MACRO-LEVEL POLICY AND MICRO-LEVEL PLANNING
AFRIKAANS-SPEAKING IMMIGRANTS IN NEW ZEALAND

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This article reports on a study which investigated the language lives of Afrikaans-speaking South African immigrants in New Zealand. Particularly, it focuses on their awareness of and attitudes to language policy in both South Africa and New Zealand, and how these influence their own and their family’s language practices. Narrative interviews with 28 participants living in towns and cities across New Zealand reveal that while living in South Africa they were generally aware of macro-level language policies in the country, and were able to articulate how these policies influenced language practices at work and within their families. The absence of an explicit national language policy in New Zealand means that these immigrants, on arrival in New Zealand, base their understanding of the linguistic context in the country on the language practices that they observe in their day-to-day lives. It is these observations which guide their decision-making with regard to their own and their family’s language practices.

INTRODUCTION

Tannenbaum and Howie (2002) state that immigration involves loss, including loss of significant people and culture, familiarity and sometimes loss of one’s mother tongue. The latter has significant implications for inter-generational socialization since language is the means by which the values and cultural heritage of a particular society are passed on to the next generation (de Klerk 2000; Fishman 1991; Hornberger 1998). Managing the loss of a mother tongue (personally or within a family) or implementing strategies to maintain the mother tongue are therefore important activities for the immigrant family (Neville-Barton 2003).
Immigrants to a new country arrive with a wealth of experience of micro-level language practices in their home-country communities and often of the macro-level practices (and sometimes policies) of their country of origin. In these contexts, they make connections between micro practices and macro practices/policies; for example, in a multilingual country, a family may decide that it is acceptable to use a particular language for the purposes of communication within the family but that a language of wider communication (e.g. Swahili in Kenya or English in Singapore) should also be learned since it enhances education and job prospects (Arua and Magocha 2002; García 2003). Kaplan (1994) points out that often language policies may be developed (even implicitly) in certain sectors of society (e.g. government, education, the family) with no relation to the language practices in other sectors of the same society. However, and especially in societies with well-formulated and widely publicised policies, there is usually some degree of interrelationship among the various sectors. One would expect, therefore, that pre-immigrants’ knowledge of language use (Wong-Fillmore 1992) and of the power associated with particular languages (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981) in their more familiar home-country contexts will guide their decision-making with regard to language choices in their own lives and in those of family members. This will occur to differing extents, depending on inter alia their awareness of and attitudes to the policies in the other sectors.

In their new country, immigrants are faced with a different set of linguistic circumstances. In this article, we report on a study which investigated the language-related experiences of adult Afrikaans-speaking South African immigrants to New Zealand. During narrative interviews, the participants were asked about their awareness of and attitudes to language policies in South Africa and New Zealand, and were also asked to describe any personal and family language policy decisions they may had made since living in New Zealand. Their responses reveal a heightened awareness of and attitudes to language issues in New Zealand, probably as a result of their personal experiences of the relatively high-profile language planning activity in South Africa, especially post-apartheid South Africa in which most of the participants lived. We argue that this awareness contributes significantly to their personal decision-making regarding their own and family micro-level language planning; decisions which affect the maintenance or loss of their mother tongue.

**LANGUAGE PLANNING AND IMMIGRATION**

Cooper (1989) defines language planning as ‘the deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their
language codes’ (p.45). On the macro level, this means that governments, education and legal systems and non-governmental institutions (e.g. banks, the entertainment industry, churches, etc.) either explicitly (i.e. in the form of policy statements) or implicitly (Baldauf 1994; Wiley 1996) intervene in the language practices of immigrants who operate within their bounds. Lo Bianco (1990) argues that several factors influence the drive for language planning activities; for example, the large numbers of migrants, refugees and workers moving between countries means that policies have to manage language issues in order to assist new residents with gaining access to jobs, education and health services.

