

# ○ AFRIKAANS LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN AUSTRALIA

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Changes in the political climate in the home country have resulted in the emigration of South Africans to English speaking countries such as Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Despite the scale of movement of the South African population, language maintenance in these diasporic contexts has received little consideration. This paper presents a description of an Australian Afrikaans-speaking community in the small Queensland city of Toowoomba. The study shows a high degree of bilingualism amongst the first generation Afrikaans community but also shows incipient signs of language shift within the home and a weak connection between language and identity.

**KEY WORDS:** Afrikaans, language maintenance, language shift, language attitudes, Australia

## INTRODUCTION

South Africa's political history throughout the last two decades has been turbulent with the application of political reforms and the eventual dismantling of apartheid. The changes have had linguistic consequences. In 1994, South Africa introduced a new language policy and as a result eleven languages were granted official status. English and Afrikaans and nine African languages were allocated this role in a language policy which aimed to promote the status of South Africa's African languages. The international spread of English has meant

that it has been given particular prominence and changes in the linguistic and political climate have led many South Africans to assign greater value and prestige to English (de Klerk, 2001; Rudwick, 2008). This had subsequent detrimental effects on both Afrikaans and South Africans' other languages (de Klerk, 2001; de Klerk & Barkhuizen, 2001; de Klerk & Barkhuizen, 2002; Finlayson, Caulteaux & Myers-Scotton, 1998; Kamwangamalu, 2002, 2004; Louw, 2004; Rudwick, 2008; Sonntag, 2003). Although Afrikaans was, and is, an official language of South Africa, Afrikaans is largely seen as a language of colonizers, while English is embraced as a global language (Batiko, 2005, p. 107).

Widespread proficiency in English paired with the changes in the political climate in the home country have resulted in the emigration of South Africans to English speaking countries such as Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Despite the scale of movement of the South African population, the language maintenance and shift trends of South African communities in such diasporic contexts have received little consideration. The published work has considered Afrikaans-speaking communities in New Zealand and to a limited extent, in Western Australia. In a series of recent articles, Barkhuizen and associates (Barkhuizen, 2005, 2006; Barkhuizen & de Klerk, 2006; Barkhuizen & Knoch, 2006) have reported the linguistic and cultural experiences of families who have moved from South Africa to New Zealand. The narratives reveal cultural changes and point towards numerous linguistic changes that have occurred in these families. These include shifts in language use, and reported language attrition (see Barkhuizen, 2005, 2006; Barkhuizen & de Klerk, 2006; Barkhuizen & Knoch, 2006) with many Afrikaans' children experiencing difficulties with vocabulary (Barkhuizen, 2006). Little is known about the linguistic status of Afrikaans in other diasporic contexts and thus there is a need to conduct further research in order to consider the place of Afrikaans amongst Afrikaans speakers in Australia.

The South African community is considered to be the fifth fastest-growing ethnic group in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2007a). The 2006 Census reported 104,122 resident Australians were born in South Africa (ABS, 2007b). Most are highly-educated with 36% of South Africa-born residents holding a higher degree, postgraduate diploma, bachelor degree, undergraduate degree or associate diploma. In comparison, only 17% of the total Australian population holds one of these qualifications. The South African population is located in major urban settlement throughout Australia, with large populations in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia (See Table 1).

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Table 1

South Africa-born Australian residents by states in 2006

<b>South Africa-born population of Australia by states/territories</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
New South Wales (including Sydney)	16,098	16,850	32,948
Queensland (including Brisbane)	11,289	11,421	22,710
Western Australia (including Perth)	10,836	11,213	22,049
Victoria (including Melbourne)	9,421	9,928	19,349
South Australia (including Adelaide)	2,143	2,346	4,489
Tasmania (including Hobart)	506	562	1,068
Australian Capital Territory (Canberra)	516	544	1,060
Northern Territory (including Darwin)	224	225	449
<b>Total</b>			<b>104,122</b>

Based on ABS 2006 Census Tables (2007a)

The data in the current study was collected in Toowoomba, a small regional city two hours west of Brisbane with a population of 114,476 (ABS, 2007b). The majority of the residents are Australia-born, with only 11,103 or (9.7%) overseas-born; therefore, the city is less ethnically diverse than the overall Australian population. Most of the overseas-born residents originate from England and New Zealand (see Table 2). The two largest multi-lingual communities in Toowoomba are the South Africans and the Sudanese. Both ethnic groups are relatively recent with significant migration in the past 10 years (ABS, 2007b). Other ethnic communities in Toowoomba include the Chinese, Dutch and Germans.

