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WHAT MAKES ENGLISH VALUABLE AS TRAVELING CAPITAL? A PERSPECTIVE FROM TWO FORCED MIGRANTS WITH SOUTH-SOUTH-NORTH TRAJECTORIES

This article reports findings from autobiographic interviews on the value of English resources as traveling capital. The participants in this study are two refugees of war from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who have had long transits in Uganda before being resettled to Norway by the United Nations. These refugees attribute value to English as linguistic capital due to its potential to provide help for oneself and others, inside and outside one's community of experience. Consequently, these findings may challenge central foundations in Bourdieu's framework of capital and exchange, foundations that assume individualism and competition for limited status to be important underlying factors in why social actors exchange linguistic capital for other forms of capital. The findings further complement research on language and migration with more emic perspectives from speakers with forced South-South-North trajectories, as well as research on the value of English resources globally that often focus on more macro-level perspectives.

Keywords: language and forced migration ◆ emic perspectives ◆ Global South ◆ linguistic capital ◆ Global English

Introduction

Recent years have seen an upsurge in forced migration worldwide. The trajectories of such forced migration are both from the Global South to the Global South, referred to as South-South migration, and from the Global South to the Global North, referred to as South-North migration (see e.g., Monsen & Steien, 2022a; Netto et al., 2022; Thomson, 2014; Vigouroux, 2019). The

ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one example of a conflict that has resulted in displaced Congolese people in other African countries, such as South Africa and neighbouring countries like Uganda and Tanzania; as well as across the Global North, including Norway in northern Europe, where they have been resettled by the United Nations (UN) (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2019; Steien & Monsen, 2022; Thomson, 2014; Vigouroux, 2019).

Refugees from DRC who have spent a decade or two in transit in countries like Uganda and Tanzania often pick up English and other local languages used in their new localities (see e.g., Bokamba, 2018; Steien, 2022). By the time some of them are resettled in the Global North by the UN, these speakers thus often have the global language English in their multilingual repertoires, a language that travels well since it "allow[s] insertion in large transnational spaces and networks" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 46). As a global language, English is generally viewed as highly valuable traveling capital as a lingua franca and as linguistic capital that helps individuals access other forms of capital (see e.g., Bayyurt, 2021; Crystal, 2012; Grey & Piller, 2020; Jenkins, 2015; Norton, 1997; Rindal, 2013; Saraceni et al., 2021). The present article explores emic values of English resources for two individuals with histories of forced South-South-North migration. 'Emic' here refers to the participants' "local point of view" (Hornberger, 2013, p. 112), their perspectives as insiders, i.e. how they conceptualise their experiences, how they orient themselves in the world, etc. (Pike, 1967; see also Grey & Piller, 2020). The focus in this article is on how these two individuals construct the value of English in autobiographic interviews (Pavlenko, 2007) in 2021 following personal life histories of forced South-South-North trajectories.

The next section presents the two participants and their life histories, as well as the *linguistic ecologies* (c.f. Haugen, 1972; Mufwene, 2001) relevant to their spatial trajectories in order to contextualise the participants' life histories. Next, the research context and data collection procedures for the present findings are presented. After that, the conceptual lens utilised for the analysis is presented, as well as previous research utilising this conceptual lens in order to show how the present study builds on and differs from previous research. Once all relevant background information and analytical tools are presented, the main analysis follows, which outlines the main findings related to why the participants attribute value to English as traveling capital. Finally, the article ends with a discussion and some concluding remarks.

Ecologies in Eastern DRC

DRC has been independent from the brutal and exploitative Belgian colonial rule (see e.g., Fabian, 1986; White, 2000) since 1960, for about 60 years. However, colonial language

ideologies have in many ways prevailed, e.g., in continuing the policy of French being an official language, French being the medium of instruction in education, and the ideologically ambiguous status of Swahili and Lingala (see e.g., Bokamba, 1995, 2018, 2019; Fabian, 1986). DRC is a highly multilingual country with estimates of numbers of languages spoken ranging from 210 (Eberhard et al., 2023) to 214 (Bokamba, 2018), "of which four serve as national languages (NL: Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingála & Tshiluba)" (Bokamba, 2018, p. 436). English is not one of its main languages, and has been labelled a "foreign language", mainly a school subject and "scarcely used in public given the infinitesimal number of fluent speakers" (Kasanga, 2012, p. 50), although its usage and visibility in the linguistic landscape is increasing in the larger cities, like Kinshasa and Lubumbashi (Kasanga, 2012, 2019). In terms of communicative practices and language ideologies in eastern DRC, where the present participants, Fidèle and Prudent, were born, ethnographic research has shown that speakers engage in monolingual and translingual practices with resources from French, national and local languages (Golden & Steien, 2021). This suggests that translanguaging is viewed as normal and not marked, which is similar to South Asian communities described by Canagarajah (2013).

