

THE STORY OF A COURSE, SCHOOL, FIRST LANGUAGES AND HOME:  
A QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE VOICES OF REFUGEE STUDENTS  
AND THEIR TEACHER

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## **Abstract**

In this study, I have sought to understand my pedagogical and ethical dilemmas as an instructor when teaching an online undergraduate education course on multiculturalism and multilingualism in educational contexts to refugee students living in UNHCR refugee camps in Kenya. This dissertation asks questions about first-language loss, longing for home, and schooling experiences as expressed in the writings of students in that education course. The theoretical framework of the dissertation is informed by an ethical, social justice pedagogical perspective, refugee studies, postcolonial studies related to linguistic imperialism, and theories of bilingualism, multilingualism, and second-language acquisition. This dissertation is intended to create a space for pedagogical inquiry through autoethnographic reflection, reflexive teaching, and discourse analysis of student and teacher voices. The study hopes to contribute new knowledge related to questions about first-language maintenance and second-language acquisition in the schooling of children in refugee camps.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my family  
A family that blossomed in Canada after difficult beginnings as refugees

For the gifts of love, care, and support, I thank my husband Claudio Duran, my partner and companion of many years. I thank him for his example as a parent, grandfather, model teacher, poet, and inspirational intellectual. Without Claudio's constant support and encouragement, I would not have entered into this adventure at the end of my career as an educator. With him, I thank our daughter Francisca and son Andres, their spouses David Carter and Caroline Evans, and their children, our grandchildren, Jacob and Tomas Carter Duran and Benjamin and Sophia Evans-Duran, who have brought the gifts of extended family, grace, light, and happiness to our lives.

## Acknowledgements

Webster's (1986) defines *acknowledgement* as being a "recognition or notice of an act or achievement" and *to acknowledge* as "to express gratitude or obligation for," "to take notice of," and "to make known the receipt of." In expressing my gratitude and obligation for the support I have received in the writing of this dissertation and in the work that brought me to decide to engage in this task, I want to begin by saying that I have taken notice and want to make known that I have received many gifts of care and support throughout my career since my arrival in Canada many years ago as a refugee.

First and foremost, this dissertation has been written thanks to the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) students of the ED/EDST 2450 Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Educational Contexts Fall 2018 course who gave permission for their work to be analyzed and become the core of this "story of a course." I not only acknowledge their cooperation, but I reiterate my admiration for their intelligence, courage, and resilience.

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Those who have helped me in the way are too many to name, but I want it to be known that I acknowledge the support I have received throughout a career that has given me the opportunity to work in schools, teach at York University, and ultimately made this work possible.

As a family, we would not be in Canada if it wasn't for the decisive intervention of members of the Canadian Embassy in Santiago, Chile, in September 1973 who were responsible for giving refuge to a group of persecuted Chileans. Their proactiveness and the help and solidarity of the many Canadians who welcomed us made possible the establishment of the exiled Chilean-Canadian community that has made Canada its home.

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Throughout all those years, the Faculty of Education at York University, and its faculty have also been a source of guidance and support. I was welcomed and encouraged by colleagues in the Faculty, first as an instructor of the ESL Additional Qualification courses for practicing teachers, later (1989–1995), as seconded professor, and since 2001 as contract faculty, as well as spending some years as Coordinator of the Faculty’s Community Practicum program. What I have learned about teaching and teacher education comes from my work with teacher candidates of the Faculty of Education and I acknowledge and thank them for their wisdom, trust, enthusiasm, and love of teaching and learning.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### A Teaching Story

During Fall 2018 I taught the ED/EDST 2450 online course Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts to students residing in refugee camps in Kenya. The students were part of a cohort of undergraduates participating in the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) program. York University's Centre for Refugee Studies and Faculty of Education are partners in BHER. According to York University professors Don Dippo and Wenona Giles, project founders and participants,

BHER is an international partnership of Kenyan and Canadian universities and a Kenyan non-governmental organization that, with the support of the UNHCR, work together to provide post secondary opportunities to mainly uncertified teachers, as well as some other students living in long-term conditions of forced displacement. (Giles & Dippo, 2019, p. 89)

The history of the development of the BHER program is narrated in the book *Borderless Higher Education for Refugees: Lessons from the Dadaab Refugee Camps* (Giles & Miller, 2021). In the introduction, the project is presented by Giles et al. (2021) as a dream that brought the possibility of a university education to refugee camps:

The refugee camp as a university campus—that was the dream. This book tells the story of university partners in Canada and Kenya who collaborated in the

development and delivery of tuition-free academic programs for refugees living in two of the largest refugee camps in the world, Dadaab and Kakuma. (p. 1)

The course I taught engaged students in an exploration of first and second-language acquisition and focussed on the importance of first-language learning and maintenance for both cognitive and emotional development. As part of the course, students were asked to explore the role of language in their personal lives through writing short pieces about first-language learning, schooling, and poems or reflections about home memories. They were also asked to participate in the class forum commenting on course readings and videos. In one of the classes, I used a video of the poem “Home” by Somali poet Warsan Shire (2011) to open a reflection about the importance of home in students’ lives. Students could write prose responses, but I also suggested they could write a poem if they wished. There were a variety of responses by the students, most of them reflecting a longing for their lost homes and the emotions brought up by the poem “Home.” Fawzia<sup>1</sup> responded that she was going to write a poem about the refugee camp since it was the only home she had ever known:

Home for hopeless  
Like me and thousand others  
Exactly two decades and a half ago  
When my parents were in despair  
I never knew only suffered the long journey  
Tired of walking all that distance  
My younger brother on my mother’s back  
I being right on her chest  
With no water and food to taste. . .

The poetry and responses of my students, like Fawzia’s, still challenge me as a teacher. Their reflections and stories of loss of home have moved me to think about my pedagogical decisions. Their responses also connected to my own refugee story, intertwining our lives and

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<sup>1</sup> All student names are pseudonyms.

bringing back memories of my father coming to my home one early morning and saying “get the children in the car. You have to leave, no looking back.” And as he said, we never went back.

In this dissertation, I analyse the voices of the students in the undergraduate course I taught in Fall 2018. Profound experiences of teaching this course have compelled me to write about the pedagogical insights I gained while working with and learning from students who live in refugee camps. Since the dissertation presents an analysis of student voices and of my pedagogy, it is relevant to say a few words about the course organization and content as context.

### **Background and Context**

Towards the end of the summer of 2018 when I was completing my doctoral course work and researching my thesis topic, I was approached by one of my professors asking me to teach the Fall course ED/EDST 2450 Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts for a cohort of online BHER students, as I was familiar with the course topic. I knew about the program having served as a graduate assistant for a course that had BHER students in it. That course had a combination of York students in Toronto and BHER students living in UNHCR refugee camps in Dadaab, Kenya. I had enjoyed the experience and was interested in the work the refugee students were doing for their Bachelor of Arts program. Since the request for this new course came at the end of the summer, I had to work fast and intensely to ensure I was ready to teach it.

In preparation for teaching the course, I conducted research on the UNHCR refugee camps in Kenya as well as engaged related literature. My academic background enabled me to modify content to meet students’ needs. However, the recommended bibliography of the course description, while appropriate for Canadian and American students, did not include references or

course material authored by continental African scholars and researchers. Despite a lack of culturally relevant resources, I felt the theme of the course, multilingualism and multiculturalism in educational contexts, would address what I assumed were the experiences of the students. I planned to link course materials and activities to an exploration of students' first languages, their acquisition of second languages, and how their education impacted their being multilingual people. I also knew that many of the students were teachers in camp schools, and thus the content of the course would be relevant and could also be connected to linguistic issues they would encounter in their teaching. I decided to change the recommended readings. I used several chapters from *Multilingual Education in Practice* by Sandra Schecter and Jim Cummins (2003) and also added readings by African-based scholars and researchers engaged in questions of research on language loss, second-language acquisition, and linguistic imperialism. I included a video version of the poem "Home" by Somali poet Warsan Shire, a film about biographical storytelling in classrooms, a video of a conversation about language between Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe and Somali writer Nuruddin Farah (Farah & Achebe, 1986), and a video of a talk by Syracuse University, School of Education, Professor Marcelle Haddix on community engaged teaching. Also, I asked my former colleague and friend, antiracist educator Enid Lee to give a guest lecture on first languages and literacy, which she entitled "Language is not Neutral." By the end of the first week of September 2018, I had a course description (Appendix A) and felt I was prepared to teach the course.

However, given my historical and political location, I felt ill-equipped in terms of ethical responsibilities. Was I adequately prepared to address the situations and lives of students? I worried about my identity as an instructor and my limited knowledge about UNHCR camps, Somalia, Kenya, refugee movements in Africa, and multilingualism in Africa. I would soon learn

that these ethical responsibilities would become as much a part of my teaching as my desire to deliver significant and situationally relevant content.

Teaching this course opened my eyes to the need to understand the meaning of the students' voices. Throughout the course and as part of a weekly forum, students commented on course readings and films in written work. They also wrote three required reflections about their experiences of first-language loss, schooling, and longing for a lost home, most of the latter as poems. In this dissertation I have aimed to understand the social and educational significance of the opinions they presented on those topics through a discourse and pedagogical analysis of their writing.

I call this analysis pedagogical because even as it focusses on the writings of the students it also engages in relational analysis, one that involves in-depth consideration of the personal, social, and political-historical locations circulating among teacher and students (see Mishra-Tarc, 2015). This study has engaged reflexive pedagogy and discourse analysis to "read" students writing and to understand the ethical practice that is required to frame teaching encounters with students living in the containment of refugee camps.

I approach a critical analysis of my work from an autoethnographic perspective (see Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography has helped me to arrive at a critical understanding of the ethical questions involved in my teaching of this online course to refugees. It has allowed me to speak introspectively, including a critique of my pedagogy, helping me to understand my voice as a teacher. I also hope that my use of an autoethnographic approach will connect me more directly to the reader.

I am guided in my search for the ethics of my teaching practice by the distinction drawn by Sharon Todd (2003) in relation to ethics in education between ethics as a set of societal rules

about how human beings should behave and ethics as the connections that bind us to each other. In the connections established between teacher and students in this online course and the questions I have asked myself about the ethicality of my teaching, the work of Zembilas and Vrasidas (2005) has also been a guide: “ethical online pedagogy requires paying attention to ways in which interactions across difference promote relationality, humility, criticality and responsibility” (p. 77).

Although research is often used to seek out evidence for claims in teaching, it also has a pedagogical function. According to Bourke (2014),

research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants. . . .

As such, the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process. Identities come into play via our perceptions, not only of others, but of the ways in which we expect others will perceive us. Our own biases shape the research process, serving as checkpoints along the way.

Through recognition of our biases, we presume to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with participants. (p. 2)

My research is intended to create such a space of pedagogical inquiry and analysis, one where I revisit teacher-student encounters through autoethnography, discourse analysis, and reflexive teaching. In this research, I hope to understand how online teaching and learning experience with students living in refugee camps present an opportunity to reflect on one’s pedagogy in support of student learning, questioning, and becoming.

I have also approached this study keeping in mind the concerns and ethical questions raised in literature by African-based researchers (Clark-Kazak, 2021; Dryden-Peterson, 2006,

2010, 2011, 2016, 2017) and educators engaged in learning about and teaching courses to populations living in protracted refugee camp situations (Duale et al., 2019; Giles & Dippo, 2019; Alsop & Cohen 2021). As a teacher, I am guided as well by a conceptual framework borne from the lessons learned from critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks, which have informed my practice as a teacher and influence my research. The following questions have guided my research:

- What do we learn from the reflections of refugee students when they write about their first language, longing for home, and schooling in camps?
- What pedagogical insight does the writing of students in the camps hold for the teacher?
- How does ethical pedagogy provide a framework for teaching online courses to refugee students who live in refugee camps?

I hope that this dissertation will contribute to research on teaching and learning in refugee camps and that my inquiry into my teaching as a cultural practice from a critical stance will resonate with audiences. I also hope that my inquiry into the emotional experience of teaching refugees and hearing their voices “embraces vulnerability,” demonstrating a “willingness to be vulnerable” (Mishra-Tarc, 2019, p. 22).

## **Chapter Outlines**

This dissertation comprises eight chapters that situate and present my reflections on teaching a course to students in a refugee camp.



**Chapter I** introduces the research and includes background information on how the idea for the study came about. It introduces the subject of the study and provides a rationale for the theoretical grounding and research and for the questions that guide the study.

**Chapter II** is a literature review divided into two sections. The first reviews literature related to the context of the study, particularly literature that describes life in refugee camps in relation to culture maintenance, schooling, and livelihoods. The second section reviews literature related to teaching as ethical encounters. It introduces the methodology of the study and the conceptual framework to be discussed in the next chapter.

**Chapter III** presents the methodology and conceptual framework of the research. It provides a rationale for the autoethnographic, and discourse analysis approaches used to enable pedagogical analysis of the data. The section on the conceptual framework discusses critical pedagogy, antiracist education, pedagogical ethics, bilingualism, and linguistic imperialism, all theories that inform the analysis and illuminate the approach used in the dissertation.

**Chapter IV** relates to language; it covers the first three classes of the course and provides the model that is followed in chapters V to VII. This chapter and the following chapters are written in an autoethnographic voice, where I present the class inspired by the approach used by Carolyn Ellis (2004) in *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*. The chapter presents an analysis of student voices as related to first language as per their course Reflection #1, as well as of their responses to readings, in the student forum. It incorporates an analysis of the teacher's voice and introduces the required readings for classes 1–3, including references to theories related to first-language maintenance, second languages as languages of instruction, bilingualism, and linguistic imperialism.

**Chapter V** continues the approach of Chapter IV, but focussing on classes 4 and 5, where the topic of schooling was covered. It includes a note about the readings covered in those two classes and provides an analysis of student voices recounting memories of schooling in their second reflections as well as of their responses to readings in the student forum. The chapter also includes an analysis of the teacher's voice and concludes with me asking questions that emerged from my reading of the students' concerns about their schooling experiences.

**Chapter VI** focuses on classes 6 and 7. Its format differs from the previous two chapters in that it opens with the poem "Home" by Warsan Shire (2009). This is followed by an analysis of the student forum, including my comments to students. I then cover students' third reflection on memories of home inspired by listening to Shire's poem. Most of these reflections consist of students' poetry. Poetry writing is the main theme of the chapter, as well as poetry as an expression of grief in refugee camps. Learning from the Other, ethical student-teacher encounters, and reparative teaching and learning are present in the analysis of the teacher voice.

**Chapter VII** focuses on the writing of students in the forum as well as my responses in the last three classes in the course. It discusses storytelling, teaching, and community engagement, which are themes covered in the last three classes. It also includes a discussion of student views on community, schooling, and storytelling as related to the film *The Story Telling Class*. In the analysis of the teacher voice, I summarize the learning I gained from teaching.

**Chapter VIII** focusses on the ethics of teaching, learning from students, and ethical student-teacher encounters. The conclusion reflects on lessons I learned and asks questions about schooling in refugee camps with an emphasis on first-language loss, as a contribution to scholarship in the fields of refugee education and educational studies.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

This literature review is divided into two sections. In the first section, I review literature related to the geographical, socio-political, and historical context of the study, reviewing information about Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps and aspects of life in those camps including schooling, languages, livelihoods, and cultural maintenance. In the second section, I review literature that informs the framework of my study, namely literature related to ethical teaching and learning.

#### **Context**

##### ***Refugee Camps***

I begin this review by providing an inscription Behrouz Boochani (2018) found written on the walls of the room where he lived while in the prison camp of Manus Island. Boochani and a group of refugees were detained in this camp after they arrived in Australia by boat. The inscription by an unknown author pleaded: “Oh God, do something, take us to a nice place. Kiss, kiss” (p. 561). Boochani imagines the inscription was written by a young child and he names her Nilou. He speculates that the child and her family had been living at the camp before being taken elsewhere. As with his own life, the lives of Nilou and her family depended on the decisions of the government of the host country Australia, where the camp was located.

Boochani's memoir gives me insight into the vital role that life writing can play in the lives of refugee students. Most people in the world know little about what life in camps is like and what dreams a child like Nilou and her family hold. Before Boochani's *No Friend but the Mountains* was published in 2018, few people knew about the existence of the Manus Island prison camp. This memoir led to an international outcry about the deplorable situation of detainment for refugees like Boochani in Australia and worldwide (Stack, 2020).

Although not prison camps, Dadaab and Kakuma camps, where most BHER students and their families temporarily live, are large refugee complexes located in Kenya. According to UNHCR Kenya (2020),

the Dadaab refugee complex has a population of 218,873 registered refugees and asylum seekers as at the end of July 2020. Dadaab refugee complex consists of three camps. The first camp was established in 1991, when refugees fleeing the civil war in Somalia started to cross the border into Kenya. A second large influx occurred in 2011, when some 130,000 refugees arrived, fleeing drought and famine in southern Somalia.

There are three camps in Dadaab: Dagahaley, Hagadera, and Ifo. The majority of the refugees living in the Dadaab complex are Somali nationals who fled civil war in Somalia. A small percentage (4%) of Dadaab camps inhabitants hail from other parts of Africa. Most of the camps' population are young; approximately 50% are between the ages of 5 and 17. (UNHCR Dadaab Operational Update, 2020).

Kakuma was established in 1992 and is located in Northwestern Kenya. In January 2020, Kakuma was reported to host 193,941 refugees. The majority of inhabitants come from South

Sudan (58%), followed by Somalis (18%). The rest are from DRC, Ethiopia, Burundi, and Sudan (Fleming, 2017; UNHCR Kakuma Operational Update, 2020).

The Kenyan government provides the land for the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, but camp life is administered and regulated by UNHCR, which is subcontracted to humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These organizations assist refugees with food, health services, and schooling (Besteman, 2016). Refugees are not able to work in Kenya without special permits, nor are they allowed to live outside of the camps (UNHCR Dadaab Operational Update, January 2020).

In her introduction to *Placeless People*, Lindsey Stonebridge (2018) describes the core issue of the global refugee crisis:

Refugees were—and are—the overlooked victims of modern politics. In part, this is because the mass movement of people has been normalized over the past one hundred years. People usually in far away places, move; they are the flotsam and jetsam of conflict, the unfortunate victims of history, who only constitute a “crisis” if they get close to home. But in another sense, existential as well as political, refugees have always moved too close to what the more securely domiciled think of as home. (p. vii)

Catherine Besteman (2016) describes the development of refugee camps as the result of the existence of nation states that assume that everybody must belong somewhere and hence render anyone who leaves their homeland as a result of political turmoil or natural catastrophe a stateless person:

Because their forced border crossing renders refugees effectively stateless and thus threatening to territorial sovereignty, the world’s political powers define

them as people who must be contained and managed, a problem to be solved by international institutions whose function it is to maintain the global order of nation-states. The result is the creation of an “international refugee regime” consisting of an interconnected set of humanitarian institutions, policies, protocols and practices that direct the management of people who, through forced displacement across an international border, are no longer nationally rooted as citizens. (p. 58)

Besteman raises the ethical issues that accompany these policies and the moral dilemmas that confront humanitarian organizations in their work to alleviate the hardship of life in camps. She is critical of the globalization of refugee camps, which she sees as a result of 20th-century postcolonial national policies. In this logic, camps become places of containment where people reside for their entire lives unable to engage in the occupations and affairs that human beings normally engage in during their daily lives. Namely, freedom of movement, economic activities, decision making, governance, etc. (p. 64).

Ben Rawlence (2016) gives an account of the everydayness of refugee camp life through the stories of 16 refugees from the camps in Dadaab. Their stories are intertwined with descriptions of food distribution, housing, markets, hospitals, schools, and incentive jobs. He discusses the role of the UNHCR and NGOs, the harshness of droughts and floods, famine stories, and the constant threat of Al-Shabaab terrorism. He also speaks of Kenyan police and government corruption, as well as stories of escape and accounts of hope for resettlement. While not prison camps like Boochani’s Manus Island, much of the life experienced by the refugee population in Dadaab is akin to that of being imprisoned:

The geography of a refugee camp is about two things: visibility and control—the same principles that guide a prison. The refugee camp has the structure of punishment without the crime. The crime is implied. And, by and large, the refugees, docile, disempowered, do as they are told; they hesitate before authority and plead for their rights in the language of mercy. (p. 113)

Life in refugee camps is difficult and stories can be harrowing. However, the resilience of refugees in managing to live a semblance of normal lives can be seen in the ways they find means to survive the daily harshness.

### ***Livelihoods***

Livelihoods describes a refugee community's capacity to develop sustenance opportunities and not be totally dependent on provisions from humanitarian organizations and the UNHCR. According to Dryden-Peterson (in Mundy and Dryden-Peterson, 2011), the concept of livelihoods has gained popularity in the humanitarian field as a description of the agency of refugee communities to sustain their living in protracted situations: "The term livelihoods has been conceptualized in recent research as the resources and strategies people use to maintain and sustain their lives and their living" (p. 86).

NGOs and UNHCR are also involved in facilitating training and opportunities for the development of small enterprises to support the economy of refugees in camps. Ronald Odhiambo Omuthe (2015), in his Research Project Report for the University of Nairobi, states that

in Kenya, the encampment policy increases dependency and spread of poverty throughout in camps. The livelihood implementing agencies however have been

involved in improving resilience and livelihood opportunities for refugees through provision of training and capacity building. It is necessary to understand the effectiveness of training in enhancing household income and community resources. (p. 15)

In his research conducted in Kakuma refugee camp with refugees involved in CBO's, refugee-led, community-based organizations, Mohamed Duale (2020) speaks of a double standard on the part of UNHCR and funding agencies. On the one hand, these agencies stimulate self-sufficiency and independent decision making influenced by neoliberal policies, and on the other hand, they continue a practice of distrust and paternalism. Duale also finds that there is a major disconnect between recent global refugee policy formulations and refugee experiences of participation. In the Kakuma Refugee Camp, refugee-led organizations have increasingly been providing education, health awareness, sports and recreation programs. Despite inclusion in the implementation of refugee programming, refugee leaders are excluded from meaningful input in decision-making and planning. (p. 3)

There are limited work opportunities in the towns of Dadaab and Kakuma. Refugees need special permits to work in the towns, and sometimes there are considerable distances between a camp and the town. The only work available to them in the towns is usually related to menial services or cleaning jobs, and the wages are lower from those of Kenyan nationals (Kamau & Fox, 2013, p. 13; Omuthe, 2015, p. 15). Still, refugees have demonstrated resilience in developing means of supporting themselves, despite the many barriers they encounter. According to Kamau and Fox (2013), the restriction of movement for refugees and the difficulty in obtaining work permits



“affect . . . the range of options available to them” (p. 21). In the interviews they conducted in Dadaab, they found that

the majority—59%—relied on unskilled labour as a means of income. And only 18% were involved in some form of skilled profession, for example, teaching, tailoring, midwifery, construction and motor vehicle repair. Only a very small proportion—2%—said they relied solely on food aid, meaning that the majority of refugees supplement the assistance received with other income generating activities. This indicates a high level of willingness to engage in productive activities. (p. 22)

The majority of BHER students are among those refugees involved in “some form of skilled profession,” mainly teaching, but some also work in hospitals and for NGOs, and they receive incentive payments for their work. The refugees employed as teachers have described the realities of working in schools as trying and difficult.