Table 2

Toowoomba residents by top 10 countries of birth

Country of Birth	Number of Toowoomba residents
Australia	84,212
England	2,084
New Zealand	1,278
Sudan	430
South Africa	421
Scotland	375
Zimbabwe	304
The Netherlands	288
China	288
Germany	278

Based on ABS Statistics 2006 Census Tables (2007a)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007a) reports the languages spoken in the home by region. In Toowoomba, over 91% of the population claim to be speakers of English only. The relatively high number of Mandarin (457) and Cantonese (234) speakers is due to the small local Chinese community supported institutionally by the teaching of Mandarin as a school language in one of the largest local state schools. There is also a private Buddhist college operating in Toowoomba which attracts migrants from China. Dinka (323) and Arabic (266) are spoken in the Sudanese community and German (203) by the long-established post WWI and WWII local German community (Hatoss, 2006). Of the languages spoken at home, Afrikaans does not emerge in the five most spoken home languages other than English (see Table 3). When the figures for the 'language spoken at home' in Table 3 (153 speaks Afrikaans) are compared with those of country of birth presented in Table 2 (421 South Africa-born), the number of South Africa-born is almost triple that of the number of speakers in Toowoomba who speak Afrikaans in their homes. This could be due to a variety of factors. Some of the South Africa-born might be English-only speaking South Africans

and some might live in mixed marriages where a language other than Afrikaans is the home language. The figures suggest potential language shift, a common characteristic of migrant communities both within and outside of Australia (see Clyne, 2003; Fishman, 2000 amongst others for details).

Table 3

Top 10 languages spoken in Toowoomba homes in 2006

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<b>Languages spoken at home</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Persons</b>
English	43,210	47,651	90,861
Mandarin	246	211	457
Dinka	192	131	323
Arabic	168	98	266
Cantonese	117	117	234
German	93	110	203
Afrikaans	75	78	153
Italian	77	64	141
Hindi	76	47	123
Dutch	48	59	107
<b>Total population</b>	<b>47,614</b>	<b>51,869</b>	<b>99,483</b>

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Based on ABS 2006 Census Tables (2007a)

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

The term language shift can refer to the language behaviour of a whole community, a sub-group within it or an individual (Clyne, 2003). It can refer to a process, such as a gradual shift from the use of mother tongue in certain domains, to the use of the dominant language. Clyne (2003) describes two main types of language shift: (1) intergenerational shift which refers to the structural or functional reduction in the use of the migrant language in the second or third generations and (2) intra-generational shift which occurs within one generation and refers to the structural (attrition) or functional reduction in the mother tongue

of the migrant generation. This paper considers language shift in the Australian Afrikaans community from both of these perspectives but the focus is on the former of these processes. The literature (see e.g. Bourhis, 2001; Edwards, 1992; Fishman, 1991, 1966; Gal, 1979; Holmes, 1997; Jaspaert & Kroon, 1988; Schmid, 2002) has identified a wide range of factors that come into play to influence the language behaviour of a migrant community. These include social, political, demographic, cultural and linguistic factors (Baker, 2001; Conklin & Lourie, 1983). Smolicz (1981, 1999) theorised that some cultures, such as the Germans and the Dutch, do not consider their national language to be a core value in their culture and this lack of core cultural connection with language typically leads to language shift in these communities. Other communities attach a significant value to their language as an expression of their identity. These ethnolinguistic groups typically maintain their mother tongue at better rates. In Australia, examples include the Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese and others. No study has established the position that Afrikaans-speaking South Africans take on this core value measure, although several facts about the community might promote a weakening of the link between language and identity. Political strife in the homeland has meant that contacts with the homeland are perhaps not as strong as with other communities with less turbulent uprooting. The language situation in South Africa has also meant that many South Africans place high value on English prior to immigration (de Klerk & Barkhuizen, 2002; Kamwangamalu, 2002, 2004; Rudwick, 2008). In intermarriages between English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans in South Africa, English is the language of choice (de Klerk, 2001). This may also affect attitudes towards Afrikaans in Australia.