On the micro level, immigrants are faced with the task of planning language for themselves: What decisions are they and their families going to make with regard to maintaining their mother tongue and shifting to the dominant language(s) of the receiving country? Our contention is that they do this in relation to the macro-language policies and practices to which they are exposed (see also Ting 2003). In South Africa, language planning has always been highly politicized and highly visible (Kamwangamalu 2000; Kamwangamalu 2001). The results of this activity are most obviously seen in the selection of official languages. During the apartheid era, English and Afrikaans were the only two official languages, and then post-apartheid, in a bold status planning move, nine African languages were also declared official languages. Underlying the country’s national language policy are two dominant themes: the promotion of societal and individual multilingualism, and in order to achieve this, the development and promotion of the indigenous African languages. The policy and ongoing planning activity are thus fairly explicit.

In contrast, although New Zealand has for some time been a multilingual and multicultural country and is rapidly becoming more so, it does not have an explicitly stated national language policy (Peddie 1997), although there have been various attempts over the years to establish one (Benton 1996; Kaplan 1994; Peddie 2003). The Maori Language Act of 1987 recognised Maori as an official language and established the Maori Language Commission, the core focus of its work being the maintenance of te reo Maori (the Maori language). Another major initiative was the Ministry of Education’s discussion document towards a national languages policy for New Zealand. The report, Aoteareo: Speaking for ourselves (Waite 1992), identified a number of priority areas for development, but on the whole it received somewhat mixed reviews, and Peddie (1997), who provides a useful background to the report, remarks that it is unclear what planning moves relating to the report have been made since its release.

It is into such a context that Afrikaans-speaking South African immigrants move when they arrive in New Zealand, bringing with them experiences of more highly visible language policies and associated language planning activities. As immigrants, they are
faced with making decisions about whether or not to maintain Afrikaans for themselves and their families, and if they do, how they will go about achieving this. They will no doubt experience shift to English (Fishman 1989; Holmes et al. 1993) but how they monitor and manage this process will also need to be decided upon. We suggest that language policy at the macro level end of a macro-micro continuum (see Starks and Barkhuizen 2003) provides a framework or a lens for interpreting language practices in any society, and consequently helps to shape language practices and policies at the micro-level end of the continuum. Awareness of and attitudes to language planning and policy are vital ingredients in this association, and are the focus of this study. Before we turn to the study, however, we provide a brief overview of Afrikaans in both South African and New Zealand.

AFRIKAANS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NEW ZEALAND

In 1948 the Afrikaans-speaking white population obtained political control in South Africa, and Afrikaans and English became the two official languages. The tide against the power of Afrikaans started to turn in 1976 when school children in Soweto demonstrated against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in their schools. Since 1994 Afrikaans has become just one of eleven official languages, sharing equal status with nine African languages. There is growing evidence that the status of English is rising among South Africans (Louw 2004; Webb 2002; Wright 2002) and that Afrikaans is experiencing a slight downward turn (Cluver 1993; Kamwangamalu 2001; Webb and Kriel 2000), mainly due to its association with the apartheid regime.

Prior to the 1980s, language loyalty (English versus Afrikaans as mother tongue) represented ‘the primary social division in white South African society’ (Lanham and Macdonald 1979, 26), and it ‘has always been more intense among Afrikaans speakers than among English-speakers, because of the history of the fight for Afrikaans as a political tool over the past century’ (Malan, cited in Du Plessis 1986, 71). From 1948, with the National Party in power, Afrikaner nationalism reached its zenith, and linguistic ethnicity was exploited for political ends, with language an important marker of group identity.

Recently, however, things have changed radically for Afrikaans, which now finds itself beleaguered and associated with a host of negative connotations linked to the country’s apartheid history. In recent years, researchers have monitored its decline, its loss of functions to English, and the ways in which the recognition of a new multi-ethnic speech community has resulted in the disappearance of boundary markers for Afrikanerdom.
Parallel to this steady decline in the status of Afrikaans, there is a growth among Afrikaans speakers of positive attitudes and a covert prestige attached to the ability to speak English (de Klerk 1996; de Klerk 1997; Watermeyer 1996).