### ***Schools***

In Dadaab, two generations now coexist with the original refugees who arrived in 1992 after the fall of the Siad Barre regime in Somalia. Rawlence (2016) describes the generation gap where the middle generations, trapped in the containment of the camps, find it difficult to understand the motives of the original refugees in seeking asylum. Also, this second generation differs from the original refugees in that they have been raised and schooled in a UNHCR regime and in schools that follow the Kenyan curriculum. Most of them speak English and Kiswahili and have an understanding of the world that differs greatly from that of their elders (p. 149). According to

Flemming (2017),

there are currently nine NGOs that administer education programming in Dadaab; these organizations comprise the Education Working Group, which is co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF and meets monthly. These organizations cooperatively implement education programming in 35 primary and seven secondary formal schools; one accelerated education program for primary education (six centres) and one for secondary (three centres); and four vocational/livelihoods programs at four centres. (p. 6)

To this list, Duale et al. (2019) add 35 pre-school centres and community-operated Quranic schools (p. 56). Dryden-Peterson (2016) describes these informal Quranic schools initiated by refugee communities:

The establishment of informal schools can also reflect the kind of education refugee parents seek for their children. In many countries of first asylum, Muslim refugee communities create *duksis*, or Koranic schools, to complement formal education; more formal *madrassas* also operate in many refugee settings providing instruction in Arabic, mathematics and history and sometimes other subjects. . . . Community-initiated schools may substitute for available formal education as observed in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, where refugee parents chose to create their own primary schools where they could ensure smaller class sizes and have control over curriculum. (p. 139)

Horst and Aden (2021) describe the role of refugee communities in establishing those private schools:

In Dadaab, refugee-managed schools offer accredited private primary and secondary education for an increasingly large number of students. These schools were established by refugees to provide an alternative to the UNHCR run public schools in order to solve challenges the refugees faced in educating their children. Prior to this, refugee children whose parents wished for them to receive Islamic education struggled to attend madrassa (Islamic religious school) in one location and secular primary school in another. The refugee-managed primary schools were set up to provide an integrated curriculum, which combines the Kenyan national syllabus with informal Islamic religious education. This solution is both more affordable and convenient for refugee families. (p. 3)

UNHCR Kenya operational update (2022) website provides the following information related to schools in Dadaab and Kakuma:

There are a total of 22 pre-schools, 22 primary schools, 6 secondary schools, 5 primary accelerated learning centers, 9 Alternative Basic Education (ABE) centers, and 6 vocational learning centers (TVET) in Dadaab refugee camps (Hagadera, Ifo and Dagahaley).

In Kakuma, refugee children are schooled in establishments run in collaboration with NGO partners: “UNHCR, through its Education partners, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Finn Church Aid (FCA) and Windle International Kenya (WIK), provides education in Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Settlement” (UNHCR Kenya, 2022). Regarding implementation of education in Dadaab and Kakuma, Flemming (2017) adds,

UNHCR described Kenyan education policy towards refugee learners as positive: “[it is] good in practice, sometimes challenging in implementation,” according to

Nairobi-based education staff. Refugee students are allowed to sit for annual national examinations and are awarded official Kenyan certification in both primary and secondary education upon successful performance of exams . . . .

Refugee students are legally allowed to attend Kenyan public schools, but UNHCR officers noted the logistical challenges to this were largely insurmountable for those living in Dadaab and Kakuma. UNHCR funds and operates all formal primary schools in both Dadaab and Kakuma camps. Kenyan education policy is largely decentralized to the county and sub-county levels. For UNHCR, this results in significant operational differences between Kakuma and Dadaab camps. In Turkana County (Kakuma), formal schools are technically registered, while in Garissa County (Dadaab) they are not. This affects, for example, the ability of those schools to proctor national examinations; refugee learners in Dadaab must be registered and transported (at the cost to UNHCR and NGOs) to Kenyan schools for the exams, often many hours away. (p. 5)

Giles and Dipbo (2019) state that out of the 50,509 displaced children, only “62 percent of school-aged boys and 52 percent of school-aged girls were enrolled in these schools” and that the approximately 4,838 students enrolled in secondary schools (1,269 girls and 3,569 boys) represented only 10% of school-aged adolescents in the camps (p. 91). Schools operate through an agreement with the Kenyan government and follow the Kenyan curriculum (Karangu, 2017; Piper et al., 2020).

Dryden-Peterson (2016) locates refugee education in a global context and identifies the UNHCR as the organization mandated with the provision of education in refugee camps:

As a constituent body, UNHCR's work on education, as on other issues, is coordinated with the governments of countries in which refugees reside. Refugee education thus depends on the laws, policies, and practices in place in each national context. Importantly, the countries of first asylum where 86% of the world's refugees live are generally characterized by already over-stretched education systems and often fragile political and economic institutions. (p. 135)

Dryden-Peterson describes the three models of schooling adopted by the UNHCR for schooling refugee children. One is where "we see refugees having a kind of parallel education" with schools set up with a curriculum focussed on imagining a return to the country of origin. There is also **a** second option "where refugees and nationals are physically together in schools. So, we see this often in urban areas in places like Uganda and Ethiopia." In the third option, which is operating in Dadaab and Kakuma, refugee schools follow the national curriculum of the host country, but education happens inside the camps. "So, in Kenya, for example," Dryden-Peterson explains, "refugees are following the Kenyan curriculum in English and Kiswahili, taking primary and secondary school leaving exams, but they are isolated for the most part in camp settings, where there are only refugees in the schools." While this option enables students to finish their schooling and pass national examinations based on the curriculum mandated by the host country and, in many cases, even acquire post-secondary qualifications, it does not mean refugees can participate in the daily life and economy of the host country. Refugees are not able to become citizens of that country nor are they able to work there. As Dryden-Peterson explains, there is an unfulfilled promise in this kind of education: "and so, on the one hand, [there is] this promise of belonging and long-term certainty through education. And on the other hand, this

tension of an experience that actually sends a message of isolation and exclusion” (Brehm, 2017).

Acquiring schooling is more difficult for girls than for boys in the camps because of a combination of culture, tradition, and the realities of survival. Dryden-Peterson (2011a) compares global enrolment and access to education for refugee girls and discusses how their education becomes more difficult at the secondary level: “At secondary levels, the global average suggests near gender parity in access to school. However, this average mask massive disparities between regions. In camp settings in Eastern and the Horn of Africa, only five girls are enrolled for every 10 boys” (p. 29). Flemming (2017) points out that of 63,000 students enrolled in primary schools in Dadaab, 40% are girls and of the 7,000 students enrolled in secondary schools 30% are girls (p. 5). The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) reports that of the 107,747 school-aged (3–17 years) refugees in Dadaab, only 29% (12% female) are enrolled in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education.

In his study of hidden curricula in Dadaab schools, Karangu (2017) writes about the community’s perception of the role of girls. He cites a teacher who was one of his interviewees: “You see, most of the people in the community see a girl child as an object to give birth, so even educating them becomes an issue, they say even after educating them they will end up getting married” (p. 78). Girls are not only at a disadvantage because of community perceptions but also because they have to help out with daily domestic duties including fetching water from the cisterns either before or after school. Giles and Diplo (2019) speak of the tensions for young women attending university courses and refer to gender differentials in the camps as well as concerns expressed by parents about security for girls (p. 98).

Although schools are set up in the camps for refugee children, as these studies show, education does not reach all children and it is not equal for all. There are formal and informal situations of schooling and not all are regulated or follow standards. Still, schools are a stable space for many students whose lives are surrounded by uncertainty and precarity.

### ***Teachers***

Conditions for teachers are reported to be less than optimal in the camps. In Duale et al. (2019), teachers describe the poor infrastructure in schools where classrooms usually host between 80 and 100 students. According to these teachers, poor conditions for teaching do not allow for individual attention, particularly for students with special needs. Also, the overcrowding of classrooms is conducive to misbehaviour of students often resulting in teachers reacting with punitive measures such as corporal punishment. Duale et al. cite a refugee teacher who comments on the role of corporal punishment: “here in Dadaab, the stick used for punishment is often referred to as the assistant teacher” (p. 56). They also call attention to how such punishment further traumatizes children who are survivors of trauma, as are their families (p. 56).

While teaching has become a postsecondary occupation for many successful high school graduates, they are confronted with the reality of their protracted lives. According to Duale et al. (2019), these refugee teachers are talented multilingual speakers and are often “a bridge between NGOs and refugee communities” (p. 57). However, their lives are difficult as they are “mostly untrained,” are excluded from teacher unions, and often live far away from the schools where they teach. They also receive less than Kenyan teachers, following a compromise agreement reached between the UNHCR and the Kenyan government. Kenyan teachers are paid Kenyan

salaries and refugee teachers receive incentive payments, and, accordingly, their salaries are low because as refugees they are entitled to “in-kind shelter and food assistance” (Duale et al., 2019 p. 57). Kenyan teachers usually make more than double what refugee teachers make. Rawlence (2016) cites the case of a refugee teacher being paid 6,800 shillings (\$82) per month while her Kenyan colleagues earned 40,000 shillings (\$490) per month (p. 317). MacKinnon (2014), Karangu (2017), and Duale et al. (2019) see these salary discrepancies as an oppressive disparity that affects teacher performance.

The BHER project is one of the postsecondary educational possibilities available to refugee teachers who have not had the opportunity of higher education and who were hired to teach in Dadaab upon completion of high school (Giles & Dippo, 2019, p. 89; Rawlence, 2016, p. 319). Many of the BHER students who took the Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts course with me in Fall 2018 were teachers in camp schools and worked under the conditions described above.

### *Language*

Historically, the language of educational instruction has been contested in postcolonial African nations (Brock-Utnea & Mercerb, 2014; McKinney 2007; Phillipson, 1992; Ramoupi, 2014; Thiong’o, 1986). These postcolonial contestations are reflected in decisions and debates about the language of instruction in UNHCR camp schools. Kenya’s linguistic decisions related to languages of instruction for Kenyan schools are reflected in the languages taught in Dadaab and Kakuma schools. English is the primary language of instruction and Kiswahili, the first language of a majority linguistic group in Kenya, is the second language of instruction. There is also provision for local languages to be taught in early primary schools. Language provision is a



complex issue in refugee camps, but it is also difficult to implement for minority linguistic groups in Kenya. Piper et al. (2020) discuss the case of Turkana speaking children: “In Turkana County, where Kakuma is located: “research has shown that English is used as the language of instruction and that children are often punished for speaking in Turkana” (p. 78).

In her Review of Refugee Education for UNHCR November 2011 Dryden-Petersen (2011a) elaborates on the neglect of refugee children’s home languages in schools:

The choice of language of instruction impacts the quality of education that refugee children are able to access. Research is clear that children are better able to acquire literacy initially in their first language and then to transfer those skills to the target language of instruction. . . . The education available to refugees in exile is often neither in their first language nor in the language in which they have previously studied. Children face not understanding what the teacher or their peers are saying. In this situation, children are often demoted to lower classes not as a result of their cognitive development or content knowledge but instead as a result of their lack of proficiency in the language of instruction. (p. 64)

Piper et al. (2020) studied literacy performances of refugee children in grades 1–3 in the primary schools of Kakuma and Kalobeyei and concluded that the low performance rates of both refugee and local children in the region of Turkana was affected by the low level of support those schools received, but also by language policies, and stressed that children who developed literacy skills in their first languages would be likely to draw on those skills to read in the second language, whereas children who did not would be at a disadvantage (p. 97).

Linguistic imperialism in Kenya is reflected in the provision of education for refugee students in the camps as Phillipson (2013) notes referring to its effects: “Language use is often

subtractive, proficiency in the imperial language and in learning it in education involves its consolidation at the expense of other languages” (p. 1).

Drawing on Richard Ruiz, Schecter and Cummins (2003) point to a distinction of orientations in language instruction: “(1) language as problem, (2) language as right, and (3) language as resource” (p. 4). Language as problem is the orientation that sees first languages as needing to be replaced by the second language acquired in schools, which is the orientation governing Dadaab and Kakuma schools. Language as right would mean that camp schools consider the right of refugee children to maintain and be educated in their first languages. Language as resource, which is the orientation favoured by Schecter and Cummins, incorporates minority languages into school programs and sees the maintenance of first languages as a human resource to be nurtured but not in opposition to the acquisition of a second, or the dominant, language. Using this last orientation would be an asset for refugees hoping to relocate in their countries of origin once conflicts subside, with the added asset that these populations would also be functional in a second international language.

Kim (2018) explores the multilingual character of Dadaab’s refugee population. She finds that regardless of the diversity of languages spoken in the camps, aid organizations operate in English and Kiswahili and that these are also the languages of instruction in camp schools (p. 20). She claims that despite the languages of instruction there are many members of the refugee community who don’t speak those languages. Women and seniors in particular fall into this group, and the languages of the street and community markets continue to be Somali, and languages spoken by refugees from Ethiopia and Sudan (p. 22).

In similar ways that first-languages resist and survive so do elements of culture that persist despite the difficulties of exile and refuge.

### *Poetry, Community, and Cultural Transmission*

Although refugee populations arrive in camps with their cultural traditions, these are altered with the emergence of new cultural values, particularly in young people. Influenced by international humanitarian organizations, new cultural forms get mixed in with the traditional ones brought by the original refugees (Rawlence, 2016, p. 245). Film Aid International's Dadaab Stories (2013) is an example; its website features a number of cultural initiatives it supports.

For Somali refugees in Dadaab, poetry plays a significant role in cultural maintenance. Poetry is transmitted to the younger generation by parents and grandparents and then reinterpreted by the younger generation. (Dadaab Stories, 2013). Mohamed Siyat Hajir, who has lived in Dadaab since he was nine, speaks of his grandmother reciting poetry to him and his siblings at their home in the camp and demanding careful attention from them:

When I was young, our grandmother used to call us to gather around the fireplace to narrate epic poems. She would recite long poems and at the end asked us questions pertaining to the poem. . . . Anyone who would not understand was regarded as a “foolish member of the community whose objective was to eat.”  
(Duran et al., 2020, p. 144)

In his chapter about youth organizations in the Hagadera camp of Dadaab, Rawlence (2016) describes the presence of a community poet as part of a youth centre's end-of-year celebration: “next was Sid Ali, in jeans, sunglasses perched on his crown, a novelist and ‘event poet’ in his own terminology. On the spot he composed a poem, more of a rap in the traditional Somali style” (p. 248). In the same meeting, the audience eagerly awaited the arrival of Jowahir, a Somali singer who “picked up the microphone and began to sing of home. The sound seemed

to freeze the air and calm the birds” (p. 248). This poetic tradition was noticeable in my course, as students opted to respond with poetry to the poem “Home” by Warsan Shire. Poetry is present among both adults and the young in these camps.

### ***Somali Poetry***

Said Samatar (1982) in *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayid Mahammad ‘Abdille Hassan*, provides a commentary on the importance of poetry in Somali culture. He links it to an historical account of the life of the poet Sayyid Mahammad ‘Abdille Hassan, leader of the Dervish warriors in their struggle against British and Italian colonialism in Somalia (1900–1920):

Whereas in the industrialized West, poetry—and especially what is regarded as serious poetry—seems to be increasingly relegated to a marginal place in society, Somali oral verse is central to Somali life, involved as it is in the intimate workings of people’s lives. For reasons which we hope to elucidate in this study, the pastoral Somalis attach great value to their oral verse and cultivate it with an undying interest. Indeed, the one feature which unfailingly emerges even from a casual observation of Somali society is the remarkable influence of the poetic word in the Somali cultural and political scene. The Somalis are often described as a “nation of bards” whose poetic heritage is a living force intimately connected with the vicissitudes of everyday life. (p. 2)

Somali literary culture has been transmitted through oral poetry throughout the centuries, and the trove of poetry that sustained pastoral life continues to be valued as an element that binds

Somalis as a people (Andrzejewski & Lewis, 1964; Laurence, 1970; Samatar, 1982). Margaret Laurence (1970), in *A Tree for Poverty*, describes how present poetry was in the life of Somalis, particularly in the pastoralist culture with which she became familiar during her two years in rural Somalia in the early 1950s:

Most Somalis take a great deal of interest in their national poetry, and almost everyone seems to appreciate it and to be able to distinguish between the good and bad in it. In their own terms, their literary tastes are highly developed. Most Somalis can recite and sing a number of poems of some kind, even if they do not themselves compose. (p. 23)

In *Somali Poetry: An Introduction*, Andrzejewski and Lewis (1964) discuss the historical, geographic, linguistic, cultural, and sociological contexts of the Somali poetry they translated from Somali and Arabic.

A good poet usually has an entourage of admirers, some of whom learn by heart his poems and recite them wherever they go. It is from these admirers that other reciters learn the poems, if they consider them sufficiently beautiful and important to memorize. . . . The Somali classify their poems into various distinct types, each of which has its own specific name. It seems that their classification is mainly based on two prosodic factors: the type of tune to which the poem is chanted or sung, and the rhythmic pattern of the words. . . . In addition to their distinctive prosodic features, types of Somali poems are further differentiated by their average length, their diction and style, and their range of subject matter; and while some poems are accompanied by handclapping or drumming, others are always recited without any accompaniment at all. (pp. 44–47)

Poets in Somalia have considerable influence and public following. Students in my course commented on the relevance of Somali poetry for them as young people growing up in Dadaab camps. Poetry was always present at important functions and celebrations. Ibrahim commented that “as part of childhood my mother recited poems to me and my siblings during the night. When she recited, usually tears came out because she was from a family who were farmers and she loved to recite poems related to farming and cultivation and cows” (Duran et al., 2020, p. 145). Shahow was inspired by Somali poetry: “I do agree Somalia is a nation of poetry. I am inspired by listening to Somali poetry on YouTube and in community gatherings” (p. 146). And Hajir described its importance for Somalis: “Somali poems are majorly employed to warn or teach a lesson. During weddings and political gatherings people would group themselves into smaller groups and recite poems of praise” (p. 144). As a result of the poetry students wrote as reflections in the course, it became evident to me as the teacher, that poetry spoke to a large number of students and that it was part of their culture. In this sense, comments about poetry became part of the student-teacher dialogues that followed students writing.

In this section of the literature review, I have discussed the social, cultural, and educational context of students living in refugee camps in Dadaab and Kakuma who attended the BHER course I taught. In the next section, I review literature that has helped me conceptualize the ethical encounters of students living in harsh and difficult circumstances and their teachers and what we can learn from each other.

### ***Teaching as Ethical Encounters***

Teaching courses to refugee students living in a protracted situation presents ethical dilemmas, particularly for teachers living in the global North where complicities with

neocolonialism and paternalistic and prejudicial attitudes is an unconscious element in the drive to teach such courses. Giles and Dipbo (2019) address these ethical questions, related to their and instructors' participation in the BHER project: "much of what we experienced and learned about the ethics of partnerships through our involvement in the RRN [Refugee Research Network] runs like threads into our virtual and on-site classrooms" (p. 88). Professors from both Canadian and Kenyan universities "had to deal with the complexities of offering higher education in a context of prolonged encampment," and they had to ask themselves questions about curriculum content, cultural appropriateness of materials, and pedagogical approaches in the context of "unfamiliar professor-student relationships" (p. 91). In their efforts to build "ethical student-professor relations" in the harsh conditions of a refugee camp, they encountered "disorienting dilemmas" (p. 88) as they tried to reconcile their expectations and worldviews with those of their students. In their reflection about the development of an ethical pedagogy, they worked with Butler's concept of ethical encounters and Arendt's concept of worldliness (p. 89):

The transformative method that we refer to is thus embedded in a historical materialist methodology and involves at least three aspirational steps: the imperative to act as a result of an engagement in worldliness; a prohibition of doing harm in the name of good as a consequence of a critical engagement with post coloniality; and an ongoing effort to enter into ethical student-teacher encounters. (p. 101)

Christina Clark-Kassak (2021), in *Ethics in Forced Migration Research: Taking Stock and Potential Ways Forward*, discusses the ethical challenges of migration research where there are significant "power asymmetries" between researchers and the populations they study. Eve Tuck (2009), in her article "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," speaks of the

experiences of North American Indigenous communities with regards to researchers and educators working in their communities. Tuck calls for rethinking what she considers “damage centred research” in the hope that it will aim at “fostering and maintaining ethical relationships” (p. 409). Such relationships should be respectful of people’s desires, and the engagement should be with who they are at present and not solely in terms of the damage they have experienced as if that defined the whole of who they are:

The danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community. Here’s a more applied definition of damage-centered research: research that operates even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation.

A theory of change helps to operationalize the ethical stance of the project, what are considered data, what constitutes evidence, how a finding is identified, and what is made public and kept private or sacred. (p. 413)

In the case of researching refugees living in the containment of refugee camps, I find especially relevant Tuck’s point that it has become a habit in the western world when researching communities affected by colonial invasions to define communities by the damage that was done to them and not by their agency as human beings. Tuck proposes research based on people’s desires that comprehends the intricacies of people’s lives: “desire-based research frameworks are concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (p. 416). She cites Avery Gordon’s concept of complex personhood to further highlight what she understands by desire: “[he] describes complex personhood as conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people’s lives are simultaneously straightforward



and full of enormously subtle meaning” (p. 420). Tuck suggests that educators and researchers “envision alternative theories of change, especially those that rely on desire and complexity rather than damage” (p. 422).

As a further cautionary note, I read “Anthropologists” by Yousif M Qasmiyeh (2021). The poem speaks about what refugees wonder when researchers come to find out about their lives.

### **Anthropologists**

I knew some of them

Some of them are friends but the majority are enemies

Upon the doorstep you observe what they observe with a lot  
of care

You look at them the way they look at you, curiously and  
obliquely

You suddenly develop a fear of imitating them whilst they  
imitate you

You worry about relapsing into one of your minds while  
sharing mundane details with them

Sometimes I dream of devouring all of them, and just once  
with no witnesses or written testimonies

All of us wanted to greet her

Even my illiterate mother who never spoke a word of  
English said: Welcome!

After spending hours with us, in the same room, she left  
with a jar of homemade pickles and three full cassettes with  
our voices (p. 17)

Todd (2003) cautions that a distinction needs to be made in education between ethics as the instruction of the set of societal rules about how human beings should behave and ethics as the relationality that bonds us:

Ethics frequently signifies two major things for education: a programmatic code of rules or principles and a branch of philosophy that has importance for theorizing educational issues. . . . In instrumentalizing ethics through education, or, rather in viewing education as an instrument for ethics, there is a tendency to read ethics as a problem of knowledge. Ethics often is construed in educational terms as, “what and how do we need to know in order to live well together.” (pp. 5–6)

In her proposal for an ethical encounter in education and the possibility of social justice education that moves away from ethics as prescription, Todd stages an encounter between Levinasian ethics and psychoanalysis. Although she finds the frameworks to be contradictory at times, she believes that bringing together an understanding of alterity with the significance of affect can bring about the possibility of an ethical engagement: “together, in my view, they offer insight into how the surprising and unpredictable forms of relationality that arise in the immediacy of an encounter with difference, carry profound relevance for ethical interaction”(p.4)

Zembylas and Vrasidas (2005) agree with Todd about the inevitability “in educational practices” of an ethical encounter with alterity (p. 63) and ask questions about online pedagogies: “How are identity and communication constituted in online education? What are the features of an ethical pedagogy in online education—that is, a pedagogy that considers the ethical implications of online communication?” (p. 60). They engage the ethical theory of Levinas and

propose that his views on ethics and Otherness can help “educators and learners become more aware of how they *respond* to the Other and consider their ethical responsibility to the Other’s multiple and complex identities” (p. 60; emphasis original). Engaging ethically with the Other in online teaching is made even more complex because of the fact that there is no face-to-face interaction. For Zembylas and Vrasidas, an “ethical online pedagogy requires paying attention to ways in which interactions across difference promote relationality, humility, criticality, and responsibility” (p. 77). The point for them is not to make assumptions about the Other and “refuse to reduce the Other to the self,” which would amount to what Levinas defines as “totalization,” the attempt to reduce the Other to ourselves:

Central to this project, we have argued, is understanding the hybrid identities and complex relations among learners in cyberspace. To turn away from the Other is to behave unjustly, not because there is a universal law that defines such behaviour as unjust, but because it is one’s ethical responsibility to face (or interface with) the Other. This encounter reminds us of our duty to oppose sameness and expose ourselves to alterity. (p. 78)

I wrote this thesis during the COVID-19 restrictions when most global teaching was happening online. Much has already been written about the significance of this global change for universities and for teaching in particular (Peters et al., 2020). An ethical reflection about online teaching becomes more urgent given the global reach of the pandemic and the necessity to understand our lives when interacting with Others in this world.