Many of the Congolese refugees in Norway, including Fidèle and Prudent, are from the Kivu region of DRC (Monsen & Steien, 2022a). This region "has been war-torn for several decades" (Monsen & Steien, 2022a, p. 7). Congolese refugees from this area were forced to flee their homes "due to an immediate threat of sexual violence, plundering, killings and forced recruitment to militias" (Monsen & Steien, 2022a, p. 7; see also Mathys, 2017; Meger, 2010). They have often fled to neighbouring countries, like Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (UNHCR, n.d.).

Ecologies in Uganda

Uganda has been independent from British colonial rule since 1962, i.e. for about 60 years like DRC. Further like DRC, colonial language policy has influenced current macro-level language ideologies, for instance, English being the most prestigious language in the country (Nakayiza, 2016). While having less documented living languages than DRC, Uganda is still a multilingual country with 41 living languages (Eberhard et al., 2023). The official and *de facto* national language in Uganda is English, while Swahili was made a second official language in 2005, although causing few practical changes to language policies in the country (Meierkord, 2016; Nakayiza, 2016). Like in DRC, Swahili also has an ambiguous status in Uganda as "it is unfortunately still associated with the military and the "troubled" times in the 1970s and 1980s" (Schmied, 2008, p. 154).

Previous ethnographic fieldwork among newly-arrived Congolese refugees in Norway (Steien, personal communication) have highlighted the multilingual nature of the refugee camp where they stayed in Uganda. The refugee camp catered for refugees from DRC, Sudan and Rwanda. In the refugee camp, both English and Swahili seemed to function as linguistic capital that could be exchanged for shelter, food, friendships, education and work. Furthermore, ethnographic fieldwork (Monsen, 2022; Steien, personal communication) and research on refugee camps for Congolese refugees in Tanzania (Thomson, 2014) have found precarious living conditions and lack of opportunity for individuals to plan for the future. According to Fidèle, the quality and status of the primary education offered to refugees in Uganda is questionable. He explained to me in one of the interviews that current unemployment rates in Uganda discourage people from prioritising school, and that the school days themselves are often too long for the children, without any meals provided by packed or served lunches, and the children walk long distances to get to school on roads where girls in particular are vulnerable to violent attack. Other Congolese refugees have stayed in Kampala, where they had to find housing, food, etc. with less support from NGOs than those refugees who stayed in refugee camps, and thus experiencing precarity in other ways (Steien, personal communication). Some Congolese refugees have obtained some higher education in Uganda. And like Prudent and Fidèle, many Congolese refugees also have work experience from Uganda, although there are large differences between the refugees. Often women have less education and formal work experience from Uganda due to being young mothers, while men might have been more likely to be able to pursue higher education and work experience.

Such living conditions may make individuals more dependent on fellow refugees with similar experiences and perhaps even foster a strong collectivist culture (see e.g., Triandis, 2015). Congolese refugees who share the experience of having been UN refugees in Uganda stay in touch, in person and digitally, despite having been resettled across different countries in the Global North. They have a strong sense of community, despite no longer being physically together in the same geographical location, Uganda, anymore, which is similar to Anderson's (1991) concept *imagined communities*. They can thus be seen as what Kivimäki and colleagues (2023) refer to as a *community of experienc*e , i.e. "people who recognize similarities in their experiences, who share and negotiate these experiences and their meanings with each other, and who start to identify themselves as a group, bound together with a sense of shared experience" (Kivimäki et al., 2023).

Ecologies in Norway

As mentioned in the introduction, many of these Congolese refugees in transit in Uganda were eventually resettled in Norway by the UN in 2019-2020. The Norwegian state further settles refugees across Norway. Norway has been an independent country since 1905, i.e. for about a century. Unlike DRC and Uganda, Norway was not colonised, but in unions with its neighbouring countries for c. 500 years. As it was perceived as a provincial and remote part of the unions with both Denmark and Sweden, Norway very much developed a history of perceived monoculturalism and monolingualism, although the minoritised population has long been multilingual with e.g., Sámi, Kven or Romanì resources in addition to Norwegian resources (Røyneland et al., 2018). Today, the majoritised population in Norway have multilingual repertoires with Norwegian and English resources and often some German, French or Spanish resources (Røyneland et al., 2018). The minoritised population have multilingual repertoires with Norwegian resources, either indigenous or non-European resources, and often English resources (Røyneland et al., 2018). Norwegians in general have "functional fluency" (Bokamba, 2018) in English and Norway is ranked among the top five countries in the world in terms of non-native English proficiency (Education First, 2021). English-speaking Congolese refugees may therefore use English as a lingua franca in Norway, with most of their Norwegian-dominant interlocutors, an example of which is given in the analysis. In fact, until the war in Ukraine, Congolese refugees with long transits in Uganda were the only group of refugees who had any shared communicative resources with Norwegians, as most refugees came from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, where English is in less use than in Uganda. There might however be ideological reasons for avoiding English in Norway.

