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Multilingual cultural resources in child-headed families in Uganda

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This article reports on a study focusing on the use of multilingual cultural resources in child-headed households (CHHs) in Uganda's Rakai District. Using funds of knowledge and sociocultural perspectives on children's learning, we documented through ethnographic observations and interviews how children in four CHHs used multilingual cultural resources at home. Our findings show that children co-construct, re-appropriate and remix stories, songs, riddles and proverbs from their cultural environment in situated ways that are a response to the changing context of their social worlds. The study provides a window onto the unique production and use of multilingual cultural resources in CHHs, and further speaks to the need for educators and policymakers to better understand the critical role of siblings in their own learning of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Keywords: multilingual cultural resources; child-headed households; funds of knowledge; sociocultural perspectives; Uganda

Introduction

- Ibra: I learn how to beat the drum and play the xylophone and get a song from it.
Debbie: OK. Go ahead and sing for us one that you use to communicate to others.
Ibra: We ought to stop those practices that lead to the increase of HIV/AIDS so that our dear mother country Uganda can go ahead. It was a shame in the 1980s for one to know that there is a killer disease that finishes people. (translation from Luganda)
Winnie: When we sing at school, we come back home and when we are through with our housework, we start singing. (Interviews, February 2008)

In this example, Ibra sings a song about HIV/AIDS to his younger siblings. Since the death of their parents, both of whom died of AIDS, these children have been living on their own in what has commonly become known as a child-headed household (CHH). CHHs are defined as children, typically under the age of 18, living on their own as a result of circumstances such as parental death, illness, addiction or abandonment. We know little about this global phenomenon, particularly how children live, work and learn together in the absence of adult guardians. In our example, Ibra beats the drum, plays the xylophone and, from the rhythm, creates his own song about HIV/AIDS, its history in Uganda, and its impact on his family. He uses the song and musical performance as a way to bring his siblings together in the evening, after chores are done (see Kendrick and

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Kakuru 2012), but more importantly, his performance is his way of passing on important information about how to prevent HIV/AIDS. In this example, Ibra has taken information learned at school and remixed it with the communicative cultural resources of song, music and performance in the service of maintaining family bonds and teaching his siblings. Our study, which includes four child-headed families in rural Uganda, focuses on the ways in which various multilingual cultural resources such as songs, stories, proverbs and riddles are used as tools for teaching and learning among siblings.

Dominant discourses on children's learning in family contexts typically construct children as recipients of adult care and support, downplaying their agentic capabilities (Gregory 1998). Gregory (2001) argues that studies examining children's learning in family environments fall largely into four categories: 'scaffolding' between adult and child, 'collaborative learning', imaginative play, and the role of siblings and peers in fostering each other's learning. Although the special role of siblings has been examined to some extent, this has largely been in relation to older children mediating learning for younger children. Siblings close-in-age have generally been overlooked in the research literature. Gregory maintains that a fuller understanding of the important role of siblings in each other's learning requires moving beyond taken-for-granted metaphors of 'scaffolding', 'guided participation' or 'collaborative learning' to explain the learning that takes place between siblings as they interact within family environments. Our research, with its focus on close-in-age siblings living on their own, provides a unique opportunity to move beyond the paradigm of adult support to more carefully consider how siblings mediate each other's learning.

The study detailed below is part of a larger study on funds of knowledge and networks of support in child-headed families in Uganda (Kendrick and Kakuru 2012). In the initial phase of the study, we identified 'funds of knowledge' (Moll and Greenberg 1990) across a wide range of categories and domains including family history, values and beliefs; food gathering; animal care; household management (childcare, cooking, budgets); trade/business (selling coffee, odd jobs, negotiating school fees); construction (home repair); alternative modes of communication (multilingual cultural resources, sign language); and religion (moral knowledge and ethics), social knowledge (e.g. how to have positive relations with neighbours); school knowledge; and HIV/AIDS knowledge (see Kendrick and Kakuru 2012).