The ethics of online teaching is critical to my work with students in Dadaab and even more so since the COVID-19 pandemic. I am reminded of Butler (2012) who draws on Levinas’s views on the ethical obligation towards the Other. However, she clarifies that this commitment

cannot be limited to certain groups or to our proximate Other but that the ethical bounds are absolute and global: “Levinas’s position allows us the following conclusion: that the set of ethical values by which one population is bound to another in no way depends on those two populations bearing similar marks of national, cultural, religious, racial belonging” (p. 140). She separates herself from Levinas’s limiting of that ethical obligation “to those who were bound together by his version of Judeo-Christian and classical Greek origins” (p. 140). Instead, Butler

insist[s] upon a certain intertwinement between that other life, all those other lives, and my own—one that is irreducible to national belonging or communitarian affiliation. In my view (which is surely not mine alone) the life of the other, the life that is not our own, is also our life, since whatever sense “our” has is derived precisely from this sociality, this being already, and from the start dependent on a world of others, constituted in and by a social world. (p. 141)

This ethical position is affirmed by an understanding of how we live with others in the world. Butler agrees with Arendt’s cohabitation of the earth. The ethics of cohabitation, the responsibility that falls on us because we cohabit the earth:

We live together because we have no choice, and though we sometimes rail against that unchosen condition, we remain obligated to struggle to affirm the ultimate value of that unchosen social world, an affirmation that is not quite a choice, a struggle that makes itself known and felt precisely when we exercise freedom in a way that is necessarily committed to the equal value of lives. We can be alive or dead to the suffering of others—they can be dead or alive to us. But it is only when we understand that what happens there also happens here, and that “here” is already an elsewhere, and necessarily so, that we stand a chance of

grasping the difficult and shifting global connections in ways that let us know the transport and the constraint of what we might still call ethics. (p. 150)

The dilemma of teaching BHER students who are living in refugee camps has forced me to interrogate my teaching philosophy. I looked back on my teaching experience to understand what my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher are and thought deeply on how and why I could accept, or even entertain, the fact that I was worthy of teaching African students who were refugees.

bell hooks, in *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), analyses her commitment to teaching and her teaching philosophy. She opens Chapter 1 with a discussion about education as the practice of freedom:

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn.

That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (p. 13)

hooks relates how she learned from Freire's insistence that education could be "the practice of freedom" and how this "encouraged [her] to create strategies for what he called 'conscientization' in the classroom" (p. 14). The engaged professor takes risks, accepts their vulnerability, and is committed to be "wholly present in mind, body, and spirit" with their students (p. 21). It is such a commitment to students that I also attempted to embody in my work with refugee students.

Freire (1970, 2000) emphasizes the problem of education becoming a problem of narration where “the teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable. . . . In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (pp. 71–72). Such education confirms the fact that knowledge is the purview of the powerful and students, whatever their condition, are the oppressed. For education to be truly a practice of freedom, it must break with the “vertical patterns of banking education” and become “problem posing education” (p. 80).

Jan Stewart (2011) sees critical social theory and postcolonial theory as the philosophical foundations for understanding the educational support needed for refugee student populations. For Stewart, “Freire’s arguments are particularly relevant to the assumptions underlying [her] work with refugee populations” (p. 13). Educators are the facilitators of the emancipatory education needed to ensure social justice education for all, and postcolonial theory is foundational for educators to understand power inequalities in postcolonial societies and thus to understand power differentials in education:

Post-colonial theory involves critical thinking and questioning about identity, race, gender, ethnicity, racism, language, place, history, and globalization. It is the epistemological and ontological investigation into power and resistance, knowledge and identity and how this is used by the colonized and the colonizers, by the developing and the developed. (p. 14)

Enid Lee (2011–2017) provides teachers with a tool kit to help “in assessing, advocating and advancing equity in the everyday practices of educators.” Lee writes that the tool kit was

inspired by a teacher who said to her, “I check my systems for equity every time I enter my classroom”:

She [the teacher] explained that she checks her assumptions about students, families and communities based on aspects of identity such as language, culture, race, gender, faith, class, immigration status, perceived ability and sexual orientation. She recognized the role of her own identity in shaping her assumptions and she also reminded us of the ways in which the power of our social group can determine the treatment we receive in society at large and in schools in particular. That treatment takes place through the systems we operate in our schools, classrooms, district, and society. (back cover)

Finally, critical to my engagement in ethical pedagogy is Mishra-Tarc’s (2019) idea of educators as witnesses who can be changed by their students. She calls on teachers to listen to their students as they speak about their experiences of war and associated trauma. Her call is for the development of a sensitive and sensitizing ethical framework: “I work with emerging educators to investigate and support the idea that teaching, at its core, is not only about imparting knowledge. Rather, it is about a willingness to be vulnerable to, and taught and changed by, the lives we face”.

What I have learned about refugees and refugee encampments in my search for a pedagogy that enables ethical student-teacher encounters has been the basis of my methodological decisions in the writing of this dissertation. However, in searching for a methodology that enables me to understand more deeply the voices of my students as expressed in the writings they shared with me throughout the Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts course, I read, one more time, Yousif M. Qasmiyeh’s (2021) poem

“Anthropologists.” I read it, knowing full well that I am not an anthropologist but a teacher reflecting on the lessons learned from my students.

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology of my study and introduce linguistic studies related to bilingualism, language acquisition, linguistic imperialism, as well as approaches to autoethnography, and discourse analysis, that have guided me in my work.



### Chapter III

#### Methodology

While teaching Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts, I often asked myself questions related to my pedagogy and the ethicality of my teaching practice. Namely, what are my assumptions about who my students are, what is the rationale for my willingness to engage in the teaching experience, and what can we learn from each other in the process? As this dissertation is a reflection about the experience of teaching students who were living in protracted situations in refugee camps, I have engaged in retrospective analysis of my communication with students asking questions about my ethical encounters with them and how these encounters happened in the context of online teaching.

To analyze my teaching experience, I turned to autoethnography, pedagogical and discourse analysis, linguistic studies related to bilingualism, language acquisition and linguistic imperialism.

To support the investigation of my teaching BHER students. Autoethnography offered me a means for pedagogical analysis that helped me listen carefully to the voices of my students in dialogue with mine. Autoethnography allowed me to reflect more deeply on the “intertwinement” (Butler, 2012) of our lives.

In *Evocative Autoethnography. Writing lives and Telling Stories*, Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (2016) refer to autoethnography as a form of writing that involves the researcher and his/her relationship to culture. Autoethnography as a form of autobiographical writing looks

inwards and outwards, exposing vulnerabilities in the search for understanding.

Autoethnography, according to them,

*is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth, autoethnographers gaze, first, through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing the vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond recognition. Usually written in first person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality and self-consciousness are featured in relational, family, institutional and community stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are revealed through action, feeling, thought and language.* (p. 65; emphasis original)

Colette Granger (2007) uses an autoethnographic lens in her research because it allows her to explore “the personal on one hand and the culture of education on the other, to explore the ways these inform and are informed by one another” (pp. 14–15). In order to arrive at a deeper analysis, she recognizes “the importance of (and undertake[s]) discourse analyses of [her] autoethnographic data to expose troubled and troubling aspects of education as both an institution and a set of relations” (p. 18). Like Todd (2003), Granger believes that psychoanalytic theory is needed “to address the interplay both between the culturally constituted individual and

the culture that constitutes that individual, and also among the individual, the culture as a whole and the psychological dynamics that interact with both” (p. 18).

Holman Jones et al. (2013) characterize autoethnographies as using “personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience. Autoethnographers do this in work that ranges from including personal experience within an otherwise traditional social scientific analysis . . . to the presentation of aesthetic projects” (p. 22). The characteristics that distinguish autoethnographic work from personal writing (autobiography) are:

*(1) purposively commenting on/critiquing of culture or cultural practices, (2) making contributions to existing research, (3) embracing vulnerability with purpose, and (4) creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response.* (p. 22; emphasis original)

My ethical search is, nevertheless, troubled by my decision to use autoethnography. I am mindful of my positionality as a researcher and teacher of the course, investigating both students’ voices and my own as a teacher.

The positionality of the researcher is just one of many important issues to consider when doing autoethnography ethically. Autoethnography as a method can lead to emotionally and intellectually powerful texts that extend out beyond the page or the stage to affect audiences and communities. Autoethnographers must, therefore, consider the personal, social, political, and ethical consequences of using their experiences as the primary source of research data. (Tullis, quoted in Holman et al., 2013, p. 246)

I have approached the analysis of my teaching experience following the method Ellis (2004) used in *The Ethnographic I*. In each chapter, Ellis explores a particular area of

autoethnographic theory and practice. She does this as if she was teaching a course to a group of students. However, the similarity with my work is only one of format, as I do not instruct on a theory but search for grounded theory from the analysis of both my teaching and the voices of my students as expressed through their course writings. My method of analyzing my teaching is retrospective, evocative autoethnography, and interrogating my teaching from an ethical, critical, social justice point of view. The analysis of student voices is from a qualitative, discourse analysis approach.

## **Sources**

My sources are primarily the writing of my students and my communication with them during the Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts course. During the 12-week course, students participated in a weekly forum in which they wrote unedited comments about course readings and videos. They also wrote three required reflection papers on the topics of language, schooling, and home. I have analysed students' writing in the class forum and their writing in the three required reflection assignments. I analyse my participation in the student forum and my individual feedback to students for each of the reflection papers. I also analyse my course planning and my rationale for choosing the resources for the course I did. Students' final essays are not analysed in this research.

The course was an exploration of cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism in multicultural, multilingual educational settings. We analysed how education could be redesigned for more successful democratic and cooperative learning outcomes. I invited students to examine their personal histories in relation to second-language learning and first-language loss and the role of educators and schools in addressing these issues. The course was taught in a blended

online format. It met on Fridays for a one-hour face-to-face online tutorial with the teacher, from September 14 to November 30, 2018. Forum participation and all written activities and communication happened online in Moodle. Students attended the tutorials from learning centres located in Dadaab and Kakuma.

There were 28 students registered for the course, and I obtained informed consent from 24 of them. Of the 24 students, five were female and 19 were male. The majority were of Somali origin, with one student born in Rwanda and four students in Ethiopia. Four students were residents of the Kakuma camps, and the rest lived in Dadaab refugee camps. I did not receive information about their age, as it is not usually obtained in an online course, but from the accounts in their reflections, Somali students had either arrived as infants in Dadaab after 1991 or were born in the camps. Ethiopian students wrote about having finished school in Ethiopia before arriving in the camps and the Rwandan student arrived as a child. Student confidentiality has been assured; students names will not be disclosed, and data is kept in password secured files.

### **Discourse Analysis**

Conducting analysis on pedagogical discourses has been helpful in my effecting a more systematic critical examination of student and my writing. Discourse analysis looks at how language functions and how meaning is created in diverse social contexts. I am guided in this task particularly by James P. Gee's (2005) *Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*: "In the end, discourse analysis is one way to engage in a very important human task. The task is this: to think more deeply about the meanings we give to people's words so as to make ourselves better, more humane people and the world a better, more humane place" (p. XII).

Textual analysis of scholarly literature on UNHCR's refugee camps and schooling in refugee camps provided context to my discourse analysis of student voices.

It is my hope that by analysing and critiquing my teaching, I will be able to contribute with an approach to the planning and delivery of online teaching to populations living in protracted situations in refugee camps, as well as contribute to an understanding of concerns related to schooling in refugee camps. The analysis of student voices has helped me to comprehend where this particular group of students stood vis-à-vis first-language maintenance or loss, longing for home, and schooling experiences in camps. I hope that the extensive inclusion of their narratives about their experiences will add to the understanding of the issues confronted daily by refugees.

I echo here the hope expressed by Stewart (2011) in *Supporting Refugee Children: Strategies for Educators* about why she decided to present the narratives of the young refugees she interviewed:

I have chosen to begin with the stories and voices of the people who I believe are the “experts” in the field. I have endeavoured to bring forth the voices of the participants from the study whenever possible. This narrative approach was purposefully chosen to bring the reader as close to the stories and events as possible and to allow for the opportunity to make inferences and to analyze the data independently. The risk in doing this is to sensationalize the stories and to contribute to the marginalization of the individuals who have entrusted me with their stories. This is not my intent; rather I have chosen to weave together the stories to create a composite picture of the numerous experiences and complex challenges that children have endured. . . . I hope that these stories are heard by

the people who craft policies and who create change in organizations that will improve the lives of children who have been affected by war. (pp. 11–12)

## **Conceptual Framework**

In this section I lay out the conceptual framework for my pedagogy. I focus on the theories and experiences that have inspired my pedagogy throughout my career.

Since the early years of my teaching, I have been influenced by critical pedagogy, as well as antiracist educational theories. Over several decades, I have witnessed the development, evolution, and influence of these ideas in educational settings, both in schools and in the academy. Freire's (1973, 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987) ideas with respect to the reciprocal relations that should exist between teacher and students and students and teacher and his philosophy of education as a practice of freedom continue to influence my teaching and my research. Antiracist education theory, which acknowledges that systemic racism exists in our society and permeates our institutions and actions, has also been a framework of my pedagogical practice (see Delpit, 1988; hooks, 1994; Lee, 1985; Rethinking Schools, 2022).

Along with these pedagogical influences, the philosophical-ethical work of Todd (2000, 2003) in the context of social justice education serves as a theoretical framework for my inquiry into the "ethical possibilities of education" (Todd, 2003 p.1). "Ethics, insofar as it potentially offers us a discourse for rethinking our relations to other people, is central to any education that takes seriously issues of social justice" (Todd, 2003, p. 1).

The pedagogical insights of Mishra-Tarc (2011) also support my reflection on the ethics of teaching encounters and to "think about teaching" (p. 367):

I have come to think, following Freud, that minute changes to internalized

education can enact significant changes for social action and educational practice.

Repairing the violent effects of our internal education—or what Freud . . . calls “after education”—provides the grounds on which we can support students to develop renewed imaginative capacities of response that can sustain altered thinking and acting in the world with others. (p. 367)

Mishra-Tarc delves deeply into the difficult ethical waters teachers tread. She speaks about the decisions teachers make when using curriculum that will move their students into unpredictable emotional responses when confronted with traumatic events: “The space of my ethics is as emotionally fraught as the pedagogical space into which I invite my students. The fraught space of pedagogy and my particular style of pedagogical intervention also invite and limit each student’s potential response” (p. 359).

I also frame my teaching encounters through the theories of postcolonialism, particularly as they relate to linguistic imperialism:

The study of linguistic imperialism focuses on how and why certain languages dominate internationally and attempts to account for that dominance in a theoretically informed way. Many issues can be clarified: the role of language policy in empires (British, French, Japanese, etc.); how languages from Europe were established in other continents, generally at the expense of local languages; whether the languages that colonialism took to Africa and Asia now form a useful bond with the international community, and are necessary for national unity internally, or are a bridgehead for Western interests, permitting the continuation of marginalization and exploitation. (Phillipson, 2013, p. 1)

Postcolonial theory ideas frame my understanding of the role played by the imposition of



European languages in African nations (Achebe, 2009a; Thiong'o, 1986, 1993) and how it still echoes in educational language policies across Africa today (Brock-Utnea & Mercerb, 2014; Ramoupi, 2014).

Linguistic studies on first-language loss and maintenance, second-language acquisition and multilingualism in education frame my analysis of student writings related to their experiences with first languages, second-language acquisition, and first-language loss (Schechter & Cummins, 2003). The work of Jim Cummins (1984, 2000, 2007; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Schechter & Cummins, 2003) related to first and second languages, bilingualism, and multiculturalism is foundational in my understanding of the social and emotional impact of first-language loss. These theories helped me build a framework to engage in a pedagogical inquiry and analysis of student and teacher writings and of the student-teacher encounters that occurred during that course.

Chapter IV serves as an introduction to the story of the course. I use an autoethnographic voice to present the organization and context of the first classes. I also introduce and analyse students' writings on language. In the subsequent three chapters, I focus solely on the writing of students and my responses.

## Chapter IV

### Language

This chapter discusses the structure of the course and my approach in it. My voice tells the story of the course. Following the introduction to the first classes, I analyse the writings of students on language and my responses to their writing. As a guide, I incorporate here the first page of the course description and the schedule of classes, which include the readings assigned for each day (see Appendix A for the full course description and schedule):

#### **BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism in highly diverse societies; examines social history and cultural identity against language policy, pedagogy, and social practice; and considers how education in multicultural, multilingual societies can be redesigned for successful, cooperative learning outcomes.

#### **EXTENDED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The linguistic profile of a highly diverse society is very complex. Migrants' urgent needs to learn the language/s of social, political, and economic currency in the host society appear as an important educational responsibility. At the same time, the languages newcomers bring to a society are an elemental component of their social and cultural make-up. Given complex settlement patterns, polyglot communities and institutions are formed, and languages from different parts of a country, continent, or parts of the world form local resources.

In these diverse contexts, residents enter learning and work environments where participants have multiple languages, social expectations, cultural practices, and educational backgrounds. Educational contexts in such centres are microcosms where multiple languages are in everyday use. Increasingly multilingual educational contexts create both possibilities and problems for the educator.

This course invites an exploration of cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism in life, learning and work, inviting examination of who we are in the cultural remix, and questioning identity, history and social values. We examine existing language-in-education policy and practice, theories and pedagogies of multiple language learning and maintenance, and invite critical consideration of how we can creatively redesign education for successful learning outcomes.

This course aims to:

- examine our understandings of culture and language;
- consider cultural pluralism, and multilingualism;
- explore our linguistic landscape;  
explore ourselves as componential of the cultural remix of the contemporary classroom;
- review policy dimensions of multiculturalism and bilingualism, including conflicting agendas, and how they play out in educational contexts.
- overview how languages, and literate practices are learned in child development, second and foreign language context
- examine traditional and contemporary approaches to teaching in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>ED/EDST 2450 Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts</b>	
CLASS 1 Sept. 14	<b>Introductions, aims and objectives, course outline, discussion of assignments.</b>  <u><b>Required Readings for class 1</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harber, C. (2014). <i>Education and International Development: Theory, Practice and Issues</i>. Oxford: Symposium Books. <u>Chapter 17: Literacy and Language</u></li> <li>• Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi. (2014). African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation? <i>Journal of Higher Education in Africa</i>, Vol. 12, No. 2, Academic, pp. 53–93.</li> </ul>
CLASS 2 Sep. 21	<u><b>Home languages and learning</b></u>  <u><b>Required Readings</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi. (2014). African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation? <i>Journal of Higher Education in Africa</i>, Vol. 12, No. 2, Academic, pp. 53–93.</li> <li>• Schecter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). <i>Multilingual Education in Practice</i>. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <u>Chapter 1: School-Based Language Policy in Culturally Diverse Contexts</u></li> </ul> <b>Due today: assignment #1, part 1</b>
CLASS 3 Sep. 28	<b>Language is not Neutral</b> <b>Enid Lee guest speaker</b> <u><b>Required Readings</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lee, Enid (2001). <i>Equity and Literacy: The Challenge of the Decade</i>.</li> </ul>
CLASS 4 Oct. 5	<b>Community Languages and Schooling</b> <u><b>Required Readings</b></u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yonas Mesfun Asfahaa and Sjaak Kroon (2011). Multilingual Education Policy in Practice: Classroom Literacy Instruction in Different Scripts in Eritrea. <i>Compare</i> Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 229–246.</li> <li>• Schecter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). <i>Multilingual Education in Practice</i>. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <u>Chapter 3: Valuing Multilingual and Multicultural Approaches to Learning.</u></li> </ul>
CLASS 5 Oct. 12	<p><b>Memories from home student writings</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Reading</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schecter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). <i>Multilingual Education in Practice</i>. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <u>Chapter 4: New Country, New Language: Writings by Multicultural Students</u></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Required Viewing</u></b>  <a href="https://yorku.kanopy.com/video/writers-talk-chinua-achebe-nuruddin-farah">https://yorku.kanopy.com/video/writers-talk-chinua-achebe-nuruddin-farah</a></p> <p><b>Due today: Assignment #1, part 2</b></p>
CLASS 6 Oct. 19	<p><b>Poetry and Memory</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Reading</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schecter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). <i>Multilingual Education in Practice</i>. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <u>Chapter 4: New Country, New Language: Writings by Multicultural Students</u></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Required Viewing</u></b>  “Home” (Warsan Shire): <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybTM-aaJxS0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybTM-aaJxS0</a></p>
CLASS 7 Oct.26	<p><b>What is a Good School?</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Reading</u></b>  Hare, W., Portelli, J.P. (eds). (2005). <i>Key Questions for Educators</i>. Edphil Books, Halifax N.S. <u>Question 25: What is a good school? pp. 97–100</u></p> <p><b><u>Required Viewing</u></b>  Film: The storytelling class</p> <p><b>Due today: assignment #1, part 3</b></p>
CLASS 8 Nov. 2	<p><b>Languages of Instruction. What is Education Quality?</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Reading</u></b>  Brock-Utnea, B., Mercerb, M. (2014). COMPARE Forum Response: Languages of Instruction and the Question of Education Quality in Africa: A Post-2015 Challenge and the Work of CASAS, <i>Compare</i>, Vol. 44, No. 4, 676–680</p>
CLASS 9 Nov. 9	<p><b>Mapping a Community and Connections to School</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Reading</u></b>  Dippo, D., Basu, R., Duran, M. (2012). Building Community in Suburban Inner-City Schools Workshop: Scarborough as a Site for Emancipatory Practice. In <i>Settlement and Schooling: Unique Circumstances of Refugees and Forced Migrants in Post-War Toronto Suburbs</i>. <i>Canadian Ethnic Studies</i>, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp 50–57.</p>

	<b>Discussion of community maps</b>
CLASS 10 Nov. 16	<b>The Languages of the Community</b>  <b>Discussion of video recordings</b>
CLASS 11 Nov. 23	<b>Back to Clive Harber and Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi articles and our opinion after 11 weeks</b> <b><u>Required Readings</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harber, C. (2014). <i>Education and International Development. Theory, Practice, and Issues</i>. Oxford: Symposium Books. <u>Chapter 17: Literacy and Language</u></li> <li>• Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi (2014). African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation? <i>Journal of Higher Education in Africa</i>, Vol. 12, No. 2, Academic, pp. 53–93</li> </ul> <b>Final assignment due today</b>
CLASS 12 Nov. 30	<b>Wrap-up</b> <b>Course Evaluations</b>

### Teaching and Learning in Ed/EDST2450

The day before the first class, I introduced myself and gave initial directions in the announcements section of Moodle as follows:

#### Welcome to ED/EDST2450

Thursday, 13 September 2018, 3:50 PM

Hello dear students,

I am pleased to welcome you to our course Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Settings. I am looking forward to meeting you on-line tomorrow Friday September 14th. It will be 2:00 p.m. for you and 7:00 a.m. for me in Toronto and I do hope the connection will work well for all. If for some reason some of you cannot connect, I will try to record the session and post it here in Moodle. Tomorrow we will be mainly discussing the content of the course for this term and I will give you details about the assignments. If you have time today, please read the course description here in Moodle, or in the attachment I sent you via email and bring your questions to class tomorrow.

Looking forward to meeting you in our first class.

best regards, Marcela Duran

I remember being excited and nervous about the first class of September 14, 2018, and waking up at the right time. I got up at 6 a.m. and made sure my laptop and connection were in good working order. I also remember worrying about seeming wide awake and well-groomed for class since it was the middle of the day for them but the beginning of the day for me—I am not an early riser.

My recollection of the first session is of students walking into what looked like a classroom and sitting in front of computers. Not laptops, but desktop computers. There were more men than women and the few women who were there were wearing hijabs. My memory recalls a light shade of blue as the dominant colour of dress. As I spoke, they looked up, and I came to understand I was appearing on a big screen as in a movie. In the upper right hand of my laptop appeared a different group of students, apparently in a different location. Their room had windows and green curtains and I remember seeing the curtains first and then the students, three smiling men. They were students from the Kakuma camp. They stood near the window and nodded smiling hellos. In my memory, a woman joined the Kakuma students, but not on the first day. Two and sometimes three more students joined the class from other locations in Kenya, and they appeared in different places of my screen.

Unless teachers keep careful ethnographic notes after each class, the memory of what happened becomes a story. I must have smiled (I like to smile at my students). I have always loved those moments when I see my students for the first time in class and we all get ready to begin. Only this time, I was in my study in Toronto, and they were in their study centres in Dadaab and Kakuma UNHCR camps. My memory of what happened next is vague, but there is written testimony in Moodle:

Monday, 17 September 2018, 11:05 AM

Hello dear students,

I am attaching a summary of the conversation I had with you during the session of September 14. This is a summary of what we discussed. Please refer to the course outline if you have any doubts or further questions. Please reply if you need clarification. I was away from internet for the weekend but will respond from now on.