There are competing ideologies related to English in Norway. On the one hand, having English in one's communicative repertoire gives access to symbolic capital and intentional identity positioning using English resources (see e.g., Rindal, 2013). On the other hand, there is anxiousness that English may peripherise and even replace Norwegian in one or more domains (see e.g., Ljosland, 2007; Røyneland et al., 2018). This anxiety, together with a history of perceived monolingualism and monoculturalism, may have led to "normative monolingualism" (Grey & Piller, 2020, p. 56) in Norwegian society, with translanguaging being highly marked and monolingual Norwegian practices encouraged on several scales, like in the work place and in the media (Røyneland et al., 2018). For Congolese, this means that they are required to undertake a mandatory national one-year to two-year Introduction Programme, introducing them to the Norwegian language and Norwegian society, customs and values (see e.g., Monsen & Eek, 2022; Monsen & Steien, 2022b; Pájaro, 2022; Steien & Monsen, 2022). This is a political choice since they actually share English resources with Norwegians and might thus

practically have been able to live their lives in Norway without knowing Norwegian. This language policy and its underlying language ideology is reminiscent of how Vigouroux (2019) has described language learning for migrants in South Africa:

> the learning of the host language(s) is often framed as a moral duty, a "debt of hospitality" … that migrants are expected, if not summoned, to pay. Failure to do so (for whatever reason) is taken as a deliberate act against the "welcoming" host society and as indexing the migrants' unwillingness to integrate. (p. 35)

Fidèle's life history

Fidèle fled DRC at the age of five and spent 23 years in Uganda before coming to Norway in 2019, at the age of 29. He hardly remembers anything from DRC and refers to Uganda as his home country. In Uganda, Fidèle got married to a fellow Congolese refugee and had children of his own. He was immersed in an English-speaking environment in Uganda for over twenty years and attended English-medium education, both primary, secondary and some higher education – although not uninterruptedly, due to the financial cost of education. In Uganda, he worked as a primary school teacher for a while and started an NGO catering for fellow refugees in the refugee camp. He refers to English as his "mother tongue", displaying how English is a significant part of his identities. In autumn 2021, when I collected data for the present study, Fidèle had multiple Bantu languages – Swahili, Kinyabwisha, Runyoro and Luganda – in his repertoire, as well as English and some Norwegian resources. He was attending mandatory Norwegian language learning classes, and did voluntary work at an NGO in Norway, and continued his work with for the NGO in Uganda remotely. His dominant languages in the autumn of 2021 were English and Swahili.

Prudent's life history

Prudent was older than Fidèle when he fled DRC, at 23 years old. As a result, he has more memories than Fidèle from DRC and he attended French-medium education in DRC. He was first introduced to English formally in DRC through the school subject English. Soon after arriving in Uganda, he took a one-year language course in English offered by Catholic missionaries. Like Fidèle, Prudent also got married to a fellow Congolese refugee and had children in Uganda. In total, Prudent spent 13 years being immersed in an English-speaking environment in Uganda. He served as a pastor in a Congolese church and worked for a Christian NGO in Uganda. At 36 years old, he came to Norway in 2019. In autumn 2021, his multilingual repertoire included resources from several Bantu languages – Kitembo, Swahili, Lingala and Luganda – as well as French, English and some Norwegian resources. Prudent was also

attending mandatory Norwegian language learning classes and continued his ministry work in Uganda remotely. Prudent's dominant languages in the autumn of 2021 were English, Swahili and French.

Research context

The data presented in this article are part of an ongoing, collaborative research project called *Language across time and space: Following UN-refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Norway* that conducts linguistic and ethnographic research among 14 newly-arrived Congolese refugees in Norway (Monsen & Steien, 2022a). The project was initiated in 2019, once the Norwegian government agreed to resettle c. 3000 UN quota refugees, of whom were c. 1000 Congolese refugees in transit in Uganda (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2019). One of the fieldworkers travelled to Uganda to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in the localities where these refugees had been residing for 10-30 years (Steien & Monsen, 2022). She recruited research participants "through a self-enrolment method" with the help of facilitators from the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) (Steien & Monsen, 2022, p. 9). 10 of the participants are men and 4 are women. They range in age from their 20s to their 50s, and most of them have come to Norway with a spouse and children. They all have multilingual repertoires consisting of resources from several Bantu languages and often French and/or English resources (Steien & Monsen, 2022), having been shaped by being part of ecologies dominated by Bantu, English and French resources for decades (Syvertsen, 2022; see also Mufwene, 2001; Steien & Yakpo, 2020). Such multilingual repertoires with resources from multiple pedigrees are not unusual for people from this part of Africa (see e.g., Bokamba, 2018). In fact, as Bokamba (2018) puts it, having resources from multiple languages in your repertoire "is not an option, but a daily requirement" (p. 433) in countries like DRC and Uganda. Apart from English resources, the other resources in their repertoires may also function as linguistic capital in multiple ecologies. However, in this article I only zoom in on what makes *English resources* valuable for the participants, as a set of resources that, as mentioned above, travels well and has been researched extensively, although with less focus on the perspectives of individuals from the Global South.