According to Statistics South Africa (census 2001 data), today there are 5.9 million people who speak one or another variety of Afrikaans as a home language. This constitutes 13.3% of the total population and is overall ranked third after isiZulu (23.8%) and isiXhosa (17.6%). English is spoken by 8.2% of the population as a home language. Afrikaans is the home language of 79.5% of the so-called coloured population and 59.1% of the white population, whilst English is spoken by 93.8% of the Indian and Asian population and by 39.3% of the white population. Van Rensburg (1999) reports that approximately 15 million people in South Africa can speak and understand Afrikaans, which is roughly a third of the population. He adds that, particularly in larger cities, second and third language speakers of Afrikaans fall into the 20 years and older category, whilst those of younger ages rarely know Afrikaans. Nonetheless, Afrikaans is widely used in public and private life with more than half of its primary users being non-white people.

The sociolinguistic context is very different in New Zealand. During the past 10 years thousands of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans have emigrated to New Zealand for a variety of reasons: insecurity about the political future of the country, doubts about the economy, the high crime rate, the perceived drop in educational standards, and affirmative action policies in the work-place (Smith 2001). While for English-speaking South Africans, the move has not involved any really significant linguistic adjustments, for some Afrikaans speakers the move to a foreign country where Afrikaans is seldom used in official public discourse has entailed huge changes in their lives. For many, the sociocultural and linguistic adjustments they have made have been considerable, and for some, the process has not been easy. The appeal of emigration, however, is nonetheless strong: in 1992-3, New Zealand approved 958 residency applications; in 1994, the figure was 4244, and the 2001 census data (Statistics New Zealand 2001) show that 12783 respondents claimed to be first-language Afrikaans speakers. It is estimated that there are now some 35,000 expat South Africans in New Zealand (Smith 2001).

They have settled all over New Zealand, though by far the largest number have chosen the biggest city, Auckland, as their home. Although scattered across New Zealand, the Afrikaans community has strong ties, boosted through the community activities of the Afrikaans Club, an organization which organizes frequent cultural activities and issues
regular newsletters. There are also regular Afrikaans church services in various towns and cities.

THE STUDY

THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study are 28 Afrikaans-speaking white South African immigrants to New Zealand. All participants arrived in New Zealand within the last 14 years with the majority arriving in the last five years. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants whose comments have been used in this article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location in NZ</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Time in NZ</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Auckland</td>
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<td>5 years</td>
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<td>North Island city</td>
<td>manager</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Danie</td>
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<td>9 years</td>
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<td>Isabel</td>
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<td>Eddy</td>
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<td>South Island town</td>
<td>lecturer</td>
<td>1 ½ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Details of participants (all names are pseudonyms)

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The participants were interviewed in various locations in New Zealand, from Invercargill in the south to Whangarei in the north. Eight of the 28 live in Auckland. Almost all interviews took place in the participants’ home or workplace. Most were interviewed alone but sometimes their partners or other family members were present. The participants
were recruited through personal networks and advertisements in the newsletters of two cultural/business associations which cater for South African interests.

The researchers, who are both of South African origin, gave participants the option of speaking either Afrikaans or English (all interviews but one were conducted by Barkhuizen). In most cases, they chose English, though quite a bit of code-switching took place. The English proficiency of almost all the participants was high. One reason is that for many of them (probably those over 20 years of age) both Afrikaans and English would have been compulsory subjects at school in South Africa. Another reason is that a high level of English proficiency (measured by IELTS) is required before permanent residence is granted by New Zealand. And finally, for those who have lived in New Zealand for a number of years, they would have had this time to develop their English proficiency.