A move outside of the South African context represents a shift in place and with it a shift in identity construction. As language is central to identity and often considered to be inseparable from it (Omoniyi & White, 2006, 14), it is important to consider how South Africans, particularly the Afrikaans-speaking community, juxtapose that new identity with their new linguistic surroundings in Australia.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study investigated language use, language proficiency and language attitudes of 17 Afrikaans families residing in Toowoomba at the time of the study. All participants were Afrikaans-speaking and migrated to Australia in the past ten years. Although the researchers did not exclude mixed marriages, only one of the families fit this profile (the father was Afrikaans, the mother German). Although families were not selected on the basis of socio-economic status, analysis of participant occupations revealed that most were professionals working in the fields of education, medicine, marketing and law. All participants reported similar reasons for their migration, citing that they left South Africa to create a better life for

themselves and their children. Although there was no upper age limit on the children in the study, a younger age limit of 10 years was enforced to ensure that children were overseas-born and that all children had the necessary skills to complete the questionnaire. Twenty-two children aged 10 to 20 years participated in the research. Initial contacts were made via the South African social club with the assistance of the club secretary who was provided with details about the project and its selection criteria. From this, 21 families made contact with the research team but four were disqualified because their children did not meet the age requirements for the study. Volunteering participants gave their written consent in accordance with research ethics regulations. All of the families were active in the Afrikaans community, and all were members of the South African social club. The data were collected through a local Afrikaans-speaking resident who had strong ties in the community. This method of identifying participants has been applied successfully in other studies (Bernard, 2002).

The study employed written questionnaires and face-to-face interviews and these were completed in the homes of the participants. Both parents and children completed the questionnaire, but only the parents participated in the interviews. The questionnaire had eight sections and provided extensive documentation on the following topics: (1) language proficiencies and preference, (2) language use, (3) social contact with peers and the home country, (4) use of Internet and computer mediated communication for community activities and language maintenance, (5) language attitudes, (6) language and identity, and (7) views about language maintenance and (8) demographics. The present study reports on the proficiency data from section (1) and demographic data from section (8),

A decision was made to collect the questionnaire data in English. All participants had some level of English and many of the younger participants were more competent in English than in Afrikaans (see Table 1 for details). A member of the research team was present to help any of the children who had difficulties completing the questionnaire and four children needed this support. The questionnaire data was processed by using SPSS data editor and analysed by using descriptive statistical methods.

After the completion of the questionnaires, parents in each of the families participated in a one-hour joint interview with a female Afrikaans-speaking South African from the local community. The interview schedule aimed to elicit free speech according to four themes: migration history; language use and proficiency; attitudes to Afrikaans and English, motivation to use and maintain Afrikaans. The interviews were allowed to develop relatively freely according to the participants' observations and experiences. All parents were given the option of conducting their interview in English or in Afrikaans. All chose to be interviewed in Afrikaans. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated into English by a

local Afrikaans speaker. The interview data was divided according to the main themes and information relating to each was extracted into separate files for qualitative analysis. While much of the information emerged out of the interview questions, other information was the result of discussion elsewhere in the interviews. Extracts from the interviews are used to illustrate the status of Afrikaans in this community supplemented with occasional background details elicited from the parents' and children's questionnaires.

To provide a starting point for understanding language maintenance in the Afrikaans community, self-report data was analysed from the questionnaires. The self-report questions asked 'Are you able to speak/understand/read/write Afrikaans?' and responses analysed using a five point Likert scale from 0 [not at all] to 4 [very well]. The questions were based on the Australian ISLPR self-assessment test (Ingram and Wylie, 1993) which was designed to measure migrants' language skills in English.

## FINDINGS

The Afrikaans community in Toowoomba have attempted to maintain their cultural identity in a variety of ways. In the interview transcripts, several participants mentioned that they meet regularly as part of the South African club and enjoy spending time with fellow Afrikaans as in [Excerpts 1-4].

1. We enjoy attending South African club activities [Family 1]
2. We enjoy attending these days (club activities) and if there is a weekend away and we are able, we love going. We enjoy each other's company and love visiting around a campfire [Family 4]
3. We definitely attend as far as possible. We have the same background, understand the same jokes. The Australian humor is different to that of South Africa [Family 6]
4. I actually organise most of those [South African] activities and I enjoy doing it. [Family 11]

In addition to South African club activities, participants also noted that they attend churches frequented by South Africans where they socialise with established members of the South African Toowoomba community [Excerpt 5], and where they meet South African families new to Toowoomba [Excerpt 6].