The same fieldworker who met the participants in Uganda has continued to be in regular contact with the participants since their arrival in Norway in 2019-2020 (Steien & Monsen, 2022; Steien, personal communication). Like many other countries world-wide, Norway also went into lockdown following the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic in Norway in mid-March 2020. Some of the Covid-19 restrictions the Norwegian government imposed included limiting the number of visitors allowed in people's homes. Consequently, while these

restrictions were in place in varying degrees of strictness (c. March 2020-August 2021), only one fieldworker was in contact with the participants and collected linguistic and ethnographic data that were later analysed by the same researcher and the other members of the collaborative research project. Some of this data has been published in an edited anthology (Monsen & Steien, 2022a). Findings published in this anthology, as well as discussions with other fieldworkers in the project (e.g., Steien, personal communication; Monsen, personal communication) inform my understandings of the present material.

The dataset analysed in the present article consist of extracts from autobiographic interviews (Pavlenko, 2007), which I conducted with two of the 14 participants in the autumn of 2021 in familiar locations for these participants; field notes from six field visits; and fieldnotes from sporadic ongoing contact between the participants and myself from autumn 2021 until spring 2023. The six field visits consisted of two visits to each of the participants' homes and one to each of their adult learning centres where they are studying Norwegian, all in the autumn of 2021 and lasting between three and eight hours each. The first field visit to each of the participants was conducted together with the above-mentioned fieldworker who met them for the first time in Uganda and whom the participants considered a friend by 2021. After the first field visit, the participants contacted me directly, without using the other field worker as a go-between. Both of them invited me to visit them again and offered to help me further with my research.

I recorded four autobiographic interviews, i.e., two with each participant. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes each, and focused on exploring the participants' *subject realities*, meaning "how 'things' or events were experienced by the respondents" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 165) with respect to their histories of English practices in DRC, Uganda and Norway. During my fieldwork the focus was narrowed down to exploring 'emic' perspectives (cf. Hornberger, 2013; Pike, 1967; see also Grey & Piller, 2020) on why the participants perceived English resources as valuable after having inhabited both the Global South and the Global North. Importantly, I do not use the term 'emic' here to suggest that the participants' perspectives are representative of or generalisable to all Congolese people, nor to all Congolese refugees in Norway. Since the autobiographic interviews afforded me a glance into their subject realities, I use the term 'emic' here to refer to the "local point of view" of the two participants as individuals. Furthermore, since the data was collected ethnographically, I did not seek controlled or balanced data sets from multiple participants. In this article, I explore rich data from two participants that might help us understand more fully why English as traveling capital may be constructed as valuable to individual speakers with forced South-South-North trajectories.

Throughout the data collection process, I was very aware of the potential asymmetrical power relation between myself and the participants, and dimensions like gender, age and race that might influence what I notice (Busch, 2016, p. 6; Rosa & Flores, 2017). What struck me as the most salient influence throughout the fieldwork and analysis was that we have very different backgrounds: I have grown up in a peaceful country like Norway with freedom to relocate as I wish, while they have traumatic life histories of war and forced mobility and have been resettled in Norway due to a macropolitical decision between the UN and the Norwegian government. Because of this, all the fieldwork was carried out in places where the participants were likely to feel comfortable (cf. Agar, 2008, p. 120), i.e. in their homes and in their regular sites for Norwegian language learning. The interviews were further conducted in one of their dominant languages (cf. Busch, 2016, p. 6; Mann, 2011, p. 15), English, while use of other resources, like Norwegian, was initiated by the participants. I also strove to make the interview setting more like a normal conversation through, for instance, intonation and providing anecdotes of my own (cf. Briggs, 1986), and encouraged them to go off on tangents they were passionate about and tried to not control the conversation topics too much (cf. De Fina, 2020, p. 155). Reducing the potential asymmetry actually became a joint effort, as both Fidèle and Prudent actively repositioned themselves and me as more equal interlocutors, by steering the conversation to topics in which they were invested and, at times, providing explanations that positioned me as lacking knowledge and understanding of various topics. Both of them also separately treated me as their guest when I visited each of their sites of Norwegian language learning to shadow the participants for a day, by showing me around the learning centre, introducing me to their fellow language learners and their teachers, saving me a seat close to them in the classroom, and inviting me to join them and the other learners for lunch as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Through these gestures, Fidèle and Prudent made me feel welcome and positioned me more and more as "one of them".