In this paper, our interest is in multilingual cultural resources as funds of knowledge in child-headed families. We are particularly interested in the children's use of stories, songs, riddles and proverbs as tools for teaching and learning with siblings at home. Payne (2012) argues that CHHs are most often depicted as social problems whereby concepts of agency are seen as 'contrary to the mainstream moral and social order in society' (Payne 2012, 401). CHHs are frequently constructed as deviant households, considered as a risk to themselves and the wider society (Guest 2003), and this is a prevailing attitude that we have observed in the Ugandan communities where we have been working with children in child-headed families (Field notes; 2008–2010). Moreover, studies of CHHs are commonly set within discourses of 'survival'; as such, accounts of CHHs have often failed to capture a view of everyday life that is rooted in the perspectives and experiences of children. Payne (2012) contends that reform (e.g. policy and pedagogy) for children in CHHs needs to be grounded in 'everyday agency' rather than notions of crisis and survival. Our study documents children's everyday agency as they work and play together at home. We begin with a description of the context and families, then outline our conceptual and methodological tools, before presenting examples of the children's cultural resources and our analysis. We conclude with a synthesis of the use of multilingual cultural resources across the families.

Context and families

Our research takes place within the context of Uganda's Rakai District. Rakai was inaugurated in 1980 and is one of four former counties established when Buganda Kingdom was sub-divided into districts (Rwabwoogo 2002). Bordering the districts of Masaka in the north and north-east, Mbarara in the west and north-west, and Tanzania in the south, Rakai is one of the country's southernmost districts. It has high temperatures and heavy rainfall almost year-round. Primary economic activities are food crops, cash crops (coffee), fruits and vegetables and cattle keeping. Approximately 385,000 people live in Rakai, the majority of whom are Luganda speakers. It is also worth noting that Uganda's first recorded case of HIV was in the Rakai District, which has been particularly hard hit by the disease.

In this paper, we report on the use of multilingual cultural resources in four families. Two families were identified through a humanitarian organisation that referred us to two local schools with a high population of children living in child-headed families. A resident 'boda-boda' (motorcycle taxi) driver familiar with the local context assisted with identifying two additional families. All of the children speak Luganda at home. For those who were able to remain in school, English was the medium of instruction (MoI) from Year 4 onward. The families lived in a rural area where the vast majority of people are subsistence farmers.

The children in each family and their approximate ages at the outset of the study are outlined below, along with a brief description of the family context:

Family 1: Gerald (18), Vince (17), Lawrence (16), Jane (13) and Michael (10). The parents of these five children died of AIDS. When we first met the family, they had been on their own for approximately four years. Vince was unable to continue his schooling and began to assist his older brother Gerald with growing and harvesting coffee on a subsistence level. The three younger children were in school at the outset of the study. The family also earned money by assisting with cattle rearing for neighbours. All five lived in a mud house on a small plot of land that belonged to their parents.

Family 2: Fred (17), Gabe (15) and John (10). At the outset of the study, this family of three boys had been on their own for approximately seven years. Their father died just before John was born; their mother died three years later. For the first year, they lived with their uncle, but soon left because they were maltreated. The children were taken out of school, expected to work, and not cared for in terms of emotional and physical needs. Assisted by World Vision with the provision of a house and school fees for Gabe and John, the boys were able to return to their parents' land. As the eldest, Fred left school so he could make a home and tend livestock for his brothers.

Family 3: Ibra (12), Winnie (10), Irene (8), Manny (6), Paul (4) and David (3). The father of these children died in 2004, followed by their mother two years later. Because both parents died at home, without medical attention, their cause of death was not documented. We speculate that because the parents had recently relocated to this area of Rakai, the relocation was most likely a result of the stigma of living with HIV/AIDS in their home community, and that further stigma associated with the death of their parents made it impossible for the children to return to the area where their extended family lived. This is the youngest family in our study and the children had limited options for earning money. At the outset of the study, all of the children were able to remain in school, a privilege in this context negotiated by Ibra and Winnie with the assistance of their area Chairman.

Family 4: Barbra (15), Lydia (14) and Raymond (10). These three children have been on their own since their father died in 2005; their mother died prior to their father, when they were very young, and the children do not remember her. All three children were in school when we first met them. On occasion, their uncle assists them with food, necessities and school fees. They also sell very small amounts of coffee.