5. We attend Afrikaans club activities. We like to attend the church services and fun days organised for ex South Africans. [Family 9]



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6. We enjoy attending South African club activities, the socializing with other people who have a lot in common with ourselves and to do things together, like attending Afrikaans church – to sing together, and we also get to meet new people. [Family 1]

Others talked about their South African friendship networks, their love of traditional Afrikaans food and helping new members of the South African community settle into the region [Excerpt 7].

7. We often camp together, visit Afrikaans shops. We still buy and prepare traditional South African food that is locally available from an importer. We like to help new South Africans when they come into town to settle in into all aspects of life [Family 5]

Comments such as those listed above point to a clearly-defined Afrikaans community in Toowoomba in which cultural identity continues to be relatively strong. Yet Table 4, which reports the mean scores for reported proficiency in Afrikaans and English for all participants, according to the four macro-skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing, paints a different picture. The scores clearly demonstrate that there was a significant difference in the self-reported Afrikaans skills in all macro-skills (children being less proficient where the confidence interval was set to 95%). There was no significant difference between parents' and children's English proficiency levels.

Table 4

Mean scores of self-rated proficiency in Afrikaans and English

	Family member	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Independent samples T-test of equality of means (p values)
Speak Afrikaans	children	22	2.55	.596	
	parents	32	3.00	.000	.000
Understand Afrikaans	children	22	2.73	.456	
	parents	32	3.00	.000	.001
Read Afrikaans	children	22	2.05	.899	
	parents	32	2.97	.177	.000
Write Afrikaans	children	22	1.77	1.020	
	parents	32	2.97	.177	.000
Speak English	children	22	2.73	.456	
	parents	32	2.66	.483	.589
Understand English	children	22	2.77	.429	
	parents	32	2.78	.420	.942
Read English	children	22	2.73	.456	
	parents	32	2.78	.420	.656
Write English	children	22	2.68	.477	
	parents	32	2.66	.545	.859

Although the reported Afrikaans abilities of the children are significantly weaker than that of their parents, most participants indicate relatively high levels of speaking ability in Afrikaans. This is not surprising given the relatively recent nature of this community and the fact that all participants are overseas-born. It is, however, of interest to note that four of the 32 adults and 15 out of 22 children stated that English was now their strongest language. This type of finding is characteristic of migrant communities across Australia (e.g., Clyne, 2003), but the extent to which this appears to occur within this community suggests that Afrikaans may not be a core value amongst this particular group of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. In order to consider this possibility, the remainder of this paper considers the comments about language and identity from the parent interviews.

The home domain is considered vital for language maintenance and one of the last vestiges of language maintenance in migrant communities (Fishman, 1991, 2000). At the time of the study, all participants noted that their home language was Afrikaans. However, of the 17 families interviewed, only four noted the categorical use of Afrikaans as a home language, as in (Excerpt 8), and of these, two provided statements of English language use within the home elsewhere in the interview. Of those families who commented on English language use in the home, four spoke about English language use when outsiders are present in the conversation (as illustrated in Excerpts 9-10). There was also the indication from one of the interviews that if English speakers are in earshot (e.g. in the house rather than in the conversation), this would initiate a change in language use (see Excerpt 11). In commenting to a question on the usefulness of Afrikaans, one participant explained that many Afrikaans speakers find it rude to speak Afrikaans in front of others (Excerpt 12), a finding not atypical of migrant communities who wish to integrate into their new society (see Kuiper, 2005).

8. We only speak Afrikaans in our house [Family 11]
9. We always speak Afrikaans unless there are Australian (English speaking) friends with us; we then speak English [Family 1]
10. We speak Afrikaans and only speak English when we have Ozzie friends [Family 7]
11. At home our language is Afrikaans and with many of our friends we speak Afrikaans, but if there are any English people in the house with us, we speak English out of respect for them [Family 2]
12. Well, it enables you to say things that most people cannot understand, but we actually don't like doing it, we consider it bad manners [Family 9]

Although Afrikaans is the reported predominant language of all 17 families, there are reported shifts in language use and resulting difficulties in inter-generational communication