Through thematic analysis of the recorded autobiographic narratives, I identified a number of key themes. I initially assumed that the autobiographic narratives might indicate English being valuable as linguistic capital in distinct geographical locations for different reasons, e.g., English being valuable as linguistic capital in Uganda for some reasons and valuable as linguistic capital in Norway for other reasons. The thematic analysis instead pointed to patterns of English being valuable since it could be exchanged as linguistic capital for help, and this help was beneficial on a number of *scales* (cf. e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert et al., 2005). That is not to say that the ecologies the participants have inhabited are similar or interchangeable in general. The thematic analysis indicated that the way these participants construct the value of English as linguistic capital in Norway in 2021, following a lifetime of forced migration, was patterned according to scales and not according to geographical locations.

These themes that were identified through the thematic analysis will be explored in turn in this article, through the analytical lens of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991, 1997) and in light of observations from field visits and ongoing contact with the participants.

Capital as an interpretive lens

The value of English resources is understood here through the lens of Bourdieu's (1991, 1997) concept of language as *capital*, i.e. whether English resources can be exchanged favourably. *Capital* refers to resources that are exchangeable for other forms of desirable resources (Bourdieu, 1997). Bourdieu (1997) operates with three main types of capital: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital, with linguistic capital being a form of cultural capital.

Linguistic resources do not inherently equate to linguistic capital. Instead, so-called "legitimate competence" in a given space "can function as linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 55). Competence, in this context, does not simply refer to linguistic accuracy. Rather, Bourdieu (1991) refers to situated socially acceptable competence, such as having resources that both interlocutors in a situated encounter associate with prestige (see also Blommaert et al., 2005). This can, for instance, mean that "knowing the right kind of language or variety can enable access to desired resources such as jobs or to public and private services provided by the state (i.e. airline businesses, health, education)" (Duchêne et al., 2013, pp. 5–6), as well as connections, friendship, a sense of belonging, cultural knowledge and cultural artefacts.

Several studies have demonstrated that language practices exist in different hierarchical relations depending on geographical and social space (e.g., Beiler, 2021; Blommaert, 2009; Guido, 2018; Holm et al., 2019). Thus, what constitutes "legitimate competence" in a given encounter is influenced by the dominant language ideologies in the given space, as well as how individuals position their resources as socially valuable. Within Bourdieu's (1991) framework, social actors exchange different forms of capital to increase their social status and power. He thus views society as functioning with a linguistic market structure, where each social actor competes with other actors for a limited amount of status and capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Speaking certain languages or varieties, for instance, can give you higher status, which might, in turn, give access to more material capital.

English resources enabling help

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this study is to understand the participants' view of the value of English resources in their own lives. The participants mainly attribute the value of English to the somewhat vague word "help". English resources being exchangeable for "help"

is quite a pertinent theme, which is illustrated clearly by the narratives I present in the following excerpts. Furthermore, the participants' explanation of who will benefit from the "help" can be seen from the perspective of scales (e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert et al., 2005), since three different levels are identified – oneself, one's community of experience, and others outside one's community of experience. Thus, this section is structured into three parts in accordance with each scale: oneself, one's community of experience, and others outside one's community of experience.

Help for oneself

Firstly, English appears to be of value to the participants because it can help them personally. In one of the interviews with Prudent, he was asked about his experiences of coming to Norway with English already in his repertoire, to which he answered the following:

> Excerpt 1
>
> Prudent: Yeah, it was useful to me. (…) To me, yeah, it was difficult to Madame, but it was useful to me, because, (…) I'm not in a stranger language, yeah, just Norwegian, which is strange, but English not strange to me, yeah. It was very, very wonderful, really, when I met people to who are speaking English. (interview with Prudent)

Prudent answers here by drawing a comparison between himself and his wife. He explains that coming to Norway was more difficult for his wife, because English is not a dominant language for her. For him, on the other hand, it was a relief to discover that many Norwegians actually speak English. Thus, English seems to have a general ability to function as linguistic capital to be exchanged for any economic, social or cultural capital.

One specific example of how English provides help for Prudent himself was observed during the third field visit. During this visit, I joined Prudent for a whole day at the adult education centre where he was based. At one point, Prudent was asked to come into one of the administrator's office in order to discuss formal requirements for his work placement in a kindergarten. The discussion centred on the importance of being formally prepared for the work placement, in this case having obtained a police certificate of conduct, roughly equivalent to a British Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, prior to the placement. During this Norwegian-dominant conversation, the administrator appeared to notice that Prudent did not understand the Norwegian word *forberedt* [EN: prepared]. She asked him, "*Du forstår 'forberedt'*? [You understand 'prepared'?] Prepared", to which Prudent answered "*Ja* [Yes], before". In this case, the value of English resources can be said to lie in its ability to help resolve a misunderstanding that could have led to serious consequences for Prudent if it was not cleared

up, i.e. he might not get the work placement. Consequently, since the administrator here used English resources, this made it possible for Prudent to exchange his English resources as linguistic capital for the information he needed to make sure that he could obtain a police certificate of conduct, which in turn made it possible for him to take part in the work placement.