Conceptual tools

Our conceptual framework draws on the interrelated perspectives of funds of knowledge (Moll and Greenberg 1990) and sociocultural theories of language and literacy learning (Gregory 1998; Heath 1983; Finnegan 2007; Street 1984) to examine the use of multilingual cultural resources among siblings in child-headed families. The concept of funds of knowledge is based on a premise that ‘people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge’ (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005, ix–x). The funds of knowledge identified by González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) represent ‘a positive and realistic view of households as containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great potential utility’ (134). These are ‘the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive’ (Moll and Greenberg 1990, 21). Like Moll and Greenberg, we see funds of knowledge as a form of family capital, as prior everyday knowledge and experience set aside to be drawn on in times of need. Because a ‘funds of knowledge’ approach to research involves first-hand experience with families, it affords a powerful way to describe the wide and varied resources of families. As such, it disrupts prevailing discourses of deficit by providing new insights that can be integrated into policies and practices involving CHHs.

We view the acquisition of families’ funds of knowledge as part of a sociocultural process that stresses the mediating role of culture and social relationships in human learning (De La Piedra 2006; Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore 1993; Wertsch 1998). From this perspective, all knowledge is constructed through mediated social interactions, or activities that involve people, tools and the environment (Wertsch 1998). Vygotsky (1978, 1986) observed how children learn knowledge through social interactions with significant people in their lives, particularly parents, but also other adults. Through these interactions, children learn speech patterns, written language and other symbolic knowledge through which they derive meaning and construct their own knowledge. Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) has become a widely accepted construct for understanding children’s learning in a range of contexts. Although it has typically been conceived within an apprenticeship model where the older, more capable assist the younger, less capable, we find it more helpful to draw on Scribner (1990, 92), who makes the case for a broader understanding of the ZPD as ‘a space in which social processes and cultural resources of all kinds are involved in the child’s construction of her future’. We extend this notion of ZPD to consider how children learn collaboratively in situations where no one member of the family or group possesses the expertise to mentor or apprentice the other members. We see this as a collective ZPD (see, e.g. Kendrick and Kakuru 2012) where siblings work together, each one contributing what they have at their disposal.

Dyson (2003, 11) similarly emphasises learning as a process (i.e. not as a series of stages of sequentially learned skills). According to her, this process is ‘enacted as children participate in, and thereby enact interpretations of, the recurrent social activities of their daily lives. These activities are mediated by – revealed and accomplished through – socially organised and symbolically mediated actions, especially ways of talking’ (Vygotsky 1987). Typically, adults would be seen as the primary source of assistance in these activities through, for example, organising the environment, modelling, guiding, or informing, but we foreground the role of children in actively making sense of these activities and creating their own frameworks for action (Bruner and Haste 1987). As Dyson (2003, 11) describes it, children ‘recontextualize what they regard as relevant ways

of participating from one situated event to the next'. These events then become differentiated cultural practices (Barton 1994).

Like Finnegan (see also Dyson 2003 and Kress 1997), we also see oral language practices as much more than words given the way they are set 'in the context of, and intermingled with, the array of other communicative modes of which verbal language is only one' (2007, 210). As Finnegan describes, 'the deployment of language, and in particular, oral language' is 'a form of action, of art and of reflection' (2007, 1) in everyday practice. Our focus on multilingual cultural resources as tools for teaching and learning in child-headed families is premised on the idea that stories, songs, poems, riddles and proverbs are windows on 'the exchange of life through words' (Peek and Yankah 1994, xii). They are mediating tools, a 'form of action' (Finnegan 2007), in the everyday lives of these children and embedded in interconnected communicative and multimodal practices.