The interviews were semi-structured and focused broadly on the participants’ language background in South Africa and on their language use and language-related experiences in New Zealand. Although each interview covered a broad range of topics, participants were encouraged to tell their language stories; in other words, the interviews took a narrative structure focusing on participants’ personal stories involving their interactions with others over time and in different places (Chase 2003). Interview topics included narratives of personal experiences, perceptions of maintenance and shift in self and family, and issues to do with language and identity. The focus in this article is on the participant’s awareness of and attitudes to macro-level language policy in both South Africa and New Zealand, and how these cognitions influence their own and family language-planning decisions at the micro-level.

All the interviews were transcribed by one researcher (Knoch) and then checked by the other (Barkhuizen). The data were then analyzed following the steps of qualitative data analysis described by Miles and Huberman (1994). Themes were coded, patterns in the themes were identified and interpretations of these arrangements were made (see Strauss and Corbin 1998). Throughout this process, vertical threads in the narrative interviews of individuals were examined, as well as horizontal threads across the narrative interview data. In this way, we assembled case-study data of each participant and group data relevant to all participants (Phillion 2002). Both sets of data are referred to in this article.
RESULTS

We divide this section into two parts: the first briefly covers comments made by participants about their experiences of language policy and planning in South Africa and the second describes in more detail their experiences in New Zealand. Within each of these sections we present the most salient themes which we discovered in our analysis of the responses to questions about (a) participants’ awareness of and attitudes to policy in the two national contexts, and (b) their own language practices, including micro-level language planning decisions. Not every participant was asked these questions; their language stories unfolded in such a way during the interviews that it did not always seem appropriate to do so; others spoke at length about policy matters, often without prompting. The narrative structure of the interviews, therefore, makes a neat comparison of each participant’s experiences pre- and post-immigration very difficult. As far as possible in this section, we let the participants speak for themselves.

EXPERIENCE OF LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE POLICY AND WORK LIFE

The introduction of the language policy in 1994 impacted on the participants’ working lives, and often changes occurred quite suddenly. The most notable, and expected shift, was that English would become the predominant language of the workplace. For example, Bertha points out that ‘Afrikaans it wasn’t a business language anymore, whereas beforehand it was English and Afrikaans were the business languages. So, if you had to write a letter say to [company name] you had to write it in English and not in Afrikaans anymore’. Some, like Rikus, describe the shift to English as being more gradual but nevertheless steady: ‘The internal policy started to shift… Eventually there was an unwritten rule that internal work was to be done in English’. Rikus explains that although all official written correspondence had to be in English, the language of meetings and one-to-one correspondence was decided according to the people taking part in the meeting: ‘Any meetings, any minutes, any report, everything that you had to write, except if it was something that you and I as colleagues have to organize between ourselves. But anything that needs to go into files has to be done in English’. These findings parallel those by Barkhuizen and de Klerk (2000) and de Klerk and Barkhuizen (2001) in other post-apartheid multilingual work settings, the former in an army base, and the latter in a prison. As is typical of top-down language planning, these changes were not always optional, as Johanna describes: ‘We actually had an instruction which came through that
our daily circulation of newsletters and memoranda in the department, the departmental environment had to be in English, so that sort of forced me’.

IMPACT OF SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE POLICY ON FAMILY LANGUAGE PRACTICES

The national language policy and the subsequent language changes evident in South African society had an effect on the choices family members made with regard to language use; decisions which would have significant consequences for the education and future job prospects of the children in these families (see de Klerk 2001). These family language policies were often carefully considered, as is evident in Eddy’s story:

> It was important up to that stage for our children to have a very good basis for to be bilingual. That’s what we reckoned was important. The main thing is that you first get one language properly well established before you go to another one. So what we decided to do is, I have actually spoken with both of my children Afrikaans till they reached an age of three years. And then we sort of, I’ve started speaking in English like 100%. And in our house [wife’s name] speaks to them Afrikaans if they speak Afrikaans back to her but if they decided to speak English to her then she will reply back in English. So to be honest our household was I would say easily 75% English speaking and about 25% Afrikaans.