Fidèle also emphasizes how speaking English has value for him in terms of being exchangeable for help for himself, specifically in terms of enabling him to get higher education, work and settling into a new life in Norway. When asked during the final interview if there was anything that we had not talked about with regards to English being beneficial, Fidèle listed several experiences, see excerpt 2.

> Excerpt 2
>
> Fidèle: In Norway, I can move in all Norway now, because of my English. Like last year I travelled to Sweden, because of my little English I was convinced to travel myself using the map. So, English has helped me to study the map very well. I've made friends. And now I can attend some conferences here in Norway, especially in Oslo. (…) English it has helped me in many, many things. I am who I am because of the little English I know. Yeah, English it has helped me to go to university in Uganda and I've got some little profession now. I've worked with local people, with international people. (interview with Fidèle)

In excerpt 2, Fidèle explains how English has been beneficial for him personally, facilitating geographical mobility, map reading abilities, higher education and work, conferences, identity formation, and development of friendships. Some of these friends Fidèle introduced me to during my field visits. English resources, then, are constructed by Fidèle as being valuable. This value is attributed to being exchangeable for other forms of cultural, social and economic capital.

Help for one's community of experience

Secondly, Fidèle and Prudent seem to be concerned with group solidarity in that they want to help not just themselves, but also others in their community of experience. The Congolese church where Prudent served as a pastor was mainly made up of Congolese refugees who used Swahili as one of their dominant languages. During one of the interviews, possibly because he knew I was a fellow Christian, he spent some time describing the church as bilingual, with interpretation into English if the sermon was given in Swahili, or into Swahili if the sermon was given in English. At first, this confused me. Why would they use English in church if everyone understood Swahili? In excerpt 3 we see Prudent's answer.

Excerpt 3

Prudent: So, I mean, when they are preaching, well, you're preaching in Swahili, then they interpret in English. Or you are preaching English, they interpret in Swahili. Those ones who are there, they don't know English, they can pick some of what's there. They can learn from there also. So, you use those strategies (…) These people will not remain with them forever. They can also move from there to other places. So, when did they know the language, (…) that language can help them there. (interview with Prudent)

Prudent here points out that people were part of this church in Uganda for a limited time only. He was therefore concerned about the church members' linguistic resources. In excerpt 3, Prudent seems to imply that he wanted to ensure that the church members had legitimate linguistic competence which could be used as linguistic capital in their future locations. Being an English speaker himself, he had the ability to exchange *his* linguistic capital for future social, cultural and economic capital that would benefit *his fellow Congolese refugees*, through this informal language learning strategy with bilingual sermons. This means that, in addition to English linguistic capital providing individual help for Prudent himself, this capital is constructed as further enabling him to help his community of experience.

Both over the course of informal conversations during the field visits and in the recorded autobiographic interviews with Fidèle, it became clear that, like Prudent, he is also concerned with fellow refugees. In excerpt 4, we see an example of this.

Excerpt 4

Fidèle: I started organization which now is helping hundreds of people, both for children and women who are in different critical conditions. I've connected with international people in Africa. I have helped many organizations in different capacities. (…) Yeah, it has helped me, English. Yeah, it has helped me much. We have donors of my organization in UK. We have people in France. This is because of English. (interview with Fidèle)

Fidèle attributes his ability to start an NGO to help refugees in UN refugee camps in Uganda to having English in his repertoire. However, during the second interview he specified the important point that English capital is not necessarily valuable alone, without other forms of capital. In excerpt 5, we see how Fidèle highlights the importance of pairing linguistic capital with social capital.

Excerpt 5

> Fidèle: If you have no connections, the language it will not help you. But if you know the language, and you already have integrated in the people, so it will be easier for you. You have two things: Language (…) [and] Connections. (…) Because of what? Network. (…) You feel appreciated, you feel you feel like "I'm at home". You feel like you can share your problem with somebody. (…) Yeah, so if we have language [and if] we have people, no matter if you have job, as long as you have people, you will feel like, yeah, I'm in a community. (interview with Fidèle)

Thus, starting an NGO and connecting professionally with international people are examples of economic capital that Fidèle has obtained *inter alia* from exchanging his English resources as linguistic capital. At the same time, we see that this economic capital is not for individual gain only. Like Prudent, he wished to obtain this capital for collective gain, i.e., for the benefit of his wider community of experience.