Methodological tools

Our objective in this study was to provide an account of the use of multilingual cultural resources among siblings in child-headed families, including when and in what ways they are able to use these resources as tools for teaching and learning. Our research team consisted of two university researchers (Maureen Kendrick, a Canadian, and Doris Kakuru, a Ugandan) and two research assistants, both Ugandan and speakers of Luganda (Elizabeth Namazzi and Deborah Mwebe). For this phase of the research, we spent eight months visiting the families, typically for full days twice per month. We participated in their daily activities, observed, engaged in conversations, collected life stories and invited the children to draw pictures and take photographs of their social worlds (Banks and Morphy 1997; Kendrick and Jones 2008). Luganda (the children's first language) and English were both used as required during our interactions with the children, who switched freely between languages, although their preference was for Luganda in moments when they struggled to express themselves. Both research assistants contributed to the translation of the transcripts from Luganda into English. Our analysis was driven by 'rich points' (Agar 1996) in the data and focused on: (1) the children's everyday activities – what was observed as the children worked, studied and played together; (2) oral examples of stories, songs, riddles, proverbs, poems, etc., as told by the children; and (3) participant information about their own lives and constructions of the world (Hardman 1973).

Data analysis was initially undertaken in the field with continuous recording of and reflection on the data. All tape-recorded data were transcribed and where necessary, translated from Luganda to English. We used the children's daily activities as our base unit of analysis; these activities were first categorised according to type of cultural resource (e.g. song, story, poem, riddle). We then further collaboratively analysed the activities iteratively to gain insight and develop meaning (Srivastava and Hopwood 2009).

Some traditional uses of cultural resources in Ugandan families and communities

In this section, we describe some of the traditional ways in which multilingual cultural resources have been used within Baganda communities to design models of behaviour and patterns of living based on local customs, values and practices (Kelbessa 2009). Cultural resources such as stories, songs, riddles and proverbs convey important messages and ideas in time-honoured ways (Healey and Sybertz 2004). Stories support and reinforce the basic tenets of culture and are an essential part of traditional communal

life. In the absence of written history, storytelling was a major way of creating community and a sense of unity. Stories were repeatedly told for moral education, entertainment, relaxation, fun, and to help people forget their worries and gain a more positive outlook on life (Mhando 2008). Stories convey culture, experience and social values. Given their communal, interactive and participatory nature, they were part of children's indigenous education in everyday matters including initiation into adulthood (Kigozi 2008). They were considered as a means of orally transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feelings and attitudes. Among the Baganda, stories are typically told in the evening, at the end of the day's work, to allow for the participation of all members present.

Among the Baganda, proverbs and riddles have been considered significant mechanisms for teaching values to children. Proverbs are serious moralistic sayings meant to give guidance in particular circumstances. In contrast, riddles are questions, puzzles, or word play that involve reasoning skills and quickness of wit, as well as foster children's mental flexibility as they grapple with different possibilities and probabilities in search of the correct answers (Mawere 2011). While proverbs are used to express ideas, feelings and experiences, they are also instrumental in articulating human problems and dilemmas (Obiechina 1992). Like stories, proverbs and riddles are performed in the evenings for entertainment. Children particularly love them because of their rhetorical and entertaining nature, as well as being short and easy to commit to memory and reproduce (Kizza 2010).

Songs are central to the daily life of the Baganda and are sung during the workday as well as the evening for enjoyment and entertainment especially among children and youth. Songs are taught alongside stories and are choreographed in such a way that they connect the lyrics with the moral behind them (Kigozi 2008). The Baganda believe that through content, meaning, interactions and experience of the beat and mood, songs contribute to the intellectual, social, intuitive and emotional development of children and young people as they gain pleasure of association and learn how to think, act and relate. In this way, they integrate their emotions, reason and cognition while cultivating a sense of enjoyment, play and creativity while building vocabularies. Given that songs are collectively listened to and performed (Biko 1978 in Kigozi 2008), they demonstrate community values and social cooperation above individual interests. Like stories and proverbs, songs are also used to preserve history and to transmit cultural values and ideas.

Our findings: the children's use of multilingual cultural resources

In this section, we present key examples that demonstrate the ways in which the children in our study used cultural resources within the context of their homes as teaching and learning tools. The stories, songs, poems and riddles were all shared in Luganda, the children's home language. Each of the examples is representative of the typical kinds of cultural resources and uses put into practice by the children in the four families. Teachers use both Luganda and English in the classroom. Some cultural resources are learned in Luganda, others in English. In the larger community, communication with and among adults would primarily be in Luganda. With other children, both English and Luganda would be used.