ATTITUDES TO SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE POLICY

The implementation of the new national language policy in South Africa obviously led to a range of attitudes to the changes, especially when it started to filter down into sectors such as education, business and the media (particularly national television). The most apparent change was the establishment of eleven official languages, specifically the promotion of nine African languages to that status. Some had very positive opinions about the new policy, like Ilana: ‘I think it’s a good move from the point of view that it acknowledges African language, by acknowledging in a way who they are’. Most participants thought that the new policy is not very practical. This is reflected in the comment made by Irma, who obviously has the eleven official language scenario in mind:

> Very surprised, I suppose. I was glad that other languages were given their rightful place and stuff, but I suppose just surprised at the logistics and the logistical nightmare they were creating. I can’t really imagine that you can really have eleven.
Quite a few participants felt a threat to their own language, Afrikaans. Danie, for example, felt threatened on quite a personal level even by other Afrikaans speakers:

I had a lot of concerns that my language will in the end become something for which I would need to fight. Because I could see that Afrikaans was facing a tough time where it was going to be vilified, discriminated against, called the language of the oppressor and whereby speaking Afrikaans you would be spat at... So, yes, I had concerns for Afrikaans and the thing that made me the angriest of all, is ... my own Afrikaners telling me that you should forget about it, Afrikaans is worth nothing, it is not worth preserving, and that kind of thing, that really rankled... Suddenly, I became something which I never wanted to become and that is I became politicised because of my language. Because the language to me was very precious.

Due to the history of Afrikaans in South Africa and the changes in the explicit (i.e. stated) and implicit (i.e. in practice) language policies over the past decade, South African immigrants have a heightened awareness of language issues in the country, as demonstrated in the preceding comments. One would expect, therefore, that the participants in this study would closely monitor language issues and practices on arrival in their new home country.

EXPERIENCE OF LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING IN NEW ZEALAND

AWARENESS OF LANGUAGE POLICY

In terms of the official language situation in New Zealand, almost all participants express a certain amount of uncertainty, for example, Bertha says, ‘I know Maori is supposed to be with English, but I’m not sure about the policies at all’. Naas’ comment reflects the same uncertainty, ‘well, as far as I’m concerned English, and I think they say Maori is the official language but it is very confusing’, and so too does Uli’s, ‘I guess we’ve got two, I am just assuming it’s two because I see a lot of signs that are in two languages’.

Although these participants are generally not aware of any language policy, they draw conclusions from their observations of language practices in their day-to-day life experiences. Isabel, for example, considers New Zealand to be a monolingual English country: ‘That is just the thing. You know, you can walk in town, you’ll never hear it [Maori]. I mean this is to me it’s an English-speaking country’. In contrast, Uli from the East Coast, was surprised on arrival in New Zealand by how much written Maori was
used. He expected New Zealand to be a lot more monolingual than it actually is: ‘We expected the English. We were surprised by how many [written] Maori there is and we were also surprised to see all the street names and the signs ... didn’t hear a lot, but saw a lot’.

Rikus, who works for the City Council of his city, has noticed that New Zealand is clearly a multilingual country:

We came to realise and after living here for a while, that even the Kiwis, many of them, some haven’t accepted the fact that this is really not a bicultural, but a multicultural country... My big surprise, here I come to New Zealand, where in South Africa we were kind of forced to work with two languages, in Port Elizabeth three, because there is three regional languages. Here I come to English New Zealand and I have to do it in five: English, Maori, Samoan, Tongan and Tuvalu, for specific groups of people in [name of city].

Some participants also commented on what they observed in the New Zealand school context. Ilana thinks that learning a second language is a good thing, but her experience in South Africa has taught her to be cautious: ‘I know that there’s a move to make Maori more compulsory, so from that point of view I’ve got very mixed feelings about making anything compulsory as far as learning goes because it raises such strong emotions but on the other hand I think learning a second language is good. It opens certain doors to you, certain areas of thought that you won’t be able to see otherwise’.

FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY

Since many participants left South Africa in order to provide a better life for their children, one would expect that they have thought seriously about how the language practices they observe impact on their own and on those of members of their family. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them have considered and often explicitly formulated both family and personal language policies. By ‘family language policy’ we mean the decisions that family members (particularly the parents) make with regard to the use of English and Afrikaans within the home and in intra-family interactions. Participants’ family language policies in this study can be placed along a continuum with English-only at one end and Afrikaans-only at the other. Most families, in spite of their awareness of the challenge, have decided to maintain Afrikaans as their home language. The reasons they give for this decision are various, as is clear from the following extracts. Gert argues
that his family will speak Afrikaans in the home since his children will in any case learn English at school.

We decided we speak Afrikaans at home, because it is an extra language they can speak and they will be fluent in English anyway, because of them going to English schools. So, I think if we start speaking English, they would probably lose their Afrikaans ability to a large extent.

Isabel too is concerned about Afrikaans maintenance. She does not want her children to lose the language: ‘That is the main reason why I speak Afrikaans to my kids, I don’t want it to die out’. Rikus prefers to speak Afrikaans in the home, and he and his family have explicitly stated their decision to do so:

Because first of all I thought, if we had to teach them English we would teach them all the wrong English. What good is that, if we teach them the wrong accent, the wrong grammar, the wrong, I mean the whole approach? So we unconsciously we will pass on all the imperfections of our English. And we thought that is one reason not to do it.

Kobus believes that it is important for his children to be bilingual, a situation which could increase the chances of learning a third language later: ‘And for their brains I think it’s very important that they can think about concepts in two languages. I think if you can approach a problem from two angles because each language has a bit of a different angle, it’s to their benefit. And I wouldn’t mind them learning a third language, preferably one of the Oriental languages’. Radie agrees: ‘Fortunately I think the bilingual background helps us and gives us a bit of an edge because we believe that having a command of two makes you more susceptible to a third language’.

Some parents have decided to adopt a policy where one parent speaks English to their children and the other speaks Afrikaans. This is particularly the case in mixed-language marriages. Kobus, who is married to an English-speaking Kiwi, speaks only Afrikaans to his children because he couldn’t imagine talking to them in any other language: ‘I didn’t want to talk to my kids in a strange language or something, but I would like to communicate with my kids in my mother tongue. I thought that was very important’.

At the other end of the continuum are participants who have decided to make no conscious effort to maintain Afrikaans as their family language since moving to New Zealand. Johanna gives the following reason: ‘I have never really felt such a strong bond
with the Afrikaner culture, that I felt that come hell or high water I’m gonna preserve it’. She adds that their children would benefit economically by learning and using languages other than Afrikaans and English in New Zealand: ‘Japanese or Mandarin, because I think that’s the major trading partners with New Zealand. As I say, language is a tool. It opens doors for you. Here it’s not Afrikaans’. Her husband, Radie, adds that it would be ‘a better future for the kids to be able to speak and to live in an international language [English] than to live in Afrikaans’.

Although most decision-making regarding family policy (that is, explicit policy) is done by the parents, Danie reports on a different scenario, one that is more collaborative:

But I then gave him [his son] the choice, I said “let’s speak English at home to help you along” and he said to me, “Ek hoor genoeg Engels elke dag. Kan ons nie maar Afrikaans praat by die huis nie”. (I hear enough English every day. Can’t we speak Afrikaans at home?). And what I did find was that that in some way gave him an edge on many people, the fact that he was bilingual. Which most Kiwis are not.

PERSONAL LANGUAGE POLICY

Apart from formulating family language policies, many of the participants also have language plans of their own. Inevitably, many of these point to increased English use in work and social domains, apart from the family (although even in this domain there is shift to English). The reasons for these perceived and anticipated shifts are varied, the most salient having to do with ease of communication, career advancement, and issues of national and self identity.