After coming to Norway, Fidèle has continued managing the same NGO in Uganda from Norway. Being an English speaker has allowed him to start a Norwegian branch of his NGO in Norway during his first two years of residence in Norway. It appears that having English capital may very likely have been a contributing factor as to why this process has taken relatively little time, since it allows him to draw on English resources in his communication with Norwegian stakeholders.

Excerpts 3 and 4 show that English resources are valuable to Prudent and Fidèle because they function as linguistic capital which can be exchanged for social, cultural and economic capital, often in combination with other forms of capital, as emphasised in excerpt 5. The capital they gain from exchanging English capital is of benefit, not only to Prudent and Fidèle individually, but also to their whole community of experience: Congolese refugees. This may challenge Bourdieu's theory of exchange, where the resulting capital obtained is mainly for individual gain. It could be argued, however, that wanting to help your own social group is an extension of helping yourself, because it is *your* social group, of which *you* are a part, and upon which *you* are dependent. However, the next section will demonstrate that the participants do wish to help others outside their community of experience as well.

Help for others outside one's community of experience

Thirdly, there were several instances during the interviews when the participants expressed that English resources were valuable in enabling them to help other people outside their immediate community of experience. Prudent, for instance, saw being an interpreter as helpful to international workers in DRC; see excerpt 6.

> Excerpt 6
>
> Prudent: (…) they [international workers] are strangers who are coming for my home country. And I can help them. When, to communicate it … to let them know other things, which, I mean, in my area, if they don't really have the language. Because I can become an interpreter to them. That was my goal. I could help them by joining them to other languages which they don't know. They know English (…) I know also English. But then other languages which are there, for example Swahili or Lingala, I can be (…) the interpreter, yeah, so that they may understand to each other through me. (interview with Prudent)

In extract 6 we see that Prudent viewed English resources as valuable as linguistic capital in DRC because they could be exchanged for work as an interpreter, leading to enhanced economic capital. Prudent had noticed that Europeans and Americans were struggling with communication in DRC. Since the more rural Congolese population mainly spoke local Bantu languages (see "Participants and their trajectories" above), Prudent had experienced that he was in a position to help them with communication. Since he has multiple Bantu languages, together with French and especially English in his repertoire, Prudent could facilitate communication between international visitors and Congolese speakers.

The way Prudent constructs his motivation here, by saying that "I can become an interpreter to *them*. That was my goal. I could *help them* by *joining them* to other languages which they don't know" (emphasis added) focuses on his intention to be of service, rather than how his English resources could be exchanged for this role, or economic capital, as individual gain. From the perspective of these international workers, it might have seemed like he wanted to achieve a higher social status by associating with them, or possibly to access more lucrative financial benefits for himself and his family. However, what is explicitly constructed in his answer is rather a focus on wanting to be of assistance, not necessarily added status or financial opportunities.

Prudent has displayed similar motivations of wanting to use his English resources to help others outside his community of experience in Norway as well, both during and after the field visits

in the second half of 2021. In 2022, he often prepared, recorded and shared sermons online for an international audience, mainly in English. Choosing to conduct these online sermons in English might be understood as a means to make his message accessible to more people. As such, his English resources could be exchanged for cultural capital that, within his worldview, will be beneficial to his audience for development in their faith. This audience did not only consist of fellow Congolese refugees. Consequently, his English capital can be said to be exchanged in a way that he perceives to be of benefit to other people, outside his community of experience, as well, perhaps even on a global scale.

Fidèle expressed similar sentiments of English enabling him to help other people than just Congolese refugees. Continuing from how English has been valuable to him for enabling practical help for fellow refugees (excerpt 4), he further explains how English enables him to "help back to Norway", see excerpt 7.

> Excerpt 7
>
> Fidèle: I'm now helping back to Norway through volunteering with *Røde Kors* [The Red Cross]. I'm a refugees' guide in a Red Cross to help there fellow refugees (...) Yeah, and this is because of English, because when we are going for the meeting there, we always speak in Norwegian, but when I'm not convinced in Norwegian (…) so they speak in English because I speak English. (interview with Fidèle)

In excerpt 7, Fidèle explains that he is doing voluntary work with the Norwegian Red Cross. The Norwegian Red Cross work among migrant communities, including, but not limited to, Congolese refugees in Norway. Their work is also highly varied, including work with children and teenagers, people suffering from loneliness, paramedic work, and supporting local communities in need in other ways (The Norwegian Red Cross, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Thus, when Fidèle mentions "help[ing] fellow refugees", this group of refugees is not limited to Congolese refugees.