Thank you very much,

Marcela

The attachment I provided was a summary of my class notes, including a description of the assignments, a listing of the readings, my expectations for forum participation about the readings, and a description of the three ungraded reflections on first language, schooling, and home. In the summary, I described the course as a meditation on the importance of language: the languages we speak and how languages coexist in the places where we live. I said that the issues I hoped would be addressed during term were the connections between languages and thinking, languages and learning, and languages and the lives we live. I added that during the course we would attempt to examine power and language, the allowance and suppression of home languages, and how this is manifested in educational settings. We would also try to understand the power and persistence of languages of domination (i.e., colonial languages) and the role we play as educators or as members of a community in supporting or questioning language policies. I also said that personal examination of our own beliefs and practices through reading and listening to the opinions of theorists and writers would be an important part of the course. I concluded the note with a reminder that the first reflection was due the following class, September 21, and asked them to read the Harber article and post comments in the forum. I

signed off with an informal *Marcela*.

In reading my notes from the attachment, I notice that I also identify myself as a former refugee, that I am a bilingual Spanish and English speaker and that I have been living in Canada for 45 years. I don't usually give that much personal information in my first class in Toronto, and if I do, it is in response to students' questions.

As I was writing the first draft of this chapter, I realized there was a Moodle video recording of class 2 (Sept. 21, 2018), which was the class when Reflection #1 on first language was due. In viewing the recording, I noticed that the colour worn by the students was not blue as I remembered and the room where the Dadaab students were congregated had light shining through windows covered with sheer curtains with a design on top. The room, I found out later, was the learning center in Dadaab town used by BHER. In the Moodle-recorded session, the students asked many questions about why the reflections were ungraded and what was the meaning of all three reflections being participation marks worth 30% of the final grade. During the session I agree with them that there would be a grade attached, but the grade would depend on the number of reflections handed in, not related to the content. I also repeat several times that I don't believe in giving a numerical grade for people's opinions and memories about personal experiences, but that writing the reflections and posting them was definitely participation in the course and a testimony of engagement with the topics discussed in class and of their familiarity with the texts assigned. In the recording, all the questions are asked by men; the face of a smiling woman appears on the screen, but she doesn't speak. A man, who identifies himself as the staff in charge of technology, also appears on screen letting me know that there are technical issues connecting the Kakuma students and some of the students who were participating from other areas. One of them appears towards the last quarter of the session, and his image fills the whole



screen. He doesn't identify himself, although he might have, in the first class.

Looking at the recorded video and in hindsight from what was learned during the COVID-19 pandemic about online teaching, my lack of knowledge about online technology is obvious. During the lecture, I read passages from the readings assigned, show the students the cover of the book, remind them it is one of the readings, and ask them to follow along. Rather than having the passages on a PowerPoint slide, as I usually would do in an in-class lecture, I avert my eyes from the screen while I'm reading and hold the book to one side. I now try to visualize, in embarrassment, what that may have looked like on the big screen.

I notice in the recording I identify myself again as a former refugee, perhaps as a response to some of the student reflections on language that had already been uploaded. Probably in response to their loss of first-language stories, I tell them about my schooling and how we were punished if heard speaking Spanish during English-speaking times. I also say that my schooling was bilingual and that we were taught in both Spanish and English, which I consider to have been an advantage, and that this schooling was in Chile, my country of birth. I now question why I didn't add that I was a privileged child and that my school was a private English-immersion Catholic school.

### ***Reflection #1: Language***

Reflection #1 was an opportunity for students to share their thoughts about first languages. In addition to the reflection, I had asked them to begin posting their opinions and comments on the readings assigned for each week in the forum section of the class Moodle. What follows in this chapter is an analysis of the students' Reflection #1 and their participation in the class forum related to issues of first languages.

The topic of first languages dominated the first four classes, and students began to participate in an increasing rate in the forums related to the assigned readings for the September 21, 28, and October 5 classes. With the introduction of Reflection #1 on September 21 and the beginning of forum participation, the course became interactive, perhaps more intensely than would have been the case in a face-to-face class. The reflections were a form of correspondence between the students and me. The forum was a dialogue among students with some teacher participation. The one-hour session was usually cut short because of technological glitches and, as I found out later, was considered a tutorial in other courses. The students probably saw it that way too.

The first reflection was an opportunity for the students to explore childhood memories as well as examine the meaning of first language and first-language loss. Nostalgia for a lost world was present in many of the reflections. I have selected one or two representative samples of student writings on themes that emerged in the reflections.

**Abdii:** The topic of the reading placed me in my hometown, where I sat under mango trees watching fishermen pulling their nets out of the river with a lot of fish. They sang songs to God for the gift, surrounded by a number of kids who loved hearing songs enjoying the weather at riverbank. The flow of water, movement of the trees, the sounds of different species of birds echoed the beauty of the environment. Children learnt how to row a wooden boat to cross the river with fishermen and singing. Studying mother tongue was not in schools by teachers, but outside, from other community members with multiple skills.

Students spoke lovingly of their mothers as their first teachers of language. Both parents are mentioned often. Students tied first-language use to stories and songs that took place at home and in the community. It appears as a language of feelings and emotions. First languages are maintained at home and are guardians of culture and identity, and students expressed concern that the loss of first languages can lead to cultural disappearance. First languages are in many cases the only way to communicate with family and community. They are the connection to ancestors.

**Xirsi:** My first language is Somali because it is the language that I learned as a child at home from my parents. It was easy for me to learn my mother tongue because I was regularly interacting with speakers of Somali language at home. This helped me to acquire my first language. Somali is the only language that my parents speak, therefore it is the language that I have spoken when I was young. . . . Another reason why we speak the Somali language at home is that mother tongue is closer to our heart and my parents encouraged me to speak it, because speaking mother tongue links my culture and shapes my identity.

**Ahmed:** At home my mother tongue is prominent and profound because parents and siblings cannot understand my academic languages. Therefore, home is the center of language and culture preservation.

Community members help in keeping first languages alive through community interaction and childcare. Elders are important in language and cultural maintenance:

**Burhaan:** for instance, in our camps, we have elders who are able to read and write in mother tongue. . . . Those elders are respected highly by other members of the

community and are usually elected as the block leaders, since they are able to read and write they help the agencies in the running of their day-to-day activities. . . . In the school where I teach, I found books written in the Somali language kept somewhere in the storage and most of those books were eaten by termites, so I decided to remove them and issue them with lower learners but to my surprise I found interesting to see the watchman guiding those learners on how to read them since he knew how to read and write Somali, he had come to me and requested me to give him some copies, he also undertook to teach his children at home using those books.

In the reflections, students described themselves as a multilingual population; all students spoke at least three languages. They wrote about how they lived their daily lives in a multilingual setting. Not only schools, but friends and community members help them learn the languages of the community. Maay-Maay, which is the language of Somali Bantus (Besteman, 2016), is mentioned as an example.

**Ibrahim:** The languages I use are Somali, English, Arabic, Kiswahili and Maay-Maay. For instance, the Somali language is my first language since it is the language I was born and bred into, interacted in my society, in my childhood and currently. It is the only one that shows my identity, culture and traditions; thus, it acknowledges my entire life. Furthermore, English is the second Language that I mostly enjoy and like to use after my native language because I learned it through formal education when I was attending schools such as primary, secondary and tertiary in line with [together with] Kiswahili and Arabic, but Maay Maay language seems different from all since I learnt [it] through

interacting with the Maay Maay people whom we mostly live with and share some cultural background.

First-language loss was a painful childhood experience for students, usually tied to punishment in school. Many students gave examples of being punished for speaking their first language in school, from being caned, suspended, and shunned, to having smelly bones or the skull of a goat tied to their neck. These and other instances of physical punishment are present in Reflection #1 and the forum, and they re-appeared in Reflection #2 about schooling. Maryam's writing is reflective of the sadness expressed by students when they wrote of losing their first language in school.

**Maryam:** One day my English teacher came to class with some bones tied together on a black rope. The bones were smelling very bad, and then I was called and was asked to put the rope on my neck. I did it while crying. She then asked me to pass it on to whoever would be found speaking her first language in school. At first, it was very hard as my colleagues tried as much as they could to maintain speaking in English. So, for the whole day I found no one and was asked to sleep with it. I talked to myself that if I managed to give it out, I will never speak in my first language again nor will I ever write in my first language. I told myself that it is better to leave the space black than filling it in my first language. This was a bad experience for the first two years I was in that school. But by the time I went to class 7, I was able to write in English and my first language completely disappeared in me again. I knew I had to wait until the holidays to speak it with my mother. However, after completing primary school I had a problem with my first

language again. I realized that there are many things I would need to speak in my first language and because I had forgotten it, I had no secrets.

English is described as the language of schooling that students need for jobs and postsecondary studies (BHER was mentioned). English is the preferred second language for many reasons: it helps in international communication, finding employment, is an international language, etc.

**Xirsi:** At work, I speak English because I work with different people from different backgrounds and English is an international language.

**Maxamed:** The ability to use English in the workplace has a number of benefits for me, including: helping BHER program to succeed, building trust with colleagues and clients, building and improving international relations, enhancing skill sets and commanding higher salary and enhancing international relationships through cultural understanding. It also gives me an opportunity to be international staff and pursue further education as many institutions offer opportunities for those who have good knowledge of English.

Despite the usefulness and importance for work of knowing English, students had many recommendations for adopting first languages as the language of instruction. Their world was revealed to me in their writing; they wrote about convincing the UNHCR, international donors, the Kenyan government, and parents, teachers, and schools.

**Barre:** Finally, language acquisition is a complex process that needs to be given special consideration especially by those policy makers and curriculum designers, they should give the community an opportunity to participate in such important decision that can have

impact on our societies. . . . Irony in the Dadaab context, students from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia see their languages and identity being alienated from Kenyan curriculum and lament their needs were not considered and on the other hand are imposed a curriculum that delivers content in foreign language as a medium of instruction.

**Burhaan:** I therefore recommend Dadaab schools reverse to the previous policy of allowing children to learn their home languages so that they become confident enough to grasp all ideas better.

**Assad:** In Dadaab context in the current school curriculum system, pupils are taught using English as the official language and not in their mother tongue. The pupils then find it difficult to understand what they are being taught. In my opinion, the international donors should add mother tongue as a language of instruction.

**Aaron:** First language is more important in education because it helps individuals to open up their minds and get to learn so quickly. There is high need to develop first language to be included in the curriculum. With the experience of Dadaab we would like to inform UNHCR to work hard in strengthening the refugee curriculum which is borrowed from host community.

**Yasmiin:** We need to think on how we (educators) can implement an inclusive and effective curriculum that covers people's needs generally without being biased. In our context, Dadaab, no one considers community language for both language of instruction as well as a subject of study.

There was a general consensus among the students that first-language communication for every child for learning in school and for community communication and connections was important. Some students wrote of an innate God-given right to a first language.

**Abel:** Home language is important for every ethnic group of people who are living around the universe and I believe that any tribe or creature has been given their own language by God to communicate with themselves as a family to understand different things in their mother tongue first before going to school.

**Gurey:** People always leave home because of circumstances beyond their control and in that process, young children are the ones who suffer the most. Therefore, refugee children wherever they are, have God-given rights to learn in their first languages especially at the elementary school level.

Reflection #1 and the forum participation of students during the first three weeks of the course marked a change for me; it was the beginning of a learning experience that has continued since. I wasn't prepared for the openness and honesty with which students wrote and how much it revealed about life in the camps. Until that point, I had been approaching the course and the connection with students as I had traditionally done in other courses, following the lessons learned from living and teaching in a multicultural, multilingual, multiracial society. In my planning, I had made sure I would respect students' identities, cultures, and languages. I had included readings that were, as much as possible, culturally relevant. I knew that I might encounter linguistic interferences in their writing and had planned to point out grammatical issues, only when relevant. The reading of Reflection #1 changed how I understood the students, and respecting identity, culture, and language acquired for me a different meaning. Through



reading their writing, I developed a deeper sense of the complexity of their lives. That sense deepened even more as I made connections between what my students told me about their lives through their writing and what I had learned about life and education in UNHCR refugee camps.

One of the salient features of the students' reflections was a nostalgia for a lost language that, in their experience, was torn away from them as children. Abdii wrote about happy memories of children singing in their first language while enjoying the activities of fishermen in the river (see above). Others wrote of their first language as the keeper of culture and traditions. What they did not say but what became evident to me as the reader was that they were refugee children at the time when they were forced to silence their first language in school. They were experiencing what Duale et al. (2019) designate as the uncalled-for punishments that further traumatize children who are themselves, along with their families, survivors of trauma (p. 56).

I ask myself the question of what the intention was behind the planning of education for these refugee children, now adults, reflecting on the experiences of being forced to lose their first languages in schools. Anna Freud, in *Psychoanalysis for Teachers and Parents* (1935), warns of the dangers of education: "it should be said that psychoanalysis, whenever it has come into contact with pedagogy, has always expressed the wish to limit education. You have learned how the child is forced to fulfill the demands of the adult world around him" (pp. 95–96).

The students in the course, in writing about the loss of their first languages in schools, reflected a reality that continues to be the case in the schooling of refugee children in countries of first asylum. The UNHCR coordinates camp education with the governments of the host countries in line with "the laws, policies and practices in place in each national context" (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 135). Dryden-Peterson speaks about children's rights and how refugee schools should be safe havens protecting children from abuse, rather than places where

children encounter “language barriers, teacher centered pedagogies and discrimination” (p. 131).

She continues:

Most refugee children transition to a new language of instruction in a country of first asylum. For example, refugees from Somalia transition from Somali to English in exile in Kenya and Uganda. . . . Ongoing migration and shifting policies also contribute to the ways in which language learning shapes the educational trajectories of refugee children pre-resettlement. (p. 142)

### ***Teacher Responses to Reflection #1***

When looking at the traces left of my teaching during the first three weeks, I query my pedagogy in my responses to Reflection #1. Was I helpful in encouraging learning? Is there evidence in my feedback of what I was learning from them? I also ask myself how I was affected emotionally by these first reflections. In general, in my feedback to Reflection #1, I am immersed in the new world the students are revealing and respond to it as if I was familiar with their circumstances. The feedback to the reflections was an opportunity for personal, private communication with the students. In my first communication, I express an appreciation for their writing, beginning with thanking them for the reflection and drawing attention to particularly interesting and relevant comments they made. I often begin with “I like” and use adjectives such as “profound” and “beautiful” to refer to the quality of their writing. I resort to paraphrasing or quoting sentences or words the students have used that are relevant to the topic. I also state my agreement with them related to critical issues they raise.

**To Barre:** I like how you explore the complex language acquisition dilemma. I will start from your last sentence; I agree with you that policy makers and curriculum designers

absolutely should give “the community the opportunity to participate in such important decision.”

**To Assad:** I like the distinctions you make of your use of languages. English helps you access a variety of information, while Somali helps you in your daily interactions in your community, home and work.

**To Aaron:** This is a beautiful and thought-provoking reflection. I like how you talk about your experiences learning in your three languages.

I acknowledge the difficulties of living in a camp and speak in encouraging terms about students’ resilience.

**To Yasmiin:** Life must be indeed very difficult in a refugee camp and being a girl seems to add to the harshness. You are fortunate to have had the support of strong parents that have helped you in being the woman that you are today. Your strength is evident to us in your performance in your studies.

**To Barre:** You are strong and have survived both language suppression as well as living in camp. It is important that you have continued to speak Somali despite it all and that you have also added Arabic to your linguistic repertoire which should be very helpful in the future.

I take advantage of the privacy of my responses to reflections and write special notes to students introducing personal experiences as illustrations.

**To Omar:** Are you sure you dream in English when you have a dream about workmates?

I will check my dreams; I had the idea I always dreamt in Spanish though all my work is in English.

**To Tawfiik:** Despite all this, you speak four languages and that is something not many people can say in today's world. . . . I'm glad that Somali, the language close to your heart, is the language you use often. I wish I could say the same thing about my Spanish, although I do speak it at home.

I refer students to course readings and compare what they are saying to the course topic.

**To Aaron:** Your experience as a language learner is close to what they call "additive bilingualism" where a second and third language (L2) was added to your "repertoire of skills at no cost to the maintenance of the first language" (p. 5).

**To Bishaaro:** In the articles that are included for this course there are interesting points about the importance of first languages to support the learning of second languages which is what, it seems to me, you are bringing up when you say that Somali assisted you in many ways in helping you understand lessons.

I give my opinion, dialogue, ask questions, and sometimes debate points the students bring up.

**To Yunus:** English is indeed the language that seems to be used in Kenya and in many organizations, especially international organizations where you would like to work.

However, does this make those organizations inaccessible to people who only speak

Anywaa for example? Could it be that colonial languages marginalize certain communities to the benefit of others?

**To Abel:** Although apparently simple to state. Issues of first and second languages and official language status are complicated questions, as sometimes political decisions conflict with people's needs and desires, in terms of how to communicate daily with each other.

I give historical and political opinions about what students are saying.

**To Xirsi:** I agree that English is a common second language in the world and it helps in international communication and at work. However, historically, what has been the cost?

**To Bishaaro:** Somali is an ancient language, a language of poets, and probably a language spoken even before English emerged as a spoken language which makes us think of what the meaning is of being an educated person.

The dialogue between teacher and student was a private one in the reflections, not unlike written comments teachers make on students' papers. In response to my initial question of what I learned from the first interactions I had with students and whether I had been affected emotionally by the difficult experiences shared by the students, it seems that, while responding with empathy and care, I held to my traditional (and expected) teacher role connecting what students were saying to course themes and readings. With regards to what I was learning from them, it becomes evident that in each reflection about language they were opening their world to me and teaching me lessons about the loss of their first languages in the schools they had attended in refugee camps.

### **Student Forum on Language**

Students participated actively in the forums on the readings assigned for the classes of September 14, 21, and 28. They were interested in the articles and engaged with each other in dialogue related to what they had read. While the readings assigned for September 14 and 21 related directly to the themes of first languages, the reading for September 28 was a bridge to a focus on schooling and first languages and a preparation for Reflection #2 (see course schedule above for the required reading). The forum participation related to the Harber article (September 14) was about issues of literacy in first languages and the meaning of literacy. The student postings were lengthy. Some summarized parts of the article, but in many cases, students referred to their experiences in camp schools related to language loss and gave recommendations for change in language instruction. There was also active interchange among the students.

**Barre:** On the other hand, the chapter explains language of instruction in the curriculum should be a language that learners understand and familiar to them because it helps them to grasp the content. This was an important issue that attracted my attention since I didn't have a chance to learn my native language in the school. What I remember is if any learner dares to speak vernacular language, he/she will have a heavy punishment. Students were forced to speak English at early stage while they could not have the ability to speak a foreign language. I suggest the government of Kenya to review the Kenyan curriculum and incorporate Somali language.

**To Barre from Ibrahim:** Hi Barre. It is true that there is a need to introduce local languages in the schools, especially the Dadaab schools where the majority of the

communities in the camp speaks different languages that are not taught in the schools.

**Maryam:** Hello everyone, Following the reading by Harber, I tend to think that the UNESCO definition of Literacy is very correct. For sure Literacy is “the ability to read and write with understanding a short simple statement related to one’s daily life.” However, just like Gurey, Fawzia and many of my colleagues said in their discussion, it is very essential to know that literacy is not just about knowing how to write and read in a colonial language which in many countries it is English or French. . . . For sure, if we had all our instruction in our first language, and have the second language as a resource, for me I would then term that kind of education as a quality education, as instructing in the first language to me is one qualification among many that makes me feel that this is quality education. The education that kills our identity is an education with gaps. . . . There is a need for the first language to be used as a media of instruction in the lower classes then in the upper classes we then switch to the second language. In fact, it will be very easy to translate what you know and understand well into another language for communicate.

**To Maryam from Fawzia:** Hi Maryam, I really like the way you précised the chapter, if Kenya curriculum could add our mother tongue things will be better, nowadays the new generation will not be able to write their mother tongue so what is the solution to promote both speaking and writing?

**To Maryam from Tawfiik:** Hi, Maryam I agree with you and the other members who said that literacy is beyond the ability to read and write in English or any

other languages but of something to do with physical performance, respond and reflect upon the immediate environment one could ever live or experience.

**To Maryam from Aaron:** I fully agree that there is no need to use language of instruction which will make contents more complicated. When I was a child, even to the time of maturity, I used to think that you can only become educated when the teacher used English. To today, I understand that I can be an engineer or doctor when am taught using my first language. This was very true because we have country like Japan which is very successful, and they use Japanese.

**To Maryam from Abdii:** Thank you, Maryam for pointing out clearly the concept of the reading, I appreciate sharing your exploration especially your experience in a classroom when struggling to cope with language barriers, while your science teacher did not put a mechanism to help you out. Recognized colonial languages [as] to be a language of instructions are not only killing educational quality and growth, but also shows how educational systems in less developed nations still under slavery of structural concepts, introduced by the colonizers, which caused visual impairments and killed spirits critical thinking of curriculum designers including educators who mostly do not remember and think about including home languages in the curriculum. As important as English and other colonial languages, the reading of the course taught us the importance of home tongues which obviously created good relationships in classrooms, and outside which also open up the minds of children to learn other languages better for it contributes to socio-economic and cultural positive transformation.



The reading for September 21 again brought active participation and long expository texts in the forum. Some students summarized the article and gave opinions on it. Some expressed admiration for the democratic liberation of South Africa and its linguistic policies. Students also compared the policies of their home countries with policies in the camps. Although students posted as much as in the first forum, their participation did not bring about active responses from other students and most of the exchanges were between students and me.

**Assad:** In my understanding, the people of South Africa enjoyed 20 years of freedom. However, they also faced challenges despite their many achievements. The African community is not inclined to understand western education as brought by the colonizers. They needed to have education taught in the local African languages as well to enable Africans to easily understand the information they needed to spread.

Africans are not designed to satisfy colonial masters. . . . Indeed, several African countries have experimented through the diverse form of multilingual education and mainstreaming mother tongue-based bilingual and multilingual education like Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Niger. In Dadaab context, in the current school curriculum system, pupils are taught using English as the official language and not in their mother tongue. The pupils then find it difficult to understand what they are being taught. In my opinion, the international donors should add mother tongue as a language of instruction in the curriculum like they do in Somalia. The language of instruction in schools in Somalia is the Somali language which is the national official language. The use of the Somali language as a national language makes learning easier for learners to understand.

Enid Lee's article and her presentation on September 28 brought a return to more interactive postings by the students, I also participated in the dialogues. In this forum, probably because of the nature of the assigned article and Enid's presentation, students spoke as teachers and gave opinions about the meaning of equity versus equality and made comparisons with life in the camps and in schools.

**Yasmiin:** I have understood from the article that equity and literacy constitute important features of educational environment that encourages multiculturalism within the society that everyone would be able to honour and recognise differences in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, class, language, religion, abilities as well as sexual orientation. I agree with Enid Lee's concept that all schools around the world should encourage multilingual, multiracial, antiracism in order all people would be able to provide meaningful livelihoods within their power which would help them to ensure physical and emotional that would be able to create an environment which is sustainable to their future generation survival.

Literacy is one tool that can help bring about equality.

It is true that literacy can bring equality for instance where different learners from diverse cultures speaking different languages sitting in one class using and sharing common resources for example BA students at Dadaab are from diverse culture and still we are using and sharing common resources like compound, lab, computers, latrines, taxes and so on thus it is literacy that prevents injustice, discrimination, misunderstanding, disrespect, distrust and develops collaboration, teamwork, trustworthy, respect, justice, equality, understanding respectively.

**To Yasmiin from Barre:** Hi Yasmiin, excellent point, I agree with you that literacy leads just society, promotes multiracial and prevents racism.

**To Yasmiin from Marcela Duran:** Yasmiin, A good idea to give the example on how equitable sharing of common resources and development of literacy in Dadaab can lead to helping prevent, as you say: “*injustice, discrimination, misunderstanding, disrespect and distrust*” and by the same token this would lead to “*collaboration, teamwork, trustworthy, respect, justice, equality, and understanding.*” Good points. *M.*

**Aaron:** In any society literacy and equity is very important because it is the only way out to know what is happening around the world and help to explore the individual thoughts and feelings to the world. On the contrary being unable to read and write could create more dependency on other because of our illiteracy. The reading of literacy and equity was very much crucial for the teachers to create the good educational environment with their students and motivate them to actively work hard to convey their ideas. This was to mention that we will always create the good community or good school if we build the good multicultural community which will flourish. In the school environment we the teachers need to respect the different race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and language that students brought into the class.