Example 1: Jane's HIV/AIDS song

Similar to the song presented at the outset of our paper, this first example is also a song about HIV/AIDS. It is an 'educative' song that Jane sang to her four brothers, Gerald,

Vince, Lawrence and Michael. Gerald, the oldest brother, provided a description of the typical context in which this song might be shared. He also describes other communicative practices that are used at home.

Gerald: The way I communicate to my young brothers and sister ... is like this, when we finish our work and my young brothers and sister have come back from school, when they are cooking, we all sit in the kitchen and everyone says what they saw on their way! After all that has been done, when we are going to eat food, we all sit in the sitting room, humble ourselves and pray for the food and then eat it, after eating, the one who has an educative song sings for us.

Debbie: Who knows and usually sings?

Gerald: It's Jane.

Debbie: Jane, do you mind singing for us?

Jane: AIDS the killer disease, it came to harass children, the practice is to use preventive methods and create a bright future on this ... hour ...

Debbie: Now tell us what that song means or what information you get from it.

Gerald: Let us help her.

Debbie: Jane, tell me.

Jane: I learn to follow whatever they teach me [at school] that I am to listen to what they tell me or teach me about HIV/AIDS, the preventive methods say like not engaging myself in immorality, to stay safe because immorality is the lead to AIDS.

Jane's song, sung in English, is about the prevention of HIV/AIDS, specifically avoiding immorality (i.e. sex outside of marriage) to prevent the 'killer disease'. Evident in her song are traces of this family's history, namely, that AIDS has come to 'harass children'. Although Jane was one of the younger members of her family, she was the only girl and, according to her brother Gerald, often sang songs to educate her siblings about particular issues and topics. This was her new role among her siblings, in the absence of their parents. In this particular song, she re-appropriated 'educative' information about HIV/AIDS and integrated it with the cultural practice of singing in the evening. Jane connects her lyrics with the lesson of remaining moral in relationships. Although the song is also entertaining, she adapted the practice to the situated experiences of her family. Gerald's description of communicative practices at home at the beginning of the excerpt shows how this group of siblings also developed their own form of storytelling to describe 'what they saw on their way' to school. This language game served a number of purposes in this household; it entertained, it helped maintain social relations among the siblings, and it created opportunities for storytelling and information sharing in English, a language that will become increasingly important for her siblings' futures.

Example 2: 'old' riddles

This next example focuses on the use of riddles in the family with three brothers: Fred, Gabe and John. The session began with a request from Debbie, a research assistant, to tell her more about the proverbs and riddles they use at home.

Debbie: OK, then you also talked about proverbs or riddles. Can you tell me at least one of the proverbs you usually use?

Gabe: Koyi koyi.

All: *Lya* (eat).

Gabe: *Akalya amaggwa* [The one who eats thorns] [Laughter]

All: *Kekagamanyi enkyusa* [knows how to turn them round (in the mouth)].

Debbie: Good what does it mean?

- Gabe: OK, you can't do something that you aren't used to. For you don't know, you might rush into it and get a problem for instance, you might not be knowing how to use electricity so when you rush in a house where it is and go touching every where you might get a shock!
- Debbie: Is there any other person who wants to tell me any other riddle or proverb?
- Fred: *Koyi koyi*.
- All: *Lya* (eat).
- Fred: *Atahukutambulire* [one who isn't going with you on a journey].
- Gabe: *Akusibira ya menuvu* [packs for you yellow bananas (since s/he will not share in the unsatisfying meal)].
- Fred: [Laughter].
- All: [Laughter].
- Debbie: [Laughter] ... OK. And what does it mean? [Laughter]...
- Fred: It means that those are the old riddles.