Fidèle explicitly (excerpt 7) attributes his volunteering opportunity to having English resources. Consequently, English is constructed as valuable as it can be exchanged for voluntary work. Again, however, the focus is not on the individual benefits he might gain in the form of status, money, work experience, network, etc. Instead, his focus is on using his resources to help people who are struggling in Norway. As such, it seems clear that Fidèle is expressing a wish to share the capital he receives, from exchanging English as linguistic capital, with anyone suffering, regardless of whether they are part of his community of experience.

Discussion

There were several instances during their narratives where the participants seemed to construct English as valuable for favourable exchanges with other forms of capital. In none of these instances was the value of English related to characteristics of the language itself, e.g., being an aesthetically pleasing language, which seemingly underlies an integrative motivation for language learning (see e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Neither does the value of English seem to be related directly to potential for status and symbolic power, like Bourdieu (1991) implies. Ultimately being a helper may lead to status, but that is not what the participants explicitly constructed in the interviews with me. Neither is English constructed as being beneficial for intentional identity positioning (cf. e.g., Bucholtz, 2010; Rampton, 1995). Instead, two key findings were made clear through the analysis. These two relate to 1) that the participants are mostly concerned with meeting needs, and 2) that the capital they gain through exchanges is not necessarily solely for their own personal benefit. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

The word *help* is often used by the participants to explain how English resources have been advantageous for them. English resources are constructed as valuable for both giving and receiving help. This help can be financial, social, cultural, or related to learning languages. This is similar to what Bokamba (2018) and Steien (2022) have found to be the case for language learning in DRC and Uganda, as well as what Canagarajah (2021) highlights is the case among any refugees, i.e. that the value of linguistic resources is not related to "a choice to access new ideas and identities" (Canagarajah, 2021, p. 575), but a necessity for being able to access food, transport, etc.

Constructing the value of English resources as facilitating help, however, deserves more attention. These participants have lived in precarious conditions over decades where they have been continuously dependent on others (see "Ecologies in Uganda" above). No trace of shame related to receiving help seems to be evident among the participants. Instead, they often express gratitude for help they have received themselves, as well as a "pay it forward" mentality of wanting to help others in return. It might be that living under such conditions has made help a necessity, a normal part of life. Furthermore, it might be that living with precarity has limited their chances of exchanging English as linguistic capital for other forms of capital, for instance for personal enjoyment in the form of being able to access English-language literature and entertainment, as opposed to those forms related to practical assistance.

The help they receive, or capital, is, moreover, not just for individual gain. Often, the reason the participants construct for why they wish to exchange English linguistic capital for other forms of capital, is that it might provide collective gain as well. For example, Fidèle's wish to

go to university in Uganda was related to his desire to help fellow refugees living in difficult circumstances in the refugee camps in Uganda. His being an English speaker enabled him to go to university. Similarly, Prudent wanted to use his English resources in church, not to gain something for himself, but rather to assist fellow members of the Congolese church in Uganda in adding English resources to their repertoires in order to enable them to use English resources as linguistic capital in the future. Fidèle and Prudent thus do not explicitly mention being motivated by obtaining personal status or wealth when exchanging capital. Instead, their answers show them to be concerned with collective well-being.

Beyond collective well-being for other Congolese refugees, both Prudent and Fidèle focus on helping others outside their social group too. This might be related to the aforementioned "pay it forward" mentality that seems to have developed from living with precarity over an extended time. Perhaps precarity not only has the potential to create a strong collectivist culture within one's community of experience, but also to foster a wider culture of sharing, even with people outside one's community of experience. Regardless, the findings from this study overall do not fit Bourdieu's (1991) emphasis on social actors competing with each other for limited amounts of capital. Perhaps the linguistic market in DRC and in the refugee camp in Uganda has functioned in a somewhat different way to the French society upon which Bourdieu (1991) based his theory. Instead of individuals mainly competing with each other for limited capital, sharing limited capital seems to be the norm for Prudent and Fidèle to a larger extent. Consequently, the underlying assumption in Bourdieu's (1991) theory, of competition for individual gain, might have to be adjusted for future studies following the present empirical findings.

Concluding remarks

This article has provided emic insights from two forced migrants with South-South-North trajectories to the academic discussion on the value of English resources. Through analysis of key excerpts from autobiographic interviews and observations of two Congolese refugees in Norway, this article has argued that the participants attribute the value of English resources as traveling capital mainly due to their potential for facilitating help for themselves, their community of experience, and other people outside their community of experience. Thus, the present article has shown that Bourdieu's (1991, 1997) concept of linguistic capital can be fruitfully applied to analyses of the value of linguistic resources among speakers from the Global South.

Furthermore, some potential limitations in Bourdieu's framework have also been uncovered. These limitations are mainly related to the question of who gains from social exchanges. While

Bourdieu (1991, 1997) emphasises individualistic gain, the findings in the present article highlight a possible extension of Bourdieu's (1991, 1997) framework, i.e. that benefits from exchanges with English capital may be intended for other people as well.

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