Teachers working hard will promote and help students to access the benefits to change their community by speaking and standing for themselves and build their communities and transform it. This was very important that Literacy is one tool that can help bring about equality. Equality in term of opportunity like creating a good environment for all students to learn without any hinders. Finally, in the reading, the

author emphasises more on a literacy where the teachers encourage all students to aim for a literacy that is multilingual, multiracial and anti-racist. That is to mean that a good attitude will always help when it is passed from one student to another. If we exercise them positively will be a great help for the community.

**To Aaron from Marcela Duran:** Insightful reading and comments Aaron.

Thoughtful points about literacy and community building.

**To Aaron from Tawfiik:** I agree with you the fact that literacy literally and technically brings equality to where there is no justice as literacy is far beyond to [just] read and write but to engage the world with skills and knowledge accessed from all corners of the world.

### ***Teacher Participation in the Forums***

In contrast to the teacher responses in the reflections, the conversations in the class forums were public and my responses were one among the many reactions to a particular student posting. In this sense, the forum was similar to the dialogues that happen between students and the teacher in in-person classes.

In my forum participation on the issue of first languages, I engage in discussions on the readings and point out conflicting aspects of the imposition of colonial languages. There was a significant learning on my part from students' contributions in the forums related to their experiences with first and second languages in the schools they attended, but also from their lives in the camps. I begin to take public risks as a teacher with regards to controversial topics of second language as the language of instruction in schools.

**To Barre:** Important to be clear about language of instruction and how that language

should hopefully be the first language of learners. While it is understandable that the Kenyan curriculum supports English and Kiswahili as languages of instruction, given that Kiswahili is a main language in Kenya, it does not support the learning of students in Dadaab camp. Your experience speaks to this reality.

**To Gurey:** Your final questions are very important and I think Ramoupi is sharing with us a similar concern when he points out what seems to be a lack of political commitment to a real implementation of African language policies despite what is called for in the constitution. I think it speaks to the pervasive ideological power of colonial languages.

**To Dalmar:** I think the point you raise in the first paragraph, that there will always be talented learners who will learn despite difficulties is really important. However, as you also point out, this doesn't help the majority who experience difficulties when languages of instruction are not their mother tongue. The troubling issue is using a foreign language as [the] language of instruction, that is, to teach subjects, i.e., mathematics or science where students who are not familiar with the language will miss learning important facts because of not understanding the language.

With regards to the ethicality of my teaching. I tried to connect across the miles (Butler, 2012) and empathize with the students while at the same time I didn't give up the teacher task of challenging and encouraging them to search deeper and become more informed on the topic of the course. While some of my notes are brief and basically supportive of their postings, I take risks in the forums, in being critical of what happened in their camp schools with regard to linguistic policies. In retrospect, I wonder whether I should have been more careful given how they lived lives of dependency.

In reviewing my work of the first weeks of the course, I am surprised that I repeated that I too had been a refugee. I wonder now whether I was projecting my own experiences while trying to understand their lives, although, even if I had to flee and seek protection in a country of asylum, I had not lived in a camp. In analysing my responses to student reflections, the prevalent themes are elements of praise for their writing and their resilience. I point to the topics being discussed both in readings and presentations and reinforce aspects that are of importance in relation to the course.

### **Lessons Learned**

In sum, the prevalent theme emerging from the analysis of the writing of students in Reflection #1 and their forum participation is the commonality of opinions and experiences related to first-language loss in schools and its forceful linguistic replacement by English and Kiswahili. Other themes shared among them were sadness about first-language loss, the importance of community members and elders as keepers of language, culture and community values, their ability to speak several languages despite first-language suppression in schools, a first language as a God-given right, and recognition of English as an international language that gives access to jobs. In students' accounts, they echo concerns expressed in literature about the persistence of first-language replacement in postcolonial societies and the linguistic and cultural costs for individuals and societies when these policies are enforced. As seen in; Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2013, 2016; Philipson, 1992, 2013; Piper et al., 2020; Ramoupi, 2014; Thiong'o, 1986.

In the following chapter I continue discussing these themes, using what the students write about in Reflection #2 and the forums. The theme of first-language loss in schools emerges

forcefully, this time in relation to students' childhood experiences in camp schools, but also in community schools for Ethiopian students.

## Chapter V

### Schooling

During the weeks of October 5, 12 and 19 I wrote notes to students about my expectations for readings and assignments. I used the class announcements as a medium to write about how I thought the course was going but also to give them guidance for their future postings.

#### Class of October 12 and Reflection #2

Monday, 8 October 2018, 4:17 PM

Hello again dear class,

Beginning from the class of October 5th we are exploring literacy practices and the incorporation of first language in education. Last week you had the opportunity to read the Asfaha and Kroon, Eritrea article as well as chapter 3 from the textbook, *Valuing Multilingual and Multicultural Approaches to Learning*. In both articles we are able to examine the role of teachers in valuing first languages and the pedagogy involved.

**This week your reflection #2 is due and you will post a reflection on your memories of schooling and the encouragement, inclusion, or suppression of your first language in school.** This is a very personal piece, and you should follow your inspiration and your childhood memories. In a way, it is a continuation of your first reflection. In locating your reflection for this coming Friday my intention was to encourage you to think of yourselves as writers. In the video for Friday writer Nuruddin



Farah interviews Chinua Achebe, the focus is languages from the perspective of these two African writers. The article Chapter 4 New Country, New Language: Writings by Multicultural Students may also help you think about schools and writing.

Starting this coming Friday, we will watch videos for the next three classes and for your written responses, if you are going to post, I would suggest you write about the videos for each of the classes.

Thanks, *M.*

I begin this chapter with a personal note that resulted from reading one of the students' reflections while writing the dissertation. With retrospective concern, I read in one of the reflections that the community had questioned the fact that camp schools followed a Kenyan (Christian) timetable with schools functioning Mondays to Fridays and weekends being Saturday and Sundays. Our one-hour tutorial/class took place on Fridays which is Al-Jumah, the Day of Congregation for Muslims as stipulated in the Qur'an. At the time of my teaching, I didn't think about that, which reminds me again of the dominance of Christian colonialism in the scheduling of school timetables. I thought I was being respectful when I was told that I could not assign work for Saturdays because there might be a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist church among my students. While I agreed not to assign work for Saturdays, I don't recall thinking that scheduling a class for Fridays meant that most of the students, the great majority of them Muslims, would have to attend my session on their day of worship. I highlight this because of my participation in the development of the *Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices and Observances* (2000), for the Toronto District School Board. Based on my work, I, as an educator, assumed that religious rights would always be present in my mind. However, I realize now that it didn't even occur to me to question

scheduling a class on Fridays. It is only now, after re-reading the reflection paper of one of them, that this realization came to the forefront. My analysis of their memories as written in Reflection #2 about schooling in UNHCR refugee camps begins with that in mind.

## **Reflection #2: Schooling**

I remember we used to face in the opposite direction and tended to go behind the classroom just to escape and find a comfortable space to feel safe instead.  
–Tawfiik

Many of the students began their reflections on schooling with stories of fleeing their home country or added them as comments when writing about their schooling. They wrote of how they arrived in the camps and were soon registered in the local schools.

**Maxamed:** I was only 10 years old when we first arrived in Dadaab from Somalia in late 1997. My parents did not flee when the civil war erupted in 1991. My parents took me to school, I immediately enrolled in one of the few primary schools in Hagadera refugee camp, one of three camps that make the Dadaab complex.

**Omar:** When the civil war broke out, we fled to the Kenya border in 1992 where we were received kindly by the government of Kenya and the UNHCR. By then, we were registered as refugees and located to Dadaab camp. Having settled peacefully, my parents took to the nearest school so that I can enroll as a learner in that school.

Students' journeys as refugees were painful, and one of the students related being wounded and spending time in a camp hospital before starting his schooling.

**Abshir:** Militia attacked us early in the morning and they started firing to everyone they see. I and my father were together looking after goats on a farm not far away from our

resident home. I was among those who were shot and some parts of my body left me with pain. . . . Late evening my father found me at the edge of the river and took me from where I was laying. My father provided me with some refreshment like milk and I was not able to eat food because I was seriously injured. . . . Seven consecutive days journeying, lastly, we reached the Kenya Somali border and directly I was admitted to the main hospital of Madera where I got treatment. My thanks go to God and Kenya government offered me support. Really, I was given full help without charging me the expense spent on me during my treatment. In the hospital I spent three months and I recovered from the wounds and the injuries.

Abshir also recounted spending two years in Madera camp without schooling until the camp was closed by the Kenyan government and the family moved to Dadaab where he finally registered in a school:

My father decided to move with us to Dadaab camps where now I am living. It was an impressive opportunity that I got a chance to attend school and get required basic education which I appreciate.

The majority of the students described life in schools in their reflections, expanding on advantages and disadvantages, their adjustment problems, the demanding curriculum taught in a different language, the physical conditions they encountered in schools, how poverty affected the availability of learning materials, as well as their encounters with classmates and teachers. A vivid picture of what schooling in the camps was like for them is drawn in these reflections.

**Tawfiik:** I remember the day I was admitted to school, the class was very congested and overpopulated and every desk shared by four children while lessons were delivered one

after the other constantly and where punishment and expulsion was the only known correction of any mistake committed by the students. Regardless of children's preparation for any activities, teachers often made sure to deliver content by writing on the blackboard and through lecture method. I do remember when I was in grade four a science teacher was teaching us the theme of weather instruments, and in grade four most of us had difficulties to write properly from whatever was written on the blackboard, but the teacher explained verbally without showing what weather instruments were or details and then gone. None of us asked questions neither did the teacher, forget about doing an assignment or any further activity. When we see teachers from a distance and facing to the students' direction, I remember we used to face in the opposite direction and tended to go behind the classroom just to escape and find a comfortable space to feel safe instead.

Physical conditions in schools were difficult, and textbooks and learning materials were lacking in general. Poverty was also a factor in students not being able to avail themselves of learning materials.

**Maxamed:** I was put in Standard Two after passing an entry test. I had no books or paper to use. We younger pupils had class under the big tree right in front of the principal's office. Many were the days when we missed classes due to heavy rains that the tree did not shield us from. Since we couldn't all fit in the classrooms, we were forced to stay away from school until the ground dried. . . . After the results were released by the Kenya national examination council, UNHCR and the partners in Dadaab had to see how much funding was available and decide how many refugee pupils could be admitted to high

school. It didn't matter how many qualified candidates there were. Out of more than 635 pupils who sat the exams, only 120 were selected from Hagadera camp to continue their studies. I was among the lucky ones. The large school compound was fenced with thorny branches cut from the bush. The walls of the classrooms were made of flattened metal recycled from the USAID oil tins that were attached to one another and fixed around the walls. Even the upper classrooms were tightly congested with 80 pupils crammed into one small classroom. Many of us were seated on the ground and the lucky ones shared a desk with four other children. It was a total mess, 80 kids listening to one teacher.

Teachers could barely create a path to reach the students in the back benches. Those who didn't get the chance to go to high school had no chance.

**Assad:** In my learning I faced challenges that are faced by many learners. For instance, I could not afford school resources like school uniform and shoes, textbooks, mathematical set, pens and pencils. The lack of these learning materials prevented me from attending school regularly. I had to work and do menial jobs to get some money to buy some of the resources I needed. However, I kept an optimistic attitude and worked very hard.

Like their reflections about language discussed in chapter 4, students elaborated on language policies in schools, describing punishments received for using their first languages:

**Aaden:** Teachers used to beat anyone they heard speaking in vernacular during learning time. The use of home language was suppressed in the school and sometimes life was hard learning those foreign languages. The two official languages were English and Kiswahili which I could barely speak and understand.

**Maxamed:** I vividly remember when some of us were caught speaking Somali language in class, new rule was established: anyone speaks native language the skull of dead goat will be hanged on his neck. This could minimize use of first language in class. This was assigned and monitored by the class prefect.

Students also spoke about corporal punishment as a punitive method in all subject areas:

**Aamiina:** I remember a day while I was in class seven and we were having a math lesson, when the lesson is about to end the teacher gave us questions to do on the board, I was the first one to be chosen to do the first question and I am poor in math, what happened is that I failed to do the question, the teacher got angry with me and asked me to kneel down outside. After the end of the lesson, he came out and took me to the staff room where he gave me a serious punishment, this has stuck in my mind because my hands turned red and this made me to drop out of school because of the corporal punishment that I had.

In the students' recollections, mixed with the sadness of language loss and punishments, there are also memories of schools being places of play, mischievousness, encounters with friends, supportive teachers, and personal successes. School, in their memories, appears as a contradictory place, which, while painful in many ways, also provided them with support and respite in their difficult, protracted lives.

**Omar:** In my first day of school, I was introduced to my fellow learners in the class. In my class, there were different learners with different culture, religion and also

language. . . . During my schooling in primary and secondary, some activities took place and I was included, some of the activities were choir team and football team.

**Dalmar:** Another thing I reflect about my schooling years was that in school I felt it almost boring but also supportive and fun. My flashback from my schooling days, the event still clear in my memory, while playing with my classmates “hide and seek games” we divided into two groups Group A and group B and started playing in the classroom but unfortunately what happened was one of us mistakenly his right leg got stuck between two desks in the classroom and broken suddenly where I was shocked and I quickly rushed to the office and inform the matter to the school administration especially the school principal and the head teacher.

**Aamiina:** The other interesting part of my schooling was how I used to interact with friends, classmates and age-mates and the way my teachers used to encourage me on how to overcome the problems that could stop my studies.

While there is a pointed critique of the Kenyan curriculum in the students’ memories, they also speak in positive terms of the pre-unity classes where they were able to speak Somali.

**Aaden:** The two official languages in school were English and Kiswahili which I barely could speak and understand. Only the lower primary class students were allowed the home language but the middle and upper primary learners were banned from it while in school.

**Ibrahim:** It was early 1998 when I was enrolled to pre-unity school which people call nursery schools and from the start, I was brought there I started learning different languages among them was my mother language, English and Kiswahili. Of all the

languages taught, my home language was so special to me, I started writing, and reading it more perfectly compared to the other languages. I was famous in the school, as I was known a good writer of poems in my home language and everyone including my parents [were] impressed some of the poems I wrote. I remember I was awarded as one of the best young poet writers in my school. People in my region had a dream that I will be a good poet out of society and as well I had the same dream. But what happened when I realized that my home language is only taught in lower classes (grade one to three). I was amused then amazed; I am in a school that was supposed to help me achieve my dreams so that I will be useful to the society as I had some talent in writing poem in my mother language.

Despite difficult experiences, students also made a point of relating how many teachers were helpers and advocates both of their students and communities and made a difference in their lives.

**Aaden:** In class six, I was struggling on how to write a comprehensive composition. A new English teacher took the time to point out that there were some good things in my writing after marking a paper that I wrote during a composition essay. It encouraged and motivated me to work harder on my themes and thesis and before the year was out, I received my first “A” on a composition paper that I personally wrote. I still have that composition.

**Assad:** During this learning process, most of my teachers motivated me whenever I performed well in class work and even the end of term examinations. This encouraged me to continue having a positive attitude towards my work. Moreover, in cases where



teachers observed that I was reluctant in my work, they at many times advised and encouraged me accordingly. I also got help from pupils who were doing well in our class and also through discussion groups.

**Ahmed:** There was a time I had decided to drop out of school due to peer pressure and some physical changes. I was known to the teachers and they also knew my parents specially my father. When they missed me several days the school administration shared the information to my beloved parents. It was a heart touching and shocking information to them. I was invited under a shade for an advice. It was my longest time I had a talk with my parents. Having shown me something from different corners I accepted their advice and encouragement.

It also became clear that the majority of students were, at the time of their writing the reflections, teaching in camp schools and incorporated their experiences as teachers into their childhood memories.

**Ahmed:** Finally, I as a teacher, I urge language teachers to use their mother tongue the way I am doing now, because it will help learners to get the concepts of the languages that they are learning.

The community plays an important role in supporting schooling, advocating for first-language instruction, and expressing concerns about the organization of schools in the camps and the lack of awareness related to cultural and religious differences.

**Yasmiin:** The role community played, was supporting home language and questioning language policies. They were supporting home language after they noticed the impact of

colonial language towards their children. . . . Some other parents in our community say Kenyan government wants to Westernize our children and that is why they are asking for their language both for instruction as well as subject content.

**Abshir:** [In] the beginning of refugee resettlements in Dadaab camps there was a chaos of curriculum in the Dadaab primary school, mixed with the Somali curriculum and Kenya curriculum and there was no single high school in the camp and we used to learn three languages such as mother tongue, Kiswahili and Arabic. 1998 was the time Kenya curriculum was introduced, then the other system that existed in the camp was removed including mother tongue which is superior to my community. We felt disappointed when our language was removed from the Kenya curriculum, and we have organized demonstration against removal of our own language from the syllabus [as] it was challenging to the Somali community. . . . I can say [it was] a method of marginalizing other people's rights.

**Maxamed:** When we were in Somalia the weekend was Thursday and Friday, but the reverse was true in the camps because in the curriculum weekends are Saturday and Sunday. It has taken long to accept these changes as there were heavy demonstrations and protests and even some parents decided to stop their children to go to school simply because Friday was [for them] a day for religious functions.

**Tawfiik:** At the age of seven years is when I was admitted to one of the primary schools located in Dagahaley refugee camp of Dadaab district in Northern part of Kenya in 1997. At that time school-based education was not much important for the community of Dadaab but the non-formal education that were delivered in the madrassa was the only

valuable system of education in the eyes of the entire community at Dadaab region at that time.

While parents figured prominently in supporting the students in their years of schooling, some of the women spoke in poignant terms about the difficulties they had in pursuing their studies. Difficulties ranged from having to help with household chores to fathers not wanting them to continue with their studies in favour of their brothers.

**Aamiina:** The other challenges that I had were, when I completed my primary school level together with my younger brother and my parents, especially my father, proposed that I should not be taken to high school instead he gave support to my younger brother saying he will be the one going to high school. This is because I am a girl and my people like considering boys education [rather] than girls' education, I felt isolated and cursed myself why God had created me as a female.

**Yasmiin:** I grew as a refugee in Dadaab, which is a home for thousands of people who flee from their different home countries. Life is never easy growing up in a refugee camp. It is a life of poverty, limited access to education and opportunity was very few, but with the hard work of my parents who supported me, I was among the few that got lucky to join school and study within that hostile environment. Due to cultural beliefs and conservativeness of the Somali community, girl child education was never supported and people were so sticky to the culture, and girls were denied from their rights of education, but with the support of my parents, I was lucky enough to be among the few girls who got the opportunity to be enrolled to school. During that time the number of girls were very few compared to the number of boys in the class.

Ethiopian students spoke of a different experience. These students had finished their schooling in Ethiopia and came to the camps later as refugees where they became teachers and were eventually admitted to the BHER program. Perhaps because they left their home country as adults and not as young children as the Somali students did, their texts are more explicit in terms of the political situations that led to their exile and refuge. They wrote of the painful experience of escaping their country as young adults and being admitted as refugees in either Dadaab or Kakuma camps. Not having been schooled in Dadaab or Kakuma, they wrote of their schooling experiences in their home regions, where they also had been subjected to linguistic oppression. They were members of minority tribes, and all had to suppress their home languages in school in favour of Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia. They wrote of the pain of having to change their first names and of the courage of their mothers in particular, supporting them in their schooling efforts despite the many difficulties they were experiencing.

**Yunus:** I had completed one year of professional teachers training college. . . In 2003 I fled from my homeland due to the genocide committed by Ethiopian government forces on Anywaa tribe on December 13, 2003. . . . May 2004 I came to Dadaab. . . . In January 2014 I started the course on increased access and skills for tertiary education (instep) then I finished in December 2014. [Later] I have been admitted to York University in Faculty of Education as part of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees Program.

**Gurey:** My memories of schooling were not the good ones, especially during my days in elementary school. First and foremost, the existing education system forced us to give up our language, name and identity. Therefore, I had to change my name to Amharic to get admission in the school, that is why [this] name was given to me the first day I went to school for admission. No villagers knew me with that name. . . . I was not allowed to

speak my home language in school no matter what. Speaking broken Amharic was also a problem for me because native Amharic speakers always ridiculed and laughed at me which was a difficult emotion to live with especially at such a young age.

**Abdii:** Outstanding students from my community and others were facing tough influences and penalties from the government appointed officials to avoid cultural or native names in public schools. They had to change their names and religion to be admitted to learn and sit for national exams in the former Ethiopian ruling systems. This and other forms of mistreatments dragged my mum to show her firm decision to not change my names at all. She collected and went with me to face school administrators after her realization of my grade 8 national exam marks were being given to an Amhara learner, son of [a] school administrator. As a result, my final grades were checked from the registrar in the provincial educational department, by the education officer, which he confirmed me as top scorer in the region.

### ***Teacher Response to Reflections***

In reviewing my responses to students after reading their pieces, as with the first reflection, I was confronted with unexpected texts that lent themselves to much teacher learning. Together with confirming the critical views of schooling in camps that I was familiar with (i.e., Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2016; Duale et al., 2019), my memories of work in schools and recollections of my arrival in Canada as a refugee crisscrossed my mind. As I read students' pieces and thought of their lives as refugee children and later as teachers of refugee children, I thought of my own work interviewing refugee children to help in their school placements and

remembered a little boy who was so terrified of loud noises and alarms that he ran out of his class when either school alarms or the school bell rang.

The reading also made me think of our daughter who was six years old when we arrived in Canada in the month of October many years ago. I remember our confusion and precarious housing the first few months in Toronto. While trying to find housing, as we were in a temporary location, we registered her in a nearby school thinking it would be good for her. We moved a few weeks later and had to register her in a different school and in January when we were finally more settled and had found work, she had to move to yet one more school. All this in her first grade! All this for a refugee child who had lived in fear before leaving her country and who now lived with her confused parents who were trying to make sense of life in a new, unexpected situation.

I read the students' memories again and saw how, in their writing, they connected their arrival in the camps with immediate registrations in schools. How much did these schools know about these refugee children? How aware were their parents of what their children were experiencing in schools? How aware was I, as a mother, of what my daughter was experiencing? How were these memories projected when I, as a teacher, was reading the school memories of my students? I say all this, knowing full well, as I said in the previous chapter, that my family's experience cannot be compared to arrival and schooling in a refugee camp. Unlike our family, who flew to Canada after having been given safe haven in the Canadian embassy, the families of these students survived long treks, sometimes on foot, through difficult and dangerous territory, and their housing was at best a tent and later a makeshift home in a crowded UNHCR camp.

In my responses to Reflection #2, I followed a similar pattern to what I had done for Reflection #1. I continued to use positive and congratulatory adjectives such as "profound,"

“intelligent,” and “resilient,” but this time my focus was on the schooling experiences themselves. I was taken by students’ narratives and made specific references to their stories in my responses. Unlike with Reflection #1, I made fewer recommendations for further readings but rather focused on what students had said. I noticed a change in the tone of my responses. They were more direct and dialogical, expressing more familiarity or a level of comfort on my part. What I was learning from the students allowed me to make personal comments based on their writings. The lessons I was learning from my students was the most salient characteristic of my teacher responses to their Reflection #2.

**To Assad:** Your reflection speaks of a relentless love of learning and the efforts that learning has implied for you. It must be rewarding to have the satisfaction of having come through in your studies thanks to so many personal sacrifices including having to take menial jobs to buy school resources. All this must have contributed to making you a resilient person.

**To Aamiina:** You should be so proud of being the strong woman that you are! You’ve proven to your father how wrong he was and by becoming successful in your studies you are a role model for other young women. The story of that physical punishment in class seven is horrible and must have hurt you so much, not just the pain but the fact that it happened in school which was so important to you. However, you not only succeeded but also found people around you that knew it was important to support you such as your uncle and the organizations that have given you scholarships.

Congratulations and be happy you were created a woman. The world needs women like you!

**To Tawfiik:** Not good to have such sad early memories of schooling. Hopefully, Madrassa offered relief for all of you. These stories of distant punishing teachers are unfortunately only too common in people's memories. Also, the recourse to having children repeat rather than teachers and schools examining their own practices to find out if it is them and not the children the ones who are failing. As you say well, the harsh conditions of life in the camp made children continue going to those schools as the only alternative in difficult times.