When it was Gabe's turn to respond to Debbie, although asked to share a proverb, he began as if he were telling a riddle. His brothers, who were clearly familiar with his example, were able to explain the traditional cultural meaning of the riddle. Fred similarly started his proverb like a riddle, but Gabe and John were unable to explain what it meant. Fred, unsure of the meaning of his own riddle, responded by saying: 'It means that those are the old riddles' (i.e. riddles that we don't know). Here, the brothers have confused the format of a riddle and a proverb. They started with a riddle opening (*Koyi, koyi...*) but ended with a phrase that would be more similar to a proverb. Although riddles would traditionally be used as brainteasers and tests of critical thinking, in this example, as well as in a number of other examples we have of the children making up their own riddles, a hybrid resource is created. This hybrid text deviates from traditional knowledge and practice, yet it maintains some features of riddles and proverbs in this cultural context. In the hybrid texts, the telling had a revised purpose, in this case, to generate laughter and entertain one another rather than share cultural knowledge (e.g. using riddles as a test of one's knowledge about the features of particular plants and animals). The creation of hybrid texts was common among all of the children in our study. They integrate the 'known' (bits and pieces of stories, poems, songs, etc.) and fill in the gaps with their own content to create hybrid texts.

Example 3: the making of new riddles

The riddle that Barbra and Raymond share is another example of how the children worked collectively to communicate their understanding of riddles and proverbs. This was not a traditional riddle but rather one that the children composed on their own; the telling demonstrates their knowledge of how riddles work (i.e. the 'shape' of riddles) rather than traditional cultural knowledge.

- Barbra: *Koyi koyi*.
- Raymond: *Lya* (eat).
- Barbra: *Kasaja kampi* (short man).
- Raymond: *Kaakuba Taata ekigwo* (fights daddy throws him down).
- Debbie: What does that mean?
- Barbra: He has failed it.
- Debbie: How is it supposed to be?
- Barbra: *Kasaja kampi kakuuma awaka* (short man keeps the house) meaning that a padlock is short and so keeps home [safe].

During this riddling session, Lydia was absent so Raymond and Barbra took turns telling Debbie individual lines of a riddle. When Raymond gave the ‘answer’ to the riddle, Debbie was confused because it deviated from the traditional meaning. Barbra explained that her brother had ‘failed it’ (did not know the answer). Yet he was able to communicate some understanding that the riddle was about keeping a house safe. We view this riddling example as an important way for siblings to help each other develop and practice their language skills in Luganda through collective sharing. In some examples, such as this one, older children support younger children’s learning and language use. In other examples, however, such as the previous one with Fred, Gabe and John, each child contributes to the collective telling or creation of new riddles and stories, in essence, within a collective ZPD whereby no one child had the expertise or knowledge to scaffold the learning of others.

Example 4: Barbra’s story of ‘Hare and Leopard’

Our few examples of storytelling in this study were often stories of Hare and Leopard. We speculate that the younger children had not yet had opportunities to learn storytelling skills, and there were only a few older children who knew storytelling. Factors such as isolation and security issues further contributed to the children’s limited opportunities to tell stories. The stigma of HIV/AIDS forces many children in CHHs to live isolated from other members of the community. They also face significant security challenges because they are vulnerable to break-ins and other forms of violence. The children in our study often avoided staying up late at night to participate in storytelling, as it would attract unwanted attention. In the storytelling example we include here, Barbra tells her story to her brother (Raymond) and sister (Lydia).

Debbie: Which stories do you usually tell yourselves?

Barbra: ‘Hare and Leopard’.

‘Once upon time, there was Hare and Leopard. Hare didn’t want to dig yet Leopard wanted so much to dig. Whenever Leopard would tell Hare to go and dig, he would refuse, but for him, would go and dig. So one day Leopard went and dug his food but Hare came and stole whatever Leopard had dug. So Leopard asked Hare ‘Who steals my food?’ Then Leopard told him ‘You know what Hare, am going to get the person who steals my food!’ Hare replied, ‘Go ahead and catch that person, he has really stolen our food!’ So Leopard went and hid in a very hidden place where he couldn’t be seen to wait for the thief. As he was hiding, he saw Hare coming, he stole and stole, as he was stealing, Leopard came out hiding, grabbed him and beat him to death’ (Translation from Luganda to English).

Barbra: So from the above story, I learn to work hard, that if someone tells me to work, I do so rather than waiting for others to do the work and then steal their [products]. Generally, it teaches me to be hard working and not to be a thief.