(as illustrated in Excerpt 13). In some homes, the use of English is a conscious language choice (Excerpt 14). It is of interest that in these families, it is the mother who is responsible for English skills and the father for Afrikaans language maintenance. De Klerk (2001) noted the opposite pattern in mixed marriages in South Africa, where the mother was more likely to take responsibility for language maintenance. In other families in our study, parents comment on a gradual shift to English with the youngest of the children being spoken to primarily in English (Excerpt 15). We also observe comments about children interacting with each other in English (Excerpt 15), and responding to their parents in English (Excerpt 16). These findings are characteristic of many migrant communities and are often attributed to mainstream schooling (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The reported shift in language use is corroborated by the reported language abilities of the children in Table 4. As children mature, intermarriage, another common factor for language shift (Clyne, 2003; de Klerk, 2001; Kloss, 1966), is also having its toll (Excerpt 17). De Klerk's 2001 study of language use involving marriages between English and Afrikaans speakers in South Africa found English to be the dominant language choice of children from these inter-marriages. It is thus possible that many of the reported patterns observed in this study may have their origins in South Africa, as many non-Afrikaans-speaking communities in South Africa use English in their day to day interactions and as a home language (see Dyers, 2008).

13. I speak Afrikaans to my children, but they sometimes don't understand me anymore. I prefer Afrikaans, but I think they are slowly losing their abilities in Afrikaans [Family 8]
14. My husband and I speak Afrikaans to each other, but I have been speaking English to our children since they were born. They were completely bilingual by the time we came to Australia. I speak to them in English while my husband speaks to them in Afrikaans [Family 10]
15. We speak both Afrikaans and English. We speak Afrikaans to our children, but we tend to speak more English to our daughter. She was only two when we arrive in the country and started to go to daycare where she learnt English. She understands Afrikaans, but sometimes would ask us what we meant so that we have to explain it in English. Even when we visit with our Afrikaans-speaking friends, the children speak English to each other. I asked our son what language he uses when he just wants to say something upon which he replied that he thinks in English [Family 12]
16. We speak mainly Afrikaans, although not very good Afrikaans. Our children would mostly reply in English. Even if I think for myself, English words do come easier these days. We do actually still speak mostly Afrikaans [Family 17]

17. We speak Afrikaans. English only when our daughter in law is here. Her dream is to be able to speak Afrikaans like we do and she is learning to do so [Family 13]

The data suggests that distinct inter-generational patterns of language use are emerging (Excerpts 18-20). The children speak English, while the parents use Afrikaans. Such asymmetric language use has been reported in numerous studies of second generation migrant communities (Obied, 2010). In other situations, participants note the use of different languages for different effects, (as in Excerpt 18) where English is used to express 'anger' and (Excerpts 19 and 20) where it is used as the language of linguistically sophisticated discussions and as the language of instruction.

18. We speak Afrikaans at home. If my son does not understand me, I'll explain in English, but always also explain in Afrikaans. Only time, we speak English at home is when we fight. They know when I speak English, they're in trouble. I speak English so that they cannot say there's something they don't understand [Family 4]
19. ....we often speak English when in deep conversation as they [the children] seem to understand it better and can express themselves better [Family 8]
20. We speak Afrikaans but if our children don't understand something we will explain in English. After all, they study in English and all the terminology is in English so it is of no use to explain something to them in Afrikaans [Family 14]

There are also comments about the gradual decline of the first language. Parents remark that many of the children are better in English with a few noting that the younger children have considerably more difficulties in Afrikaans than their older counterparts (Excerpt 24). There are references in the interviews to the children's difficulties with vocabulary (Excerpts 21), grammar (Excerpt 22) pronunciation (Excerpts 23 and 24), and there is mention of code-mixing (Excerpt 24). As noted earlier, many of these same features are found in the New Zealand Afrikaans community (Barkhuizen, 2006).

21. [Our son] has better language abilities in English. His Afrikaans is not so good. He tries to communicate in Afrikaans but does not have the vocabulary abilities he has in English [Family 16]
22. Our son can reasonably converse in Afrikaans, ...not perfect though [Family 12]
23. [Our daughter] speaks Afrikaans fluently although some people say she speaks it with an English accent [Family 3]
24. Our son had more exposure to Afrikaans but our daughter not and she speaks it with an English accent. She also uses many English words; something our son does not do [Family 14]

Another common topic of discussion concerns literacy skills, and in most families this appears to be of only minor importance (as noted in excerpts 25-27). The emphasis is placed on oral/aural skills.