You have survived well, despite it all and your strong academic skills are a testimony of your strength and resilience, I think.

**To Aaron:** This is beautiful writing! look at this: "I went to school on Monday morning, and I remember I was the first student to arrive in the school compound. My heartbeat was so high beating inside me like a drum beaten in the midst of thousands of the crowd." In a couple of sentences, you are able to transmit the emotions and anxiety of a young boy who will not only read his creation but will defy the system reading what he has written in his home language, the language that he knows best and is the closest to his heart.

I agree with you, writing is not an easy thing to do, and it needs much commitment. However, knowing this can be deeply satisfying and allows you to tell your story, and if you are convinced it is a story that needs to be told, we all learn and become better people as a result. Think of the children clapping after you finished and how the sound of their language spoken in public by a brave student must have healed their souls.

The course, as a result of the topics discussed in the reflections and in the forums, had



become very personal in a way I had not expected. The question of grades and participation marks had been brought up by the students when I asked for the three reflections. My point had been that given the topics of the reflections a grade would be difficult to assign. My proposal was an “A” worth a percentage of the course if all three reflections were handed in. I had also said that the reflections, while responding to course topics, were personal writings as language maintenance and language loss were necessarily personal issues. I added that for that reason, I believed that giving a numerical grade was not appropriate. The students agreed, although some of them said this was unusual given their past experiences in courses and the rigid curriculum and grading expectations, they were used as students in camp schools.

### **Forum Participation**

The readings for October 5 and 12 were intended to continue the connections between schooling, loss of a first language, and acquisition of a second language. Students participated actively in the forum for those classes in addition to uploading their Reflection #2.

In addition to their comments on the readings, which in some cases they summarized, they connected the content of the articles to their experiences with schools in Dadaab and Kakuma, particularly to language issues but also to methodologies and pedagogies. The postings were lengthy, and the majority spoke as teachers in the camp schools about their pedagogical approaches. The exchanges with each other usually included one or two follow-up comments.

**Tawfiik:** The text chapter about new country, new schooling about memories of students’ home writings; describes about challenges children experienced in writing and reading in second language of their second country of Canada. The article figures out the main reason why children of grade two to five experience these challenges and stressed

that shy, low self-esteem and the fact that they are new to the environment is some of the factors that led children to be not active learner in learning the English language very fast. In the context of Dadaab for instance, children experience the same difficulties in writing and reading the English language throughout the lower primary classes but as teachers strive to teach students and encourage them to speak the English language all the time in the school yet speaking fluently is a strong challenge to the students up to the upper classes of the primary education.

**To Tawfiik from Ahmed:** Thanks Tawfiik, Home memories are always in the minds of everyone because, it [has] played a great role in the development and the growth of every individual who grew up [at] home. Therefore, its good to remember every minute.

**Yasmiin:** Learners who ranged from grade 2 to grade 5, English was not their first language and it was most challenging thing for them to acquire, develop, write, speak as well make some of them to feel shy or even scared to be in a school environment and this is what really happened to me during my lower primary school were [where] our administrators forced us to speak colonial language (English language) and this resulted most of learners especially to escape from the school because of speaking English language within the school environment.

**Burhaan:** in Dadaab context learners are facing the same challenges in the schools because they are denied the right to learn through their home language therefore it is very difficult for learners to either read or write using their home language. For example, before local languages are [were] banned from schools, learners used to perform well in their studies and were also very competitive during inter-school debates however when

the home language was stopped from schools, learners started having difficulty in their studies and later resulted them to perform poorly in exams and also failed to attend inter school debates due to lack of confidence associated to eradication of home languages in the school set up. I therefore recommend Dadaab school reverse [to] the previous policy of allowing children to learn their home languages so that they become confident enough to grasp all ideas better.

**Aaron:** When I thought about the reading of this week it took me to the conclusion that if we have some thing very important, it is the maintenance of home language. It is of great importance that we taught our child using in their home language because it will set up strong foundation for them to have strong understand that they will have better knowledge at school and will improve their learning. . . .

I understand that learners who use English as their first language often forget their mother tongue. Children who are taught in a language rather than their home language often find it challenging to understand topics that are taught in the other language. Most children attend schools where neither the language of their community or their home language is used will be very hard for them to capture the topic easily. So, as an educator in Dadaab we need to advocate to strength the use of home language in school or outside so that we students can keep intact with their language.

**To Aaron from Abdii:** Indeed Aaron, we as educators have responsibilities to develop and encourage our students to learn in home languages by working closely with curriculum developers and stakeholders as well to reduce the tensions in process of learning other languages in the country.

Students wrote as teachers and commented on their methodologies:

**Dalmar:** the reading making multilingual groups provides learner skills of writing, reading, and speaking in our context Dadaab refugee camps, teachers use group discussion methods, asking questions in between learners. these approaches are very important to the learners. . . . If the teacher uses explanation method, it will not help the learner therefore this approach to grouping helps the learner in creative thinking and its learner centered approaches whereby the learner is doing the activity and the teacher is facilitating.

**Xirsi:** For example, In Dadaab setting, students encounter similar issues in writing and reading the English language in their early years of schooling but when they reach upper primary they were encouraged to use English as a medium of instruction yet talking fluidly is a substantial test for students. These days, the learner-centered approach is helpful for students' participation and understanding of the concept, therefore; teachers are encouraged to use this approach and should act as facilitators rather than becoming the center of everything.

**Barre:** in Dadaab context, teachers use different techniques to develop active writing and reading skills. Learners are grouped to do assignments together and help each other while receiving guidance from their teachers. . . . Nowadays, learners-centered approach is effective for students understanding and participation through the engagement of activities in the class. Teachers should act as facilitators because students should do everything by their own hence gaining confidence and should need minimal assistance from their teachers.

**Aaden:** In Dadaab learners learn through the learner centered approaches where the teachers supervise the activities carried on by the learners. It gives them the opportunity to invent the own things, hence encouraging their creativity.

**To Aaden from Xirsi:** Very remarkable and thoughtful pedagogical response to the article Aaden. I support your idea that in Dadaab schools, teachers use the learner-centered approach to deliver content.

**To Aaden from Omar:** Thank you Aaden for your idea of the article. In our context Dadaab teachers use learner-centered method to deliver the content where they are more concerned for the learners.

### **Teacher Participation in the Forum**

Interestingly, I only participated in two of the forum dialogues, even though the students were engaged with each other. My interpretation from this distance is that I was more focused on reading their second reflection. In my two entries I took a traditional teacher role going back to the readings and course topic. I mentioned to one student, Gurey, that he should use quotation marks when using a source from the text: “For reading responses I prefer that you use solely your own words and opinions and if you want to cite passages from the text you use quotation marks when the opinions are those of the authors.”

Engaging in pedagogical analysis from an autoethnographic perspective can be trying as in this latter case. I question my decision and consider that intervention as unfortunate. I do not appear concerned by the fact that forum dialogues were public, and that this intervention would be read by the whole class. Did I fall into a traditional authoritarian teacher mode and used the opportunity to teach a lesson about citations to the whole class? If that was my concern, I could

have addressed it as a general point about writing in my weekly communications that I posted in the class Moodle. I see that intervention as a step back in the relationship of trust and reciprocity that I had established in my participation in the forums.

In my second posting in the forum, I focused on the course topics and engaged in commenting points that I found relevant, encouraging the student to continue to explore it as a possible final paper.

**To Aaron from Marcela Duran:**

Hello Aaron,

The article for this week is convincing in reinforcing the importance of first language maintenance, as you say: *“took me to the conclusion that if we have something very important, it is the maintenance of home language.”* At the end of your response, you add: *“So, as an educator in Dadaab we need to advocate to strength the use of home language in school or outside so that students can keep intact with their language.”*

I think the advocating and finding ways of how to do that within the reality of the system where you are teaching in Dadaab should perhaps be the direction of our reflections from now on. . . . What do you think could be the approach for Dadaab? Could this be the theme of your final paper? The idea of *“in school or outside”* is very interesting. *M.*

**Lessons Learned**

The themes that emerged from Reflection #2 and the student writings in the forums brought to the forefront the life of refugee children in camp schools, creating a link to the issues of language loss discussed in the previous chapter. The students’ voices authenticated and

reinforced the critiques of schooling in camps in related literature (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2016, 2017; Duale et al., 2019; Fleming, 2017; Giles & Dippo, 2019; Karangu, 2017; Rawlence, 2016).

In their second reflection and their participation in the forums, students openly expressed vivid memories of schooling and also informed opinions on the readings assigned for the classes of October 5 and 12. In their memories, camp schools appeared as places of containment where they were sent upon arrival. The physical conditions of the buildings and classrooms are described as precarious and unhealthy. Schools are portrayed as contradictory spaces where they were forced to abandon their home languages and adopt two languages of instruction often through punitive measures. Students speak of a disempowered community of parents that were not listened to by authorities when asking for curricular changes for their children. Women tell about their struggles to continue with their schooling, having to overcome barriers imposed by their parents and the weight of cultural traditions. However, schools are also remembered as the places where they made friends, engaged in recreational activities, and met kind and supportive teachers despite the harshness of punishments inflicted by other instructors. In their forum participation, students wrote mostly as teachers, giving informed opinions on the readings assigned and advocating for curricular change in the area of language instruction in schools.

In my communication with students in response to their reflections, I became more engaged. My responses were dialogical and concerned, and I was comfortable in giving opinions about their accounts of memories of school. In the analysis of my forum responses, I noticed a lack of participation, which I attribute to my being involved in responding to their second reflection. Nevertheless, I did take the time to call attention to a student who posted a statement taken from one of the readings as his own. I now interpret my intervention as unnecessary and

one that could have been resolved through private communication and not as a response in the forum, which was public. I still grapple with that as an ethical question.

The weeks of October 19 and 26, discussed in the next chapter, marked a turning point in the way students expressed themselves, this time through their writings about home. There was also a change in the way I participated as a teacher when commenting on their reflections, which were mostly poems, and in my participation in their forum dialogues.



## Chapter VI

### Home

In analysing the writings of my students, I re-read the original course description since in reading the students' reflections, their forum participation, and my responses to them, the course seemed to have become a world unto itself with a rhythm of its own. Reviewing what happened in a course is an opportunity to examine the culture and the world that was created in the process of that teaching and learning event. This 'new world' became more evident to me when reading the forum participation and the texts and poems that the students wrote for the classes of October 19 and 26 and my replies to them. Their texts and my responses signal a shift in both communication and personal engagement.

Between the classes taught on October 12 and October 19, I travelled to Chile. I worked from my study in Toronto, Canada, during the first part of the course and from my study in Santiago, Chile, during the second part of the course.

Class of October 19

Thursday, 18, October 2018, 7:47 PM

Hello dear students,

I am looking forward to meeting you tomorrow for our class, I am in Santiago, Chile, now and as it is, we are only 5 hours apart and not 6 as from Toronto, it will be 8:00 a.m. for me but still 2:00 p.m. for you. I do hope the communication will be smooth. M.

I had informed the class that I would be teaching from a different geographical location, and I stressed that in the communication transcribed above. During the first session taught from Santiago, Kakuma students connected earlier than the rest, and I remember having a casual conversation with them, as one does with early arrivals before in-person classes begin. One of the students asked me about my trip and I lifted my laptop and showed them a view of Santiago from the window of my study. I remember telling them that though we had left as refugees, my husband and I were now able to come back to Chile but had chosen to continue living in Canada. As the writings of the students became more personal in relation to their refuge, the fact of my being in my former home and working with refugee students had, as I think about it now, an emotional impact on me.

For the class of October 19, students had been assigned to view the video of the poem “Home” by the British-Somali poet Warsan Shire and read chapter 4, “New Country, New Language,” from the course’s recommended text *Multilingual Education in Practice*. In the assigned chapter, a teacher and an academic analyze essays and poems that young immigrant children had written about their home countries and the feelings they had when thinking about home. Shire wrote the poem Home, in 2009 after visiting the abandoned Somali embassy in Rome that a number of young Somali refugees had turned into their home (Facing History and Ourselves, 2021). Both the chapter and video of the poem informed the participation of students in the forum following the class of October 19 and inspired their writing of Reflection #3.

On the Monday after the October 19 class, I wrote a note to students reviewing the past two classes, commenting on their forum participation and reminding them of what was expected for the next session:

Personal Reflection #3 for Friday October 26

Monday, 22 October 2018, 1:34 PM

Hello dear students,

I am slowly reading your personal reflection #2, as I decided to work first in reading your responses to Warsan's poem Home. I am impressed with the level of participation in that forum, it has given me a good opportunity to get to know you better and to participate in your dialogues about what the poem has meant to you. Thank you for all that. . . . Now, for the last reflection (#3) the challenge for you is to try your hand at writing a poem or a short piece on Home, *your idea* of Home. You can write it in your first language if you wish, but please add a translation. Sometimes it works for me to have a prompt such as . . . "Home for me is . . ." Linda Christensen, in the article "Where I'm from: inviting students' Lives into the Classroom" about writing poetry with her students (which I was not able to upload for you), relates how she asks her students to try their hand at writing a poem by using "I am from" as the first words.

Looking forward to your writing. M

The reflections on schooling and language that students had written for the course had been tied to the students' perspectives about their lived experiences with loss or maintenance of first languages and how schooling related to those experiences. The third reflection encouraged thinking about home and its importance in people's lives. The intention behind asking for the reflections was to help students make a connection between language and identity, themes that could be related to an idea or memory of home. This was in line with the course aims: "examine . . . who we are in the cultural remix, and questioning identity, history and social values," examine students' "understandings of culture and language," "explore their linguistic landscape," and

“examine traditional and contemporary approaches to teaching in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom” (see Appendix A).

Given the interplay of teacher and student identity as a way to maximize learning in multicultural, multilingual classrooms discussed in the chapters of the assigned reading (Schechter & Cummins, 2003, pp. 8–12), a reflection on home seemed appropriate. However, in my retrospective analysis, I realized I did not think deeply enough at the time of the assignment about the effect that the poem would have on my students.

The forum participation of students commenting on Shire’s poem and the poetry they wrote as Reflection # 3 on home inspired by her poem, marked a turning point. The poem allowed for an opening of their souls to speak more freely about their deep feelings of loss. I transcribe the poem “Home” as an introduction to the students’ writings.

### **Home**

no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you  
breath bloody in their throats  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body  
you only leave home  
when home won’t let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in your belly  
it’s not something you ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt threats into  
your neck  
and even then you carried the anthem under  
your breath  
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet

sobbing as each mouthful of paper  
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land  
no one burns their palms  
under trains  
beneath carriages  
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck  
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled  
means something more than journey.  
no one crawls under fences  
no one wants to be beaten  
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps  
or strip searches where your  
body is left aching  
or prison,  
because prison is safer  
than a city of fire  
and one prison guard  
in the night  
is better than a truckload  
of men who look like your father  
no one could take it  
no one could stomach it  
no one skin would be tough enough

the  
go home blacks  
refugees  
dirty immigrants  
asylum seekers  
sucking our country dry  
niggers with their hands out  
they smell strange  
savage  
messed up their country and now they want  
to mess ours up  
how do the words  
the dirty looks  
roll off your backs  
maybe because the blow is softer  
than a limb torn off

or the words are more tender  
 than fourteen men between  
 your legs  
 or the insults are easier  
 to swallow  
 than rubble  
 than bone  
 than your child body  
 in pieces.  
 i want to go home,  
 but home is the mouth of a shark  
 home is the barrel of the gun  
 and no one would leave home  
 unless home chased you to the shore  
 unless home told you  
 to quicken your legs  
 leave your clothes behind  
 crawl through the desert  
 wade through the oceans  
 drown  
 save  
 be hunger  
 beg  
 forget pride  
 your survival is more important  
  
 no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear  
 saying-  
 leave,  
 run away from me now  
 i don't know what i've become  
 but i know that anywhere  
 is safer than here

Warsan Shire (2009)

### **Analysis of Forum Participation About the Poem “Home”**

The students' forum participation prior to and after the class of October 19 could be considered a climactic point of student participation in the course. All the students wrote in the forum during those days; their entries were extensive, almost one-page essays, rather than short

invitations to forum dialogues. The viewing of the video with the voice of Warsan Shire reciting the poem was the stimulus they needed to express what could be interpreted as pent-up feelings about longing for their lost homes as well as of the anxiety of living in a refugee camp. The comments, in the majority of cases, initiated active forum participation among the students, which had not been the case until that point. I also participated actively in the forum, which I hadn't as much in the other forums.

The themes that emerged in the writing ranged from comments about the poem itself, to sadness about being refugees, to life in the camps and a desire to go back to their home countries, to revelations about personal tragedies and memories of fleeing home. I transcribe excerpts of their postings and, in some cases, the entire dialogue that took place.

### **The Power of Poetry**

In many of the entries, while revealing the deep feelings and connections to their own lives that the poem inspired, students also wrote comments about the poem, demonstrating a familiarity with and an understanding of the power of poetry.

**Barre:** The poem “Home” by Warsan Shire (a British Somali poet) was very impressive and deeply touched my feelings and reminds the days I fled from my home country.

Some of the lines and stanzas directly address the real sentiment of being a refugee. She says “no one would leave home unless home chased you, fire and hot blood in your belly,” this line directly elaborates the process of fleeing home after witnessing hazardous incidents that are not good for human eyes.

In relation to the poem, some of the contemporary immigrants risk their lives in the Mediterranean Sea while endangering the lives of their children thinking such an

alternative is better than a home that is under fire. For the following lines from Warsan's poem, depicts the importance of security and discourages physical violence that can lead [to] displacement and human suffering

"You have to understand"

"No one puts their children in [a] boat"

"Unless the water is safer than the land"

In Dadaab context, the suffering of being a refugee is clear and many youths see their future at risk that they can not change [with] their own hands unless they are provided the opportunities to reach their aspiration. Refugee youths are not allowed to earn a remuneration but rather they are given incentives that can not change their desperate lives. Moreover, those concern nongovernmental organization and the host government is not willing to change such sanctions on refugee youths. However, many opted to risk their lives and went back to their home countries to get a good job that can uplift their living standards and that of their families.

**To Barre from Aamiina:** Barre, I agree with you that you mentioned the challenges that the youths are facing where they cannot change their hands unless given the opportunities to reach their needs.

**To Barre from Marcela Duran:** In very powerful ways you cite lines from the poem Barre, which highlight the dangers that refugees are willing to risk for themselves and their families when confronted with horrible situations.

Your thoughtful comment about youth seeing their future at risk is important to consider. M.

**Aaden:** Warsan has used personification like "mouth of a shark" to create a bad reflection of home, this is to emphasize the fact that everybody wants life at home unless



there is a really good reason for them to leave for other places. . . . Even though she still wants to stay in her home, her home is telling her to run away from the misery and that it is not worth staying, it is also hinting at the fact that there is a higher chance that she will survive anywhere else. We know this from the poem as she tells us that her home said: “I don’t know what I’ve become but I know that anywhere is safer than here.”

**Tawfiik:** The poem by Warsan Shire talks about the importance of peace, happiness and tranquility one could have in one’s home environment. It clearly indicates that there’s nothing like home and the only thing that compels to move or migrate from his/her ecological niche are disasters, war, hate, discrimination, and conflicts. It depicts the possible difficulties that emerge when one evacuates from home.

### **Sadness of Being a Refugee and Life in a Refugee Camp**

We are living in landlocked camps.  
—Abshir

The forum also provided an opportunity for students to document aspects of their lives in the camps. Their writings, while connecting with the poem, were an opportunity to talk about the harshness of their lives. They echoed studies of Dadaab and the life of refugees in camps as described by Besteman (2016) and Rawlence (2016).

According to Besteman (2016), camps have become places of containment where people reside for their entire lives unable to engage in the occupations and affairs that people normally engage in during their daily lives, namely, freedom of movement, economic activities, decision making, governance, etc. (p. 64). Rawlence (2016) in *City of Thorns* gives an account of the everydayness of refugee camp life comparing it to life in a prison: “The geography of a refugee

camp is about two things: visibility and control—the same principles that guide a prison. The refugee camp has the structure of punishment without the crime. The crime is implied” (p. 113).

**Gurey:** I have listened to the poem “Home” by Warsan Shire. I liked it so much that I don't even remember how many times I have repeatedly listened to it. She begins her poem with, “No one leaves home unless the home is the mouth of a shark.” Here, she clearly indicates how one’s home is the best place to be thus there is no place like home. On the other hand, her comparison of the danger of her home to the mouth of a shark also shows how her home is the worst place to be and therefore, she has to leave there in order to save her life. She also says, “no one leaves home unless home chases you” and “no one chooses to live in Refugee Camps.” Personally speaking, as a refugee all the things she mentioned in her poem was the same things I went through physically and/or emotionally. First of all, I thank the Government of Kenya for saving my life and hosting me as a refugee, but I equally resent the same government for restricting my right to travel simply because I am Refugee. Furthermore, I have also been subjected to unfair treatment with regard to remuneration where I earned much less than the citizen of the country, for the same work, simply because I am Refugee. Know that my home is no longer safe, and I could get tortured or even killed by just going there I have to stay here knowing very well that nothing can replace the feeling of home.

Finally, I have to also touch on the most important point Warsan has raised in her poem, “One has to forget pride and beg.” As a Refugee, I don't have anything for myself and therefore, have to wander from one NGO to another to make both ends meet. In the beginning, I found it difficult to push life in such a challenging environment but as time went by I get used to it and life as to continue just for survival. With regard to the insults,

Warsan mentioned in her poem; dirty immigrants, asylum seekers, sucking our country dry, savage, pagan, messed up their country and now they want to mess ours up and so on, in almost a decade and a half, I lived in Dadaab I have seen very many things in life including massive discrimination no one could be like to associate himself/herself with. By and large, I personally appreciate the achievement Warsan had irrespective of her difficult past as a refugee and her poem speaks volumes especially among those of us who have had the same experiences as what she has mentioned in her poem is what we have been and still experiencing.

**To Gurey from Marcela Duran:**

Hello Gurey, Like your reading of Warsan's poem I have read your response to it many times. Thank you for your writing. This difficult world we all share needs to know and learn from the experiences that you and Warsan describe.

Indeed, as you and Warsan say, nobody leaves home unless home chases you out. Why would people leave if it wasn't because they are forced to and then the receiving society does not always welcome the one seeking refuge; or welcomes halfway giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

I think writing is important Gurey and I encourage you to continue writing about your experiences. We can become better when our souls are touched. m.

**To Gurey from Tawfiik:** Perfect, Gurey. Indeed, we have experienced the same thing you met at Dadaab refugee camps, and this really affected us both mentally and Physically.

**Abshir:** We are called refugees and we have no right to move beyond five kilometers from where we are living. We are living in landlocked camps and our movement is

limited. In the camps when the sun sets everyone runs for home simply because the situation is disappointing, as already I said we are living in landlocked camps.

**Barre:** In Dadaab context, the suffering of being a refugee is clear and many youths see their future at risk that they cannot change with their own hands, unless they are provided the opportunities to reach their aspirations. Refugee youths are not allowed to earn a remuneration but rather they are given incentives that cannot change their desperate lives.

### **Desire to go Back Home—Longing for Their Home Country**

Home is a very important place.  
—Aamiina

Despite the tragic events that caused their having to leave home, many students expressed a deep longing for their lost home. Home is described as a beautiful place, a place of childhood memories, a place of identity, and the place to return to. Only Aaron wrote about the camp being a home. This was similar to the poems they wrote as Reflection #3, where only Fawzia referred to the camp as home.

**Tawfiik:** The poem by Warsan Shire talks about the importance of peace, happiness, and tranquility one could have in one's home environment. It clearly indicates that there's nothing like home and the only thing that one compels to move or migrate from his/her ecological niche are disasters, war, hate, discrimination and conflicts. It depicts the possible difficulties that emerge when one evacuates from home.

When fled from home, one experiences challenges that can limit the total development of the person which can throw him into misery and confusion. For instance, when the Somali refugee people fled from their home country met so many problems and challenges which resulted death, poverty, migration as well as draught and famine

throughout the country where up to now both those who fled and remained in the country suffered with various problems that includes the right to access their fundamental rights and end up to stay as a refugee in all over the world. The poet tries to educate us that still discrimination is one of the main factors which is affecting everyone whose home environment turn into fire and fury.