Barbra’s story highlights how the intrinsic value of the cultural resources learned by children in CHHs can be transformed as they remake and remix them within their family contexts. Although her story retained the traditional structure of beginning, middle and the end, she did not engage her siblings in the performance of the story, possibly because her audience was very small (only Raymond and Lydia) relative to more traditional storytelling events, but more likely because Barbra had not yet learned this skill. She did not open her story with the traditional interactive call and answer (Kizza 2010), ‘Olwatuuka, nga mbalabira ...’ (Once upon a time I saw...), which would be responded to by the audience with ‘Ow’oluganda ng’otulabira’ (meaning ‘With your own eyes’ ...), meant to recognise Barbra’s ownership of the story and to empower her to tell the story

from her own perspective as the observer of the events. When Barbra announces the end of the story, Raymond also did not respond with the traditional song meant to thank the storyteller.

Regardless of her non-traditional telling of the story, Barbra was still able to explain its moral – the importance of being hard-working. She further explained that the story shows that when we do wrong we can easily be discovered and punished:

I learn to work hard, that if someone tells me to work, I do so rather than waiting for others to do the work and then steal their [products]. Generally, it teaches me to be hard working and not to be a thief.

This message is linked to the children's current circumstances and particularly, their very limited material resources. As Raymond explained in an interview:

We need people like you to come up and assist us, help us out ... To help us buy clothes, pay for us school fees, buy us books so that we can also live a happy life, and be happy in the world.

For Barbra, the message of the story was perhaps intended for herself as much as for her brother and sister, as a guiding mantra to help them make good decisions, in the absence of their parents.

Example 5: Vince as sports commentator

In the same way that children such as Barbra and Raymond created their own riddles and co-constructed understandings as a means of entertaining their siblings, some of the children were also highly inventive at devising their own storytelling practices at home. Gabe's description of his siblings telling stories about what they saw on the way to school is one such example. In a similar example, Vince, the second oldest in this family, explains how he likes to communicate with his brothers and sister through sports:

Vince: Another way we communicate is through sports. Since childhood, I have been a fan of soccer, so I usually tell them the teams that are going to play for instance today Arsenal is going to play against Liverpool and Aston Villa vs. Newcastle. I always give them updates for instance; Manchester United will play against Middlesbrough at 7.00 pm, I try to update them about soccer that will take place over the weekend.

This family did not own a radio, but whenever Vince had reason to go to the trading centre for odd jobs, he took the opportunity to catch up on the latest news about British soccer. He then repeated this information in his own 'radio' commentary when he returned home to his brothers. In many ways, this new way of telling stories as a sports commentator was a kind of imaginary play for Vince, who we noted at the end of the study had written on the front door of the family's new World Vision house, 'Manchester United – Manager'. His sports commentaries were eagerly anticipated by his siblings and provided not only entertainment, but also an important way of maintaining sibling bonds and relationships. Many of the older boys in our study sought out places of entertainment that gave them access to sports videos and films (e.g. at *Bibanda*/shack video halls). The sports casting was a familiar genre and one often repeated at home as a means of bringing news and entertainment to the younger members of the family.

Example 6: 'keeping peace'

This example of a song shared by Ibra and his siblings demonstrates the cultural practice of welcoming and greeting visitors with messages of peace. Being sociable is of considerable importance to the Baganda, who traditionally exchanged lengthy greetings depending on the time, day, age of the greeters and length of time since their previous encounter (Kizza 2010). It was important that the visitors came with peace and also found peace in the home they visited.

You have sat well our dear visitors, oh you have sat well, and we shall commend you for that. Thank you for keeping peace our dear visitors oh you have sat well, thank you for keeping peace (law and order). Clap for me so as Buganda kingdom feels happy, oh you have sat so well ... [laughter...] we shall commend you, thank you for keeping peace our dear visitors you have sat so well. Beat the drum so that the Baganda can rejoice and dance around oh you have so well, we shall commend you, thank you for keeping peace our dear visitors. (translation from Luganda to English)

We view Ibra's emphasis on 'keeping peace' as having particular social and historical significance to him and his siblings, given that when their parents became ill, they were likely forced to move outside of their traditional home area due to the stigma of HIV/AIDS. The children typically sang this song to welcome visitors to their home, with the hope that the visitors also came in peace.