25. To us it is important that they speak Afrikaans, but they have never read in Afrikaans before so I do not believe they will be able to write in Afrikaans. It is not important to us that they do [Family 10]
26. It is important to us that they keep the ability to speak Afrikaans, but they don't really have any need for reading and writing the language in Australia [Family 11]
27. I don't think it is important for them to be able to write in Afrikaans [Family 14]

Despite the language shifts within the home and the changing language proficiency of their children, only three families expressed concerns in answer to the question 'Are you happy with your children's level of Afrikaans?'. One such comment from a concerned parent is provided below (in Excerpt 28). Most of the responses to the question differed from this (as illustrated in Excerpts 29-31).

28. They already lost most of their Afrikaans abilities. It may be a good idea to have classes. Our children prefer English as all their friends are English [Family 8]
29. Yes, we are. I do not believe in forcing my children to read or write in Afrikaans [Family 7]
30. We are happy with their language abilities. They live here now and for them to progress in their everyday life, work as well as studies. They have to be as good in their English capabilities as possible. [Family 10]
31. We would like them to have better Afrikaans language abilities, but it is not very important [Family 17]

Views on the long-term survival of the language were ambivalent with parents from six of the families stating that they did not see any long-term survival of the language (as in excerpts 32-33). Of those that viewed the language as viable long-term, their beliefs about the long-term viability of Afrikaans were attributed to the continued influx of individuals from South Africa rather than to the local Afrikaans community (as illustrated in excerpts 34-35). Only one of the families commented on local maintenance initiatives, and that was in reference to language support from the church (Excerpt 36), rather than language maintenance through the home. This suggests that these families may not view Afrikaans as a core value of their identity as South African Australians.

32. I do not think Afrikaans has a future in Australia. When we arrive here, we try to maintain the language, but it is not really possible [Family 1]

33. Very difficult to say 'yes' if you look at Afrikaans in a worldly context. I would like it to have a future, but probably less than 1% of the world speaks Afrikaans. I cannot really see any advantages in studying Afrikaans. Even in South Africa everybody can speak English, it is a world language [Family 3]
34. I think it will be maintained for a long time to come. There is a constant influx of Afrikaans-speaking people into the country and that should keep it going [Family 6]
35. There is a huge influx of Afrikaans-speaking immigrants and I therefore think it is possible for Afrikaans to have a future in Australia. Our generation will always speak Afrikaans and it will definitely survive our lifetime [Family 13]
36. I definitely think so. I believe it will not perish. Even our church is in Afrikaans and although we also sing in English, all the activities are in Afrikaans. There are so many South Africans and so many are still coming into the country that I believe the Afrikaans language has a future in Australia [Family 15]

Fourteen of the families believe that Afrikaans is a 'useful' language, although four families gave reasons for this choice which were related to identity and security (as in excerpts 37-40).

37. It makes it easy for us to converse with fellow Afrikaans-speaking people and it is useful to us to keep our identity as individuals and as a group [Family 9]
38. It is useful to be able to speak a second language and it is also part of who and what you are [Family 12]
39. I especially enjoy the language for the typical but unique Afrikaans joke. The words just seem to come easier [Family 14]
40. I think it is very useful, the fact that I am able to speak Afrikaans in a strange country. It gives me security [Family 15]

Seven of the families commented on the pragmatic usefulness of Afrikaans as a second language (as in Excerpt 41). Elsewhere one family comments that 'It makes me feel good to be bilingual; it gives you that competitive edge' [Family 12] and another 'Just the fact that you are bilingual is useful. It is good for brain development of a child if they are taught more than one language' [Family 11]. Two others mentioned that Afrikaans is useful if one returns to South Africa (as in Excerpt 42) and three stated that it was of no use in Australia (Excerpt 43), except for enjoyment and informal conversation with fellow South Africans.