The poem undoubtedly advising us to rebuild our home or country at any cost since wherever we go, we'll never find a place like it neither we live comfortable in one's country or home as racism and all sorts of discrimination may encounter us throughout life.

**To Tawfiik from Abdii:** Hi Tawfiik, thanks for talking about “discrimination” as circumstances of forcing people from homes, I agree with you because, in most of the African nations and less developed countries around the globe, there are structured gentrification discriminatory policies intentionally by the governments to force the poor community to undeveloped areas which need educators to work hard with other stakeholders in the process of bringing sustainable social, economic and political changes.

**To Tawfiik from Xirsi:** I agree with you and appreciated you for reminding us of the discrimination that we faced as refugees in Dadaab.

**To Tawfiik from Marcela Duran:** Important points Tawfiik. The poet does educate us, as you say, to the reality of discrimination no matter where we are in the planet. The need to rebuild home is for all of us to think about. M.

**Aaron:** My home is (or was) a loving supportive environment in which I grew up and discovered myself . . . as many said that home is somewhere that is both desirable and

that exists in the mind's eye as much as in a particular physical location. I never agreed with that expression, home is where everyone has the right to move to any direction (north and south, west, and east). Take for example, we could consider Dadaab our home because some of us stayed in it for the last 20 years, even there are some who were born in the camp but yet we were very restricted to move and this is the saddest part of the refugee life, but we feel safer here.

**Abel:** Home is the best ever and you cannot compare the place where you were born with other countries even if you are living in a beautiful high rise building in a foreign country because home is where you belong to with full citizenship and not half of a citizen.

**Gurey:** I know that my home is no longer safe, and I could get tortured or even killed by just going there I have to stay here, knowing very well that nothing can replace the feeling of home.

**Fawzia:** We will pray to God to restore peace and security to our homelands so that we go back and participate in the development of the countries.

### **Revelations About Personal Tragedies and Memories of Fleeing Home**

The forum served as well as a catalyst to talk about the horrors that students had experienced and the reason why they had to leave home.

**Bishaaro:** we fled the civil war that broke our country and came to Kenya as asylum seekers where we get assistance, but we feel sad because we lost many of our beloved ones, our brothers and sisters.

**Aamiina:** In the real sense this poem touches our hearts because most of our people living in Dadaab camp have been displaced by the war that happened in Somalia whereby

people lost their life property and their family members, some are orphans and some lost their mothers, however, home is a very important place.

**Aaron:** When I remember my childhood life at home place, it was a place where I miss a word to express, it was the life that I could not compare it with anything, my memory of my home river where I usually go with mom to fetch water, and the busy market, my school compound and the town main road that passes next to our compound. I left the place when people were killed, I left when hearing the sound of guns and bomb, when am told that Dad was killed. I was forcefully evicted from my home.

**Maryam:** I was born in a refugee camp with my twin brother. After 10 months the government asked us to go back home. . . . Things were not very easy, my mum asked my dad to look for another place to go but not home. . . . My mum and us decided to go back . . . but loo! no sooner had we arrived than the same night my twin brother was killed because he was a boy, in absence of my dad, they finished his seed. This story is not easy to tell because it pains me a lot, but what I am trying to say is that it has never been easy to even recover from that incident.

### **Teacher Responses in the Forum**

What does a teacher do when students open their souls as a result of input or materials introduced in a course? The powerful, and in many cases harrowing, writing of students in the forum such as Maryam's compelled me to write more personal replies. This time I participated in all the postings by the students. I referred to their writing again using praising adjectives such as "insightful," "powerful," "beautiful," "thoughtful," and "profound" while sometimes adding notes about my own experience. However, none of my responses reflect the profound impact

their writing had on me, how it changed me, and how it made me question my capacity to connect with the students. It also made me question the pedagogical risk I had taken in both including Warsan Shire's "Home" and asking for a reflection on home.

**To Ahmed:** Your comments about the power of the poem to bring up the memory of home are very insightful. In my opinion you are right in saying that whoever listens to it will necessarily feel homesick.

**To Aaden:** This is a beautiful and insightful response and analysis of Home. I agree that it is a symbol of expression for all refugees. I relive my own experiences of having been a refugee every time I listen to it.

**To Yasmiin:** Thoughtful analysis of Warsan's poem. Indeed, "*no one will leave home for pleasure purposes.*"

I commented on the feelings students expressed when reading "Home" and what they said about the reality of refuge. I took the risk of giving my opinions about their life in the camp.

**To Abdii:** Yes, the sadness can be overwhelming, as you say well. Your strength and courage in bringing this up is exemplary.

**To Fawzia:** In doing this you make us reflect on the meaning of home and the experience and profound sadness of refuge.

**To Assad:** True, it is a hard poem to listen to. It brings not only memories but a need to look at the present situation in Dadaab as you and many of your peers have pointed out.

**To Ibrahim:** Your connection with the poem is also very helpful in understanding the emotional weight of being a refugee, either in a holding situation like Dadaab or being away and living in a country of refuge forced not to return home, like Warsan.



I praised their strength and courage and let them know the lessons they had taught me. I stressed how much I learned from them.

**To Maryam:** Thank you for your words and example. I learn from your strength.

In reading my responses, it is evident that the content clearly moved me in a way I hadn't expected. I responded to every posting, which had not been the case in the previous forums. I wish now, in retrospect, that I had been more active in the forums. The forum was viewed, and possibly read, by all the students, similar to what happens with students' questions and dialogues in a classroom. My voice as the teacher in the internet forum was powerful and public, as it would have been in a classroom. and different from the private responses given to each student for their Reflections, which in the case of Reflection #3 were mostly poems.

### **Reflection #3: Poems and Texts About Home**

“The appeal of poetry,” he said, “lies in the fact that it is poetry!”  
 –Sheikh ‘Aaqib ‘Abdullahi Jaama’ (Samatar, 1982, p. 56)

Parallel, and following student participation in the forum on home, they wrote the third required reflection. I had suggested they could write a poem if that was their preference. In my teaching, I had experienced asking future teachers to try their hand at writing poetry in class inspired by Linda Christensen's (2002) approach, as discussed in the note I sent students prior to the October 26 class. This third reflection was the culmination of a process of self-examination as suggested in the course description and the course text, where in order to understand multilingualism and multiculturalism in school settings teachers should go through a process of self-reflection. I thought poetry could lend itself to self-reflection, given the connections students

could make to Shire's poem about home, which in many ways reflected their own reality. My decision to use a poem by a Somali poet was influenced by principles of inclusive teaching pedagogy, where teachers are expected to incorporate an understanding of students' identities and realities in their teaching. However, what I question now is whether it was my place to include a poem that was a harrowing reminder of the harshness of exile and refuge.

In analysing my teaching in this course, it is clear to me that I was not prepared for the students' responses. The number of poems and the quality of the writing contributed by the students took me by surprise and lead me to research Somali poetry, given that the majority of students in the class were Somalis. I discuss this in an article I wrote with three of the students from the course published in *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry Journal* (Duran et al., 2020).

### ***Reflection #3: Poems About Home***

I hail from a beautiful place called "home."  
—Barre

Sixteen students chose to write poems, two students reproduced a poem that inspired them, and one paraphrased Warsan Shire's "Home." The other students wrote texts about home or being refugees. Fawzia was the only student who wrote a poem about the camp being home. Some of the poems were written in first languages with an accompanying translation and one of the students decided to submit the poem in first language only. The themes that are most prevalent in the poems are a deep nostalgia for home, home as a beautiful, sweet place, and home as the place where family and culture are located. They also speak of the sadness of refuge, home as a traitor, the deep desire to return home, and the duty to protect home. While there is some similarity to the themes of the texts students wrote in the forum, the lyricism of the poems conveys a deeper and more personal message.

Although it was tempting to reproduce all the poems, I made the difficult decision to use only one poem to illustrate each theme, despite the fact that several of the themes were present in many of the poems, for example, a poem that was mostly about a deep nostalgia for home also described home as a beautiful, sweet place (see Appendix B for the other poems).

### **Theme 1–Nostalgia**

But whenever I see bats looking for shelter, I yearn for my home  
beyond the dark part of one's imagination  
–Tawfiik

Of the themes that emerged in the poems, nostalgia for a lost home and being refugees were the prevalent themes. A majority of the students wrote verses of deep nostalgia combined with the sadness and harshness of refuge and exile.

**Aaden:**

#### **Home is Sweet**

Away from you  
It never worked before  
Being away  
From you  
Hurt  
Like never before  
But since am gone now  
I can feel  
When the early morning  
Shines around you  
Putting a wide range of rays  
That is good for the soul  
Healing the wounds and putting  
A smile on the face  
Like never before  
My heart beats  
And it drags me  
The longing for you more  
Like never before

## Theme 2–Home as a beautiful, sweet place

Home is the best nothing best than it  
–Salim

Geography, flora, and fauna were recalled, and home was portrayed as a beautiful, sweet place that heals the soul.

### **Dalmar:                      poem on home**

my home is rich for better living in the whole  
life, wildlife and domestic animals  
homeland, homeland, let's protect it, it's paramount  
to our lives  
my home country is rich, so says its rivers flow,  
and green vegetables  
homeland, homeland, let's protect it, it's paramount  
to our lives  
my homeland is rich for joy, hills, mountains with monkeys,  
birds flying and playing and jumping from side to side  
with majestic happiness emotion and prosperity  
homeland, homeland, let's protect it, it's paramount  
to our lives  
my homeland is rich for wealth and health  
see the beautiful color of its sea known as Indian ocean  
it reaches from Jabuti to Kenya,  
and rivers,  
river Jabelle and river Juba.  
homeland, homeland let's protect it, its paramount  
to our lives  
my home is for harmony, see the people and compassion  
and passion, their hearts close to each other  
my homeland, my homeland, let's protect it, its paramount  
to our lives  
there is no place like my homeland  
no one likes to leave his home unless there are reasons  
that forces to leave home  
home, home, home let us protect it, its paramount  
to our lives

### Theme 3–Home as traitor

I am leaving, escaping, I will never come back home. I am gone  
 Carrying pain with me! Ooooooooooh! Pain only  
 –Maryam

Together with expressions of longing for home, and almost as a contradiction, feelings of abandonment and betrayal are present in many of the poems. In these cases, home appears as a traitor, a place of murders and death and political treason, the culprit for exile and refuge, and a place of no return.

**Gurey:**

**Dhugaa-Truth** (translation)

Oh truth, hard to find  
 In your absence no life for mankind  
 Where can I get you?  
 You are nowhere to be found  
 As I am checking all around  
 People tell me all lies  
 But they say they are true  
 They don't see that  
 I can see the truth  
 I know very well that  
 The road to finding you is too narrow  
 While the road to lies too wide  
 That is why  
 Thousands died for your cause  
 Killed, tortured and detained  
 Raped and forced to live in exile  
 With the circumstances beyond me  
 Had no option but to flee  
 An inferior being worth nothing  
 Praying and caring for my well being  
 Because life is a beautiful thing  
 For every living being  
 For the truth is always the winner  
 That will make the homeless homeowner  
 I will never lose hope  
 As I knew one day  
 No matter how long it takes  
 The truth will win the race

The only remedy for my lost glory  
 My truth, my home  
 Let people know I also have a home  
 Like any other  
 Where people once lived in harmony together!

#### **Theme 4—Being a refugee**

I saw you calling me back and  
 that calling is still ringing in my heart like school morning bell  
 Without you no more of me  
 —Aaron

In many of the poems the result of students having had to flee their homes and ending up in refuge is present. They speak of being refugees and what it has meant to them.

#### **Ibrahim:**

#### **Home**

Home! Home! Home!  
 Home is where I was born and bred  
 can I be without it?  
 home is where I was identified as a  
 Somali by nationality  
 and found  
 my global identity  
 can I be without it?  
 Home is where my closest family members  
 Such as father, mother,  
 grandparents  
 Sisters and brothers live  
 can I be without it?  
 home is where my beloved friends and the community's  
 Culture is found  
 Can I be without it?  
 Home-whatever you were before,  
 Now I am a refugee in another place,  
 Identity-less, I am without rights  
 Wow! Do I deserve to be a refugee!  
 Anyway, I realized that everywhere I go

Home seems the best,  
 Home I wanna go back, by any means “death” or “life”  
 Home I wanna stay with you until I go out of the universe  
 Anyway, I realized that everywhere I go  
 home seems the best

### **Theme 5—Home as the location of family and culture**

My caring mother,  
 Who loves and nurtures her children  
 That is home  
 —Bashiir

Despite the horrors, home is also personified as a caring parent and benefactor, as well as the place of childhood memories, homeland, and community. Home is spoken about as the location of family and culture, the inheritance from ancestors, that which provides national and global identity and the place where community and relatives live.

**Xirsi:**

#### **Sweet is Home**

No Trauma,  
 No nightmares,  
 Observed are my rights-  
 Next to daddy: I sit,  
 A mug of chocolate I drink-  
 I sip.  
 No discrimination:  
 Such is a sweet home.  
 Well ironed clothes,  
 Clean, neat and tidy:  
 From my mom I receive:  
 Such is a sweet home.  
 Playing children,  
 Beautiful chicken-  
 Amazing stories,  
 And happy babies-  
 Such is a sweet home.  
 Wise elders  
 Wife makers  
 Well thought ideas:  
 Such is a sweet home.

Moral virtues  
 Memorable moments  
 Such is a sweet home-  
 Home is like fresh camel milk;  
 During a dry season.  
 Once lost, can't be regained.  
 Such is a sweet home.

### **Theme 6–The refugee camp as home**

We need peace, peace, peace  
 –Yasmiin

Only one student wrote about the camp being home. While being unique in recognizing the camp as the home where the student had grown up, the theme of the harshness of being a refugee is also present in this poem, as in most of the other poems.

**Fawzia:**

#### **Dadaab my Home**

Home for hopeless  
 Like me and thousand others  
 Exactly two decades and a half ago  
 When my parents were in despair  
 I never knew only suffered the long journey  
 Tired of walking all that distance  
 My younger brother on my mother's back  
 I being right on her chest  
 With no water and food to take  
 We never cared about facility  
 But escaping from massive hostility  
 Where thousand got killed  
 Thousand other detained  
 Thank you Dadaab for hosting me  
 For schooling me  
 It is because of you that I am who I am today  
 You will always stay in my heart  
 With all the bad and good events  
 Dadaab the only place I call home  
 The place where I starve  
 Seen all the meanings of life  
 Including education to strive  
 Had all the ups and downs of life



Have nothing to regret for  
 For living all those years here  
 You are even better than Somalia  
 The country where I was born  
 Later turned into war torn  
 You will always be in my heart  
 Whether things go wrong or go right

### **Theme 7–The wish to return home**

Home is the identity of person  
 –Salim

Despite the students' sadness and anger at what fate has unleashed on them, many of the poems also express the longing to go back, and the certainty that one day they will be home.

#### **Abel : Home is the best**

Home, home, sweet home  
 there is no place like home  
 Everyone should have a home  
 Big or small home is home  
 Home, home, sweet home  
 When I wake in the morning always remember  
 about home.  
 Where we moved together as a team during  
 childhood at home  
 And sometimes I do cry day and night when am  
 thinking about home  
 Home, home sweet home  
 Today am so far away for conflict and violence  
 that exist in home  
 But I will be back any time when peace coming  
 home  
 Home, home, sweet home  
 As long as I live on this universe wouldn't forget  
 about you  
 Even if I remain silent my memory still worries  
 about you  
 But time will come when I get an opportunity to talk  
 about you  
 Home, home, sweet home

### **Analysis of teacher responses to students' poetry about home**

In reading the unexpected gift of poetry from my students, I reacted with admiration and surprise; my responses to them were not so much academic feedback but an emotional reaction to the power of their writing. This is not what would be expected of a teacher connecting student writing to course content. In none of my responses to them did I talk about the objective of the course and the originally stated reason for the assignment. In saying this, I am reminded of what Mishra-Tarc said to us in one of her classes: “teachers don’t know how they are going to be affected by their students” (class notes, March 2021). What I learned from reading my comments is that I was deeply affected by the students’ poetry and that my reaction was mostly admiration and empathy. In most of my notes to them, if not in all, I begin by thanking them for their poem and I resort to the adjectives “beautiful” and “powerful” to express my reaction to their work. I quote or paraphrase lines that I particularly liked or was moved by, rather than going into an analysis of their poems.

**To Abel:** Thank you very much for your trust in sharing your poem here. . . . Yes, I believe a time will come when you will get the opportunity to talk about home and that you will be back when peace comes; and yes! “Everyone should have a home.”

Your thoughts about home seem to be always with you as you express them here. They are with you when you wake up in the mornings and throughout the day, these are beautiful thoughts

I really liked the line where you say that even if you remain silent your memory still worries about home.

**To Tawfiik:** So glad you took time to write this. . . . There are some truly beautiful verses in your poem. I will always remember:

“Birds that fly in all directions and all animals on land and those in sea have one thing in common, that’s home.”

Thank you.

**To Aaden:** Thank you for your trust in sharing your poem with me. . . . I like the way you decided to repeat “like never before” at the end of each stanza. Powerful.

**To Gurey:** Thank you for sharing your poem and for translating it. I tried sounding it out and I could sense the rhythm of the verses. I wished I could understand the language as I was reading it. Your translated poem is very moving and your decision to equate truth with home is powerful. . . .

Thank you.

**To Fawzia:** You say so much in your introduction and in your poem. In reading your lines I appreciate your honesty and generosity in recognizing Dadaab, the place where you “Had seen all the ups and downs of life.”

**To Salim:** I’m glad you posted your poem in your home language. Thank you for the translation as well. Beautiful how you say that home is the pride and identity of the person.

In some of my notes, I comment on the difficult or sad situation described in the poem but I, with some exceptions, mostly withhold commentary other than expressions of empathy or support.

**To Maryam:** There are no words after reading your Agahinda Gusa-Pain Only Thank you.

**To Barre:** Thank you for sharing your poem.

Your poem sums up your feelings and history. In a few verses you tell the story and I do like that despite the harshness you begin with the line: “I hail from a beautiful place called Home” that part needs to be safeguarded in your memory.

**To Ibrahim:** Thank for sharing your poem.

I like how you begin several verses with “Home is where . . .” and with this you define what is/was best of home. You also then follow with what happened to you but end up forgiving and realizing that the memory of what was best of home is still with you. Moving and powerful.

**To Yasmiin:** this is a profound piece that deserves a long conversation. I wish I was sitting in front of you listening to your ideas. Many aspects to your writing . . . first your introduction about the relation between language, culture and identity and how they are intimately intertwined and how you feel your mother tongue gives you a sense of belonging which you find hard to part with. The second part is your decision of writing your poem in Somali and although I cannot understand it, I can get the sense of rhythm and depth. Once I read the translation, I can see the strength of the lament and the force of your feelings that come so strong with the repetitions such as: “and the people, the people,” “we need peace, peace, peace.”

**To Ahmed:** This is very powerful. Beautiful how for you the memory of home remains as being “sweet . . . as honey”. In your verses you tell a story which is hard, but I really like how you rescue the sweetness of home and the fact that you will not lose it because it is the inheritance from your ancestors.

### **Reflection #3: Texts**

Six students wrote texts as a reflection. Interestingly, they decided to use the opportunity of Reflection #3 to share aspects of their lives but not necessarily on the theme of home, which most of their classmates who wrote poetry did. While not speaking specifically about the camp being a home, their essays speak about their lives there. They also make a point of thanking Kenya for hosting them and supporting them, which, with one exception, was not the case in the poetry submissions. Escaping their homelands and arriving in the camps is a theme in these texts, as well as their pride in the educational opportunities they had there including the possibility of accessing postsecondary education through York University. Love for their mothers and their courage is also highlighted in the essays. Exceptions to other reflections were Burhaan's and Bashir's, which were about frightening events in their lives. Burhaan wrote about the hazardous trip to the camp, and Bashir wrote about a dangerous encounter with local gangsters in the camp. His account echoes events recounted by Rawlence (2016) in his study.

### **Escaping homelands and thanking Kenya for shelter, support, and education**

**Abdii:** I'm so proud and thankful to mighty God for he spoke through Kenyans not only to hosting, but also for offering me with advanced educational opportunities, which is sponsored by YorkU and now enjoying my time while pursuing BA in education at BHER project learning centre.

**Omar:** I was born in Somalia in 1991. When the civil war broke out, we fled to Kenya border in 1992 where we were received kindly by the government of Kenya and the UNHCR.

**Aamiina:** My mother was very encouraging and supportive. . . . She used to encourage me and my siblings to work extra hard in our studies in order to get a good job in the future, I promised her that I will do my best to help her back the way she helped me. I studied hard to finish my secondary level and proceeded to university where I have done my diploma in teaching and now getting my degree in BA education from York University.

### **The hazardous road to Dadaab and the camp as frightening places**

**Burhaan:** We fled from Somalia to seek refuge in the neighbouring country Kenya. We had several challenges on our way to Liboi town which is a town situated in the border between Kenya and Somalia. There were road blocks every 5 metres that made our journey difficult. We were to pay ransom in every roadblock for access to passage and clearance. It was unfortunate that when we came near the border that the vehicle we were travelling caught fire which made my life and that of my family at risk. Thanks to God we escaped peacefully from the incident . . . the driver explained to me that it is a result of contaminated petrol that he bought from one of the shops in a place called Qoqani. The driver explained to me further that since there is no government in place the businessmen contaminate the petrol by adding water so that they can increase the quantity of petrol.

**Assad:** I saw three of the gang men while two remained at the main door, after we realized that, we tried to escape them. . . . I run to the house and then hid myself in the corner, one of them entered looking for me after he realized he had showed me his gun, the room was very dark, all my family had gone and jumped the fence everywhere was quite a silence. Phones ringing but no one responded. . . . After a late hour, gunmen had

gone, block people came asking for the victim and condemning but I was shocked . . . sleeping that night was very difficult. During that night all my family slept together in one room, which was very congested, fearing return back of the enemy . . . at sunrise we reported to the police and the block leader, after a long investigation the government declared the gunmen are not from any other place but they live with us in the camp.

### **Teacher responses to Reflection #3 texts**

In contrast to my responses to the poems, my replies to the prose reflections were more engaged in the events the students related, and I made critical comments about the situations students were living in. I also praised them for how courageous they were when facing difficult circumstances.

**To Assad:** From what I read here what happened to you makes living in the camp very difficult. It seems so unfair as the camp is supposed to give protection to refugees. Has anything else been done about it?

**To Abdii:** This is an important story and I wish many people would learn from it. I have certainly learned from reading it. There are many aspects to your story that are remarkable and through them all, shines the brave figure of your mother and your strength as a young boy facing so many discriminations and also the story of cultural and linguistic suppression.

**To Abshir:** Reading your story makes me appreciate even more your very thoughtful and dedicated work in the course. All your family must have been so sad losing your uncle. I really like how you recognize and thank those who have helped you be where you are

despite how hard life has been for you in the past. You and your family are strong resilient people.

**To Amiinaa:** Given your accomplishments and hard work, you must be a very good mentor to those young students, especially girls, who must see you as an example to be followed. Women like you, who are fortunate to have grown up raised by strong women like your mother, change the world.

**To Omar:** I hope you can go back to teaching soon. Or are you still teaching even though you didn't get the earlier position? Those beginning years as a teacher must have been very trying for you. You must be proud of all your accomplishments since, and the fact that you will be graduating in 2019.

### **Lessons Learned**

The poetry and texts by the students and the analysis of the themes emerging from their writing were powerful lessons for me as a teacher. Their participation moved me to ask pedagogical questions I hadn't anticipated before teaching the course: Did I gain pedagogical insight after reading what my students wrote? Did I expect, or even think through, how I would be affected by my students? Was I able to continue sharing content with them that would be interesting and helpful for them? Did I understand or reflect on the ethicality of my interactions with my students as they were sharing with me deeply emotional texts through their poetry and their reflections in prose? In this sense, Zembylas and Vrasidas (2005) posit, "ethical online pedagogy requires paying attention to ways in which interactions across difference promote relationality, humility, criticality, and responsibility" (p. 77).



Despite my questions, I believe that the power of the students' poetry and the honesty of their communication brought pedagogical changes that enriched the connections we shared despite continental distances. Judith Butler's "intertwinement" helps me think of the connections that teachers have with students despite distances and differences.