Example 7: using drama to communicate

As demonstrated in the previous examples, the children's use of multilingual cultural resources was intermingled with other communicative modes such as music, play and performance. In this final example, Gabe explained how drama was also an important tool for sharing information in his household:

- Debbie: Tell me how you communicate excluding the other ways you told me the other time. Have you understood it?
- Gabe: We do communicate through drama for instance when we move [travel/commute], we learn many plays, so when you come across that play you come back home and act for the rest who didn't see it and they get to know about it and what it meant. We also tell ourselves proverbs thus teaching us more of the things we don't know and the old things.
- Debbie: Okay, that drama you talked about, that is, watching the play then coming back and acting for the rest, where do you learn it from or watch it from?
- Gabe: At times on our way to school, sometimes when we are in town there are some plays. Rakai project usually presents teaching on ways in which one can prevent him or herself from getting HIV/AIDS so in such a case I come back, act for them [siblings] and tell them the things I have learnt from there that they should do so as not to get HIV.

In this final example, we see how some of the children sought out new knowledge in their local community, knowledge that may not have been available through other channels such as school and adult guardians. The drama provided not only a way for the siblings to entertain each other, it was also another important way of sharing knowledge, experiences and feelings (e.g. about HIV/AIDS) that were integral to the well-being of this family.

Synthesis across families

Taken together, these examples of how siblings, close-in-age, use multilingual cultural resources as family capital in CHHs demonstrate children's agency in adapting everyday

knowledge and experience to meet the evolving needs of their family (Moll and Greenberg 1990). They make meaning of songs, stories, riddles and performance in multimodal communicative practices for their own purposes including maintaining and establishing new family routines; strengthening bonds with siblings; sharing new knowledge, particularly information about HIV/AIDS; and enhancing their skills in Luganda, which, for the majority of children in our study, was no longer learned at school because in practice, it is not taught after Grade 4 and only becomes an elective in secondary school. These multilingual cultural resources became situated tools for teaching and learning. The children transformed resources from their cultural environment into everyday situated practices critical to their changing family context. As González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) observed, a family's cultural and cognitive resources have great potential utility. For these children, this utility was realised through appropriating and remixing features of songs, stories and riddles through play, performance and co-constructions of knowledge to create hybrid 'texts' that were interwoven with their life histories and challenges. These texts became part of 'the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information' that these children used 'to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive' (Moll and Greenberg 1990, 21). The New London Group (1996) refers to this process as designs of meaning, whereby learners design new hybrid texts using available designs (in this case, using features of cultural resources). The Redesigned then becomes an available design that can be used for future designing.

Dyson (2003, 179), in tracing the intertextual threads of children's text production practices (e.g. oral, written, enacted, multimodal), analysed how these practices are made meaningful through associated cultural knowledge, social relations and shared history. She emphasised that children are not simply 'apprentices to neatly defined practices'. Instead, they actively respond to the range of situations they encounter. As she points out, and as was also evident in our study, the children's past and future are enacted simultaneously in particular social spaces; they 'sample and remix textual stuff from past experiences and generate future potential' (180), not by simply moving from one set of symbols and practices to another; but rather by 'reconfiguring, rearranging, and rearticulating' (108) concrete symbolic forms and social practices from one situated communicative event to another. Integral to these new practices are the ways in which close-in-age siblings operated within a collective ZPD whereby no one member of the family necessarily had the expertise to teach or apprentice younger siblings. Within this collective ZPD, social processes and cultural resources were co-constructed in situated ways, unique to the lives, experiences and histories of the families.

Examining the use of multilingual cultural resources among children in CHHs provides a unique opportunity to better understand how children learn in informal contexts and as such, how they might be better supported in formal learning contexts such as schools (see e.g. Gregory 1998, 2001). As Peek and Yankah (1994) so eloquently note, these oral practices are windows on 'the exchange of life through words' (xii) and it is this exchange that makes visible the lives, challenges and agency of children as they work, learn and play together.

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