41. I think Afrikaans do have benefits. For me, on an academic level, it has certain advantages. Because I speak Afrikaans I am able to understand Belgian, Dutch and also to a degree, German. It is beneficial when you go overseas on holiday; you are able to communicate with more people [Family 1]

42. It is not useful except if you want to go back to South Africa. I have never been back to South Africa. The only use for Afrikaans is to be able to speak another language. It is very important to socialize in English as well; otherwise you restrain the level of growth of your English language abilities [Family 10]
43. No I don't think that Afrikaans is useful; everything over here is English except that it enables us to chat to fellow Afrikaans-speaking people [Family 6]

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that family members reported few links between language and identity. Some of the families did not see the link between language and identity (Excerpts 44-45), others did not see important differences between Australian and South African cultures (Excerpt 46), and most believed in change across generations (e.g., Excerpts 47-49). Others mentioned token language symbolism, as in the use of one's Afrikaans surname, referring to the similar use of names as symbols in the Dutch community (Excerpt 48) and how it creates a perpetual link between language and identity. Each of these views is presented below.

44. My identity is not connected to the language I speak it does not matter in which language I speak or pray [Family 10]
45. I do not believe you need a language to maintain your culture and identity. I speak English for 90% of the day and I am still South African [Family 17]
46. I think identity and culture go hand in hand. We will not lose it, but new generations will not have the same identity anymore. I think the Australian culture is not so different from ours anyway. They also have roast, love their sport and even some enjoy going to church [Family 9]
47. We believe that language, culture and identity are directly linked. We will not lose our mother tongue, but the next generation will [Family 11]
48. I believe that certain last names will always connect you with South Africa, just as some connect with Dutch, German, etc. That connection to me is your identity. If culture is not constantly maintained and practiced, it will be lost. There are many similarities between our culture and Australian culture as we are both of English origin and the culture was taken to South Africa as well as Australia [Family 13]
49. Yes, I do think you eventually lose your identity [Family 1]

The Afrikaans-speaking community is a relatively new community to Australia and all the families who participated in this study have immigrated in the past ten years. Although the language of the home is still Afrikaans and most children have reported a relatively high proficiency, there are signs of language shift within the home and the loss of connection



between language and identity. It is clear from the interview data that Afrikaans is seen as important as a second language rather than as an identity marker. Few families in the study see the long-term survival of the Afrikaans language in Australia, and those who do, claim that the reasons for this are related to long-term migration rather than language measures within the home or community. Comments focus on the relatively few differences between Australia and South Africa, and English as important in both countries. Although the families enjoy interacting with other Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, most do not have strong views about Afrikaans-language maintenance. These findings suggest that the Afrikaans language may not be a core value for many in the Afrikaans community in Toowoomba.

## CONCLUSION

This study reports on the language maintenance of 17 Afrikaans families living in a medium-sized rural city in Queensland. Although all adults and many of the children report high levels of confidence in their ability to speak Afrikaans and the use of Afrikaans as the primary language within the home, there are factors that impede on this maintenance and suggest that language may not be a core value in this community. Although all 17 families had been living in Australia for less than a decade, there is a marked difference in the self-reported language proficiency of the children and the adults. Four of the adults and 15 of the 22 children now claim English is their strongest language. Of the families, only four note the categorical use of Afrikaans as a home language. One reason is that children tend to respond in English to their parents' statements in Afrikaans. Several participants also stated that they view it rude to speak Afrikaans in the presence of non-Afrikaans speakers, even when those speakers are visitors in the participants' homes. Although parents comment on a decline in their children's Afrikaans, this did not appear to be a major concern, and most stated that they were happy with their children's level of Afrikaans. Attitudes tended to be ambivalent towards the long-term survival of Afrikaans in Australia, with the potential survival of Afrikaans attributed to migration rather than language maintenance within the home. Families tended to focus on the pragmatic usefulness of Afrikaans, with only a handful commenting on the link between Afrikaans and identity. There was a general view that Australian and South African cultures are similar. Links between language and identity tended to be relatively weak, with some participants using token symbolism (such as Afrikaans surnames) to link language and identity.

Given the recent arrival of this community, most of the parents and children are proficient in Afrikaans, and associate Afrikaans with the language of emotion and friendship. Yet, the interview data suggests that the link between language and identity is a weak one. This view is likely to have been triggered by both pre-immigration experiences in South Africa and

post-immigration experiences in Australia. The study calls for further research into the Afrikaans language maintenance in its diasporic context to determine if such a situation is more widespread or simply a localised situation of language shift in a semi-urban context where the majority of the population is monolingual in English. Such documentation would help clarify the status of the Afrikaans-speaking community in Australia and help provide insights into the broader processes impeding language maintenance in recent communities. In such communities, language shift is often less progressed and, therefore, linguistic intervention could provide greater avenues for those interested in maintaining their mother tongue.

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