Boetie, a tertiary student, states that ‘English is an international language. So it’s better to get to know the language better’. A number of participants made reference to the international status of English, especially in relation to their work and careers. Eddy, for example, has shifted his linguistic priorities since he needs to improve his English proficiency to advance his career as a lecturer:

I have come to the realisation that if I wanted to stay in the field of academics, it was to my own benefit to improve my English. I would say rather the challenge of still improving my scientific level of English that is more of a challenge for me at this stage than the desire to be conversing in Afrikaans.
Many of the participants indicated that they were aware that New Zealanders had perceptions of them as conservative, and perhaps even racist. In most cases, participants report that their reasons for leaving South Africa had to do with safety, better education and job prospects, and an attractive lifestyle in New Zealand. But in some cases, and rarely stated, reasons for leaving may have been political; i.e. to escape the new political dispensation in the country. Because of this perceived political identity, some participants have appealed for caution when it comes to using or promoting Afrikaans. Gert believes that it is important for members of the Afrikaans community not to want to raise the status of Afrikaans in any way.

I think as long as the people coming in haven’t got too much of political aspirations... I don’t think we should say they must bring in Afrikaans as a language here at school, I think you just looking for trouble if you wanna do that. I think you must practise your Afrikaans at your braai [barbecue] place or in your own time.

Gert here is referring to a fairly big controversy reported in the North Shore Times over the course of a few weeks in 1999. An article (Thompson 1999a) quoted the chairman of the Afrikaans Club proposing that Afrikaans language classes be introduced into certain schools on the North Shore of Auckland (where many South Africans live). The article caused an outrage amongst Kiwis and South Africans alike and resulted in the idea finally being abandoned (Thompson 1999b).

Nonnie is one of the only participants who claims to speak more Afrikaans now than she did before immigrating. She has an English husband and had before immigrating slowly shifted to using more English. In New Zealand, however, she has experienced a shift back to Afrikaans, which she plans to continue:

But I have been very pleasantly surprised at how strong the Afrikaans community is here. And also I tend to speak a lot more Afrikaans to them now here, than when I was in Namibia [where she lived before immigrating to NZ], just to keep a bit of that alive... For me it is my responsibility to continue with my Afrikaans language and my Afrikaans culture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study, participants expressed a certain vagueness about macro-level national language policy in New Zealand (manifest in their lack of awareness of the official language
situation), and their interviews show an almost total absence of commentary on language-in-education policy. In contexts such as New Zealand, where explicit national language policies and language-in-education policies are lacking, people rely instead on their observations of language practices in their communities in order to make micro-level decisions about their own language practices.

On arrival in New Zealand, Afrikaans speakers, like all immigrants (Horenczyk 2000), are concerned with finding employment, a place to live and schools for their children. Integrally related to these concerns are decisions about language, as the participants’ comments above demonstrate. Coming from a nation where language issues are highly visible and form a significant part of the government’s agenda, South African immigrants are keen observers of language practices in New Zealand. Based on what they find, they and their families decide to use more or less English (and more or less Afrikaans) in their new immigrant lives in New Zealand.

Personal and family language planning (explicitly or implicitly) by immigrants are complex and difficult activities, and form a part of the many other acculturation experiences that immigrants become engaged in (Olshtain and Horenczyk 2000; Seville-Troike 2000). Providing immigrants with a structure (or a framework or a lens) with which to interpret language practices in a country would help ease the burden of their ongoing micro-level language planning. Knowing, for example, whether or not the host country promotes multilingualism and actively accepts the languages of immigrants, and why, would enable new immigrants to make more informed decisions about their own language choices. Knowing whether or not the education system supports immigrant children’s native language development would allow immigrant parents to make more informed decisions about family language policy. The lack of such explicit policies in the New Zealand context makes the task of personal and family language planning more ad hoc and thus less reassuring for the people involved. This is not to say that localized language practices and policies do not provide some guidance to immigrant members of those communities; there certainly is local, sector-specific language planning activity taking place. But for the sake of New Zealand’s many immigrant groups, one needs to ask, as others have already done, if this is enough.
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