I want to insist upon a certain intertwining between that other life, all those other lives, and my own—one that is irreducible to national belonging or communitarian affiliation. (Butler, 2012, p. 141)

The apparent ease with which students used poems as the literary form for their Reflection #3 caught me by surprise initially until I became more informed of the importance of poetry in Somali culture. The themes of nostalgia, sadness of refuge, betrayal, horror of war, home as the location of family and culture, and a desire to return expressed by the students in their poems and comments on the poetry of Warsan Shire in the forum, brought to the forefront the poetic tradition of Somalis. Literature about Somalia as a nation of poets confirms the prominence of poetry in Somali culture (Andrzejewski & Lewis, 1964; Duran et al., 2020; Joog & Somali Museum of Minnesota, 2017; Laurence, 1954/1993, 1963; Rawlence, 2016; Samatar, 1982). However, poetry as a vehicle to show the open wounds of refuge and exile was also present in the writings of students of Ethiopian and Rwandan backgrounds. The themes of escape, violence, and fear present in the texts written as prose also echo the research done in Dadaab by Rawlence (2016) and the stories of Somali Bantus as recounted by Besteman (2016).

In the following chapter, I present the final classes and analyse student voices in the forum, my responses to them, and our communication in bringing the course to an end. In the forum, the majority of students wrote about their role as teachers in camp schools and commented on readings and videos from that perspective.

## Chapter VII

### Storytelling, Teaching, and Community

The course comprised two sections. The first part was a self-examination on the importance of first languages for the individual as well as the social and cultural significance of first-language loss as a result of hegemonic language of instruction ideologies. Reflections 1–3 served that purpose. The second part of the course linked those themes to issues of contemporary schooling and advocated for community engaged education. It was also intended to raise the point of the responsibility of educators teaching in multilingual, multicultural schools to enable what Schecter and Cummins (2013) term “The Interpersonal Space of Cognitive Engagement and Identity Investment”:

the interpersonal space of teacher-student interactions [within which] students’ cognitive engagement must be maximized if they are to progress academically. Similarly, teacher-student interactions must affirm students’ cultural, linguistic, and personal identities in order to create classroom conditions for maximum identity investment in the learning process. (pp. 9–10)

In teaching and learning about this pedagogical approach, the students and I had engaged in replicating the classroom conditions described by Schecter and Cummins. I had invited the students to speak about their personal identities related to their first languages, schooling experiences, and memories of home. As a result, I had become involved in their stories and shared my own experiences of exile, schooling, and language learning in my responses. However, my involvement and sharing of my own story was not planned but emerged

spontaneously as a result of my emotional engagement with the students' accounts of their experiences.

As the last four classes drew near, the course had reached the point where readings, reflections, and forum discussions pointed to connections that would tie what had been learned to the reality of the lives of multilingual, multicultural students in schools. The reflections students wrote, readings, guest lecture, and videos of the first section of the course had engaged students, both cognitively and emotionally. In the classes that followed in November, they spoke openly of their work as teachers, commenting on their professional lives.

On October 26 students viewed the film *The Story Telling Class* (Paskievich & Whiteway, 2009) and on November 16 the video of the lecture *A Retrospective on Being a Community-Engaged Black Woman Scholar* (Haddix, 2017) related to Community Engaged teaching. They also read articles on schools, community mapping, and community engagement in multicultural, multilingual school settings. Students used the forum to comment on the films and readings and also took the opportunity to talk about the schools where they worked. Carolyn Shield's article "What is a Good School" (2005) and *The Story Telling Class* opened a conversation about what makes a good school. The film, which showcased a multicultural school where students did not relate to each other and where their teachers knew very little about their individual stories stimulated active forum discussion.

The power of the film lies in its focus on the pedagogical skills and dedication of a teacher who decides to make an intervention through storytelling with a group of multicultural students who felt isolated in the school where he worked. The film also features Ismael Beah, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone who is the author of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (2007) and who visited the school to talk about the power of stories. The film was

recommended to me by Jan Stewart whose book *Supporting Refugee Children* (2011) I had learned from.

In the classes that followed the viewing of the film, students participated in the forums actively, as did I. I also introduced the concept of “erasure pedagogy” (Burke et al., 2008) as a follow up to Schecter and Cummins’ (2003) notion of “subtractive pedagogy.” Teachers not only subtract what children know when they are punished for speaking their first language, but their identities are erased, not unlike what was intended in residential schools in Canada as in “take the Indian out of the child” (Fine, 2015; Sasvari, 2021). Darrel McCleod (2022) in an opinion piece published in the *Globe and Mail* refers to this experience:

Mother told a story of her and her sister Margaret having to walk barefoot, their moccasins around their necks, for two days, subsisting on bread and water, as punishment for speaking Nehiyaw (Cree) in St. Bernard’s. I can’t begin to imagine the frustration a young child would feel at not being able to express themselves adequately, for years, until the target language, English, had been sufficiently acquired. The brainwashing worked; the language was lost in just two generations. In my family, few of my generation, or the younger ones, speak Nehiyaw fluently. When we would ask Mother to teach us, she would say:

“English. You have to speak English if you wanna be somebody someday.”

McCleod’s piece is reminiscent of the accounts of my students when writing about language loss and experiences of schooling in their reflections.

My course announcements and communication with them for the class of October 26 and the ensuing November classes were brief and related to the themes of their readings. There were also lengthier ones giving instructions or answering questions about their final papers. Below I

include some of them, including the last one thanking them for their participation and for what they had taught me.

Thursday, 25 October 2018, 10:22 PM

Dear students I am looking forward to meeting with you tomorrow Friday Oct. 26. I continue to read your postings with great interest and learn so much from you. I hope that we will have the opportunity to talk about your writings as well as hear your opinions about the Film The Story Telling Class.

Friday, 9 November 2018, 7:57 AM

Hello again class,

Very good to see you today despite all the interruptions, most of them probably my technological fault. I have reposted the announcement with the assignment descriptions hopefully now it is clear to all. I have already deleted some old announcements as they could be confusing. Again, make sure you post your final assignment on November 23.

Monday, 12 November 2018, 5:15 PM

Hello dear students,

Marcelle Haddix's video **A Retrospective on Being a Community-Engaged Black Woman Scholar** related to community-engaged teaching, now available for our next class of this coming Friday, November 16 and response forum open.

Thursday, 22 November 2018, 4:29 PM

Hello EDST2450 students,

I am looking forward to connecting with you tomorrow Friday November 23, Time has flown by and I imagine how busy you all are given the many courses you are engaged in.

For tomorrow I asked you to go back to the beginning of the course and read again the articles posted for the classes of Sep. 14 and Sep. 21.

Friday, 30 November 2018, 7:11 AM

Dear students,

Thank you very much for these 12 weeks of learning. I wish you the best in your studies.

I learned so much from you through reading your reflections and your responses to the forums.

Make sure you continue to hold on to your linguistic power and share with others the joys and advantages that being able to communicate well in many languages brings.

I hope that those of you who are teaching will think about the importance of practicing additive and not subtractive or erasure pedagogy when working with your multilingual students.

Marcela

### **Forum Participation**

On October 26, students read the assigned readings and viewed the film *The Story Telling Class*. On November 2 the theme was What is Education Quality? The following two classes were dedicated to community engagement; the theme for November 9 was Mapping a Community and Connections to School. On November 16 the students viewed the video presentation by Marcelle Haddix, *A Retrospective on Being a Community Engaged Scholar*, and

for class 11 they went back to the first readings of the course and reflected on what the term had taught us as a collective.

The interactive and engaged forum participation of the last 4 weeks was a good opportunity for the students to discuss their experiences as teachers. They no longer talked about their past personal experiences but spoke about their present work in the camp schools. The themes ranged from specific points about pedagogy, the importance of storytelling in schools, first languages and teaching, and community engagement. There were also specific critiques about the physical state of schools in the camps, precarious salaries, and working conditions, and recommendations for curricular improvement. Despite the critical comments, there were significant postings on the positive role schools played in the lives of children and communities in the camps. The forums were public conversations students had with each other and the teacher, and no longer a private exchange with the teacher as was the case with Reflections 1–3.

### ***Teaching in the Camps***

In the class forums in relation to the readings where schools were discussed, students spoke about their teaching. The impact of global and current teaching approaches as shared in teacher education literature and teacher education programs was noticeable.

**Barre:** In Dadaab context, teachers use different techniques to develop active writing and reading skills. Learners are grouped to do assignments together and help each other while receiving guidance from their teachers.

**Aaron:** After all, this is very true in Dadaab, the teacher is considered the source of knowledge. But, since us the teachers, are learning different skills here at York University, we are attempting the initiative where we engage students in discussion

during our classroom time. . . . I believe that this article is also helpful for schools to develop a better understanding of issues related to forced migration experience. Applying the information learned from the article will ease the trauma of the students and open a good relationship between students and teachers.

**Aaden:** In Dadaab, learners learn through the learner centred approaches where the teacher supervise the activities carried on by the learners. It gives them the opportunity to invent their own things, hence encouraging their creativity.

Students also used the forum to raise issues of concern similar to the ones that existed when they were students in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Much of what they said echoes the critical voices of researchers concerned about the state of schooling in camps (Dryden Peterson, 2016; Duale et al., 2020).

**Gurey:** The fact in our local context is far from what I have read in this article, in that majority of teachers who teach in the camp schools today are untrained. There are also low-quality learning materials in the schools where there are no appropriate funds for teaching and learning materials; the refugee schools are not considered but ignored. Furthermore, a lack of textbooks and overcrowded classes with too many learners in one class are the most significant problem. On the other hand, the main reason for the students' failure in our local context is the inability to study through the medium of English. This is because students are not given opportunities to learn in their mother tongues and English is so infrequently used in their daily life outside the classroom thus students have no opportunity to learn English informally.



**Tawfiik:** For instance, in the context of Dadaab region, staying in classes is very difficult sometimes for both teachers and the students as rays of sun hit the iron sheets of the classes which entirely changes the environment into a disgust because of the excretion of sweating due to the high number they occupy per class. [This] worsens the condition of the class to make it unsuitable for learning sometimes. . . . Normally teachers don't participate in community development programs in Dadaab and I think it is because of the fact that they are busy at school and the low morale they have encountered through their low pay.

**Omar:** I started secondary education in 2008 and finished in 2011. In the year 2012 I was recruited as a primary teacher and the class I was teaching was overcrowded due to population of the learners. I was unable to handle the children in that class because I was going from class to class. I didn't have the skills to manage the classroom. In the year 2013 I was given the opportunity of a scholarship where I was fully trained to have skills in teaching and learning. . . . By the time I finished my training I was considered to be a trained teacher in the school where I was the only one who had successfully completed the course. I have tried to apply for a senior position . . . but I failed to get it because in Dadaab set up, you will never be promoted to a higher position unless you bribe those people who are in the chain of job recruiter.

### **Storytelling, a Good School, and Teaching**

Although many of the students paraphrased sections they liked of the "Good School" article, their references to *The Story Telling Class* film speak to their engagement with its content and the connections they made to their own circumstances. In their writing, the use of

educational terms related to school curricula and teacher education were common. They also saw the film as an opportunity to gain teaching skills and adopt some “tricks of the trade.”

**Barre:** The video was very interesting and resourceful and as a teacher I gained skills of promoting interaction in my class since I also engage different students with different cultural backgrounds.

**Ibrahim:** Therefore, the teacher uses an approach that does not only allow teaching students the curriculum content but as well gives them a chance to share their expressions and experiences through storytelling technique. This is what attracts the eyes of many people in the Dadaab context, since the Kenyan curriculum is based on content delivery. . . . In Dadaab, teachers follow a written curriculum where the teacher is supposed to deliver the lesson as per the school curriculum.

### **Pedagogical and Language Recommendations**

Students also recommended changes that should take place in camp schools related to teaching, and very importantly, to language maintenance.

**Assad:** The only way to get a quality education and language instruction is to have well-trained teachers and good resources to use in schools.

**Ahmed:** I am urging my fellow instructors in Dadaab context to actualize a multilingual framework in schools so that learners can master reading, writing skills and later recommend positively on what they are being taught. Instructional quality transforms society and brings harmony and prosperity.

**Yasmiin:** We need to think on how we (educators) can implement an inclusive and effective curriculum that covers people’s needs generally without being biased. In our

context, Dadaab, no one considers community languages for both language of instruction and as subject of study, whereby for our people it would serve a lot.

**Ibrahim:** My idea is to call for a quality education that answers and solves our problems in this contemporary world so that it leads to justice, equity and equality in the universe.

Ibrahim's comment summarizes what for me is the message that came through in most of their forum writings, which pointed to the reality of an educational neglect of all the children they cared for, similar to how they were treated when they were children in the camps. As a teacher, I mostly felt sadness at the neglect of a community that has suffered so much and that in seeking protection encounters a setting where care takes the form of punishment rather than the respect, solidarity, and empathy we owe each other.

### **Positive Contributions of Camp Schools and Teachers**

During the classes that covered the themes of community mapping and community engagement, students also participated actively in the forums commenting on the readings and Marcelle Haddix's video. What was most interesting in these forum entries and what marked a difference, if compared with the three reflections and previous forum postings, was the fact that in discussing community mapping and community engagement students described positive aspects of community and school life. In this sense, they gave a more balanced view of life in the camps, where resilience and capacity for culture development (Rawlence, 2016) coexists alongside sadness and difficult living conditions.

**Fawzia:** Here in Dadaab context refugees live together and learn the culture diversity among them, in the camp where I grew up the minority people live [in] their own blocks

but they fetch [water from] same water point where they normally socialize cultural practice, children learn in same school this creates opportunities to the refugees feel sympathy one another . . . teachers participate in communities activities such as when floods break out at Dadaab refuge, teachers voluntarily work with their communities through mobilizing and giving advice not to send their children outside the compound so that to save the life of communities teachers have had active participation when it comes to community . . . every school has a teacher named the club patron or matron like Hygiene, Girl Guide, sports, drama festival, debates and many others.

**Tawfiik:** In the context of Dadaab for instance schools and other kinds of areas that people meet, interact and exchange ideas. . . . When you look at the schools for example different teachers that belong to different communities taught the schools and this is a strong positive for all students as teachers use various languages in the teaching activities where a teacher can use another teacher as a resource person, if the students he/she teaches may not understand the preferred languages the other teacher can explain them in their own language for better understanding.

**Aaden:** To relate the article in the context of Dadaab, the camps are integrated and there is a sense of multicultural integration between the societies in the camps that creates smooth public relations and co existence. For example, in schools the learners of different ethnic backgrounds learn together in a peaceful way hence promoting love and correlations in schools and in the societies at large.

**Barre:** In relation to Dadaab, the settings of the camps are integrated and there is a sense of multicultural cohesion between Dadaabians. For instance, the sport teams are designed according to blocks where different nationalities dwell and compete with other blocks

that as well consist of different nationalities. In addition to that, as a teacher I teach a class with different nationalities from different cultural backgrounds and yet I challenge myself to instill inclusive learning environments.

### **Teacher Responses**

What is noticeable in my replies to students is how I dialogue with them in a more interactive way than I did in the previous months. I also am more comfortable giving opinions about the situations they are discussing. I refer to readings more often than before, and in echoing their comments, I venture critical opinions as well.

**To Yasmiin:** This is excellent Yasmiin. I think the point you raise in the first paragraph that there will always be talented learners who will learn despite difficulties, is really important. However, as you also point out this doesn't help the majority who experience difficulties when languages of instruction are not their mother tongue. The troubling issue is [in] using a foreign language as language of instruction, that is, to teach subjects i.e., mathematics or science . . . students who are not familiar with the language will miss learning important facts because of not understanding the language.

Important points about teacher training as well Yasmiin. I would add that this training needs to include knowledge about bilingualism and multilingualism and respect and encouragement of the first languages spoken by the students.

**To Tawfiik:** Thoughtful important analysis Tawfiik. Indeed, research in multilingual settings points very clearly to the importance of first language instruction to ensure cognitive development and a quality education for all children. Also, your poignant points about conducive environments and your example of sun hitting classrooms making

it hard for teachers and students gives much to think about.

**To Aaron:** What an important question to end your comment Aaron: *“Does it means that under hardship students learning well or what?”* I think that absolutely, resilience and individual potential will play a role. Many students will continue to do well no matter how hard the conditions where their learning takes place. However, ideally, we would like all students to do well.

**To Bashiir:** Bashiir, the focus on quality of education and the meaning of it is indeed a theme we should continue to discuss and learn what it may mean.

## Lessons Learned

### *What Does a Teacher Learn From her Students?*

Through dialogue, the-teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers.  
—Paulo Freire

In closing this last chapter of analysis of student and teacher discourses, the initial guiding questions need to be brought forward:

- How does ethical pedagogy provide a framework for teaching online courses to refugee students that live in refugee camps?
- What do we learn from the reflections of refugee students when they write about their first language, longing for home, and schooling in camps?
- What pedagogical insight does the writing of students in the camps hold for the teacher?

What I learned from the students affected me in ways I was not prepared for when I accepted the responsibility of teaching an online course to students living protracted lives in

refugee camps. The course made me reflect on the ethics of teaching and the connections established with Others in a world revealed through the internet.(Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2005). It was also a confirmation of how a teaching and learning situation is, or should be, a reciprocal relation between student-teacher and teacher-student, as Freire has made us aware. The connections established with the Other and the reciprocity of relations between teacher and learners and learners and teacher provided a framework for me for an ethical pedagogy.

The data from the discourse analysis of what students wrote in their reflections and forums during the course created an awareness for me about a world that went far beyond what was discussed and learned through readings, lectures, and audio visuals and are testimony of the pedagogical insights and in-depth learning I gained as a teacher.

It was in their writing of poems as a reflection about home that students opened a window into their souls. Their poems revealed depth and familiarity with poetry as a cultural form. The prominence of poetry in Somali life was evident in their poems and in their comments in the forums where they wrote about being poets in schools. However, the themes of nostalgia, horrors of war, and sadness of refuge were expressed through the medium of poetry regardless of nationality.

In speaking about the loss of first languages, experiences of schooling, and longing for home, students shared a vivid picture of their lives in the camp. The languages spoken on arrival at the camps and received from their mothers and elders were lost or forced to be hidden in their encounters with camp schools and teachers through shunning, physical punishments, and peer pressure. These losses are testimony of the persistence of an ideology of linguistic imperialism that exists despite the humanitarian good intentions of authorities and NGOs that organize educational opportunities in camps. The theme of language loss in camp schools was persistent

in all student writings and echoed the criticisms of scholars writing about issues of language loss in refugee education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Duale et al., 2019).

The UNHCR is responsible for enabling the establishment of schools and negotiating with the host country regarding the kind of education to be imparted in those schools (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Duale et al., 2019; Horst & Aden, 2021; UNHCR, 2021). From what I have learned from students and literature, I ask why, given the immense responsibility of negotiating for the establishment and running of schools in camps, there is not a UNHCR core curriculum. This curriculum could be implemented globally in all refugee camp schools, similar to what happens with international programs such as Montessori schools, which are recognized internationally and accepted by national school systems. Such a curriculum could attend to the social-emotional needs of refugee children, recognize the importance of first-language maintenance, teach second languages as a resource, and ensure that second languages are not the language of subject instruction until students have mastered them. This would help prepare students cognitively and emotionally for re-insertion in national schools in their countries of origin or in diverse countries at the time of resettlement, regardless of the length of encampment (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 138).

In their writings about schools, students demonstrated they were successful survivors of a competitive system that had left many refugee children behind. Women told of the many hurdles they had to overcome to be able to attend school and succeed. They commented on the opposition from their parents, usually their fathers in their continuing school, but also told of adults who supported and encouraged them to forge ahead. Students wrote about schools with a mix of negative memories but also with memories of encounters with friends and support from



teachers. As survivors of the system, a majority had been able to secure jobs as teachers, many of them immediately after graduating from high school.

Schools appear as precarious, physically difficult places that pack large numbers of children in makeshift classrooms. They are also difficult working environments in terms of employee relations where refugee teachers are paid less than their Kenyan peers and are subjected to arbitrary treatment by school authorities. As teachers, they were comfortable with their professional skills, which they acquired through programs available to them in the camps such as BHER. Camp schools are a world they know well, and their writings extended what I had become familiar with in reading scholarly literature, including the positive socializing aspects discussed in their last forum entries.

In analyzing my participation as a teacher in my responses to students' writings, I sensed a gradual change from trying to empathize and understand their lives, including sharing the fact that I had also been a refugee (which I had never done in my other teaching, except in casual conversations), to an engaged communication about the topics being discussed. Throughout my exchanges with them I didn't abandon my responsibility of challenging them and helping them focus on readings and the task at hand, but I also took risks in making critical comments about the difficult issues related to language policies in camp schools.

As the course progressed, there was a change in the emotional tone of my responses when it came to my comments on the reflections and poetry students wrote on the topic of home. I was affected by their poetry and what I learned from them about the meaning of life in a refugee camp. My notes to them about their poems have caring and admiring undertones. There was a change in the tone of my communication, and in the last section of the course my interaction with the students had become confident, direct, and dialogical.

These lessons are reflected in the concluding chapter of this dissertation where I end with the hope that what we have learned globally from refugees in camps can influence the curricular decisions and pedagogical practices in camp schools and thus contribute to the wellbeing of refugee children.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this dissertation I endeavoured, through autoethnography, to tell the story of the engagements that took place during the course Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts. I conducted discourse analysis of students' and my writing and engaged in pedagogical analysis of my teaching practice, examining the experiences my students and I had during Fall 2018. In this conclusion, I reflect on the lessons learned and on the possible contributions of the dissertation to scholarship in the fields of refugee and educational studies.

I begin these final reflections recalling what Giles and Dippo (2019), in discussing the ethical dilemmas they encountered in planning and teaching courses to students living in the protracted situations of long encampments, wrote about the philosophy that supported their teaching in Dadaab. They referred to Butler's concept of ethical encounters and to Arendt's concept of worldliness as helping them reconcile their worldviews and experiences with those of their students. Butler's (2012) statement "what happens there also happens here, and here is already elsewhere" (p. 150) and the words of Bishop Desmond Tutu (1986) speaking of Ubuntu, "My humanity is bound up in yours, I am, only because you are. We are all one," have helped me to understand my connections with students during our online teaching and learning experience.

Desmond Tutu died on December 26, 2021, as I was writing the final drafts of the dissertation. I watched the newscasts and videos recalling his visit to Toronto in 1986. His talks brought back to me how I had been impressed when he referred to the Zulu concept of Ubuntu as

a philosophy of human interconnectedness. My reflections on the ethics of my teaching are influenced by my realizing and internalizing the strength of the interconnections that were possible during the course.

As the Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts course progressed, my connections with the students acquired a pace similar to the classes I normally taught at York. I prepared classes, delivered, and discussed content, and read student work as I had traditionally done. I expected assignments in on time and responded and gave grades accordingly. However, as discussed in the previous chapters, I was emotionally affected and changed by the experience. The change was gradual and personal and probably not noticeable to the students. But as I discuss in chapter VII, it changed my teaching in that I too became involved by sharing my experiences as I was asking them to do, as a model for effective teaching and learning in multilingual, multicultural contexts.

I approached the teaching with confidence in my capacity to teach empathically and with care (see Noddings, 1986) to a multicultural, multilingual group of undergraduate students. I became informed about the intricacies of online teaching and tried to learn as much as possible about UNHCR camps, BHER, and life and work in Dadaab and Kakuma before the course started, as other faculty that teach BHER courses do as well (see Miller & Giles 2021). However, the communication I had with students through the reading of the three required reflections as well as their forum participation brought insights that moved me from empathy to an understanding of human connections.

I have also understood more fully the significance of teachers learning from their students, which I had learned theoretically from Freire, hooks, and critical pedagogues, and that I

thought reflected my teaching practice. However, in analyzing the change in my communication with students in the course, I am humbled by the lessons they taught me.

Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation but only in communication. . . . Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges, teacher-students with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught, also teach. (Freire, 2012, pp. 77, 80)

Through their reflections, students opened their world and feelings and I, as the teacher, gradually changed the tone of my responses from attentive academic listening when reading their first two reflections, to being moved by their poetry and what I was learning from them. Also, through their concerns expressed from their identities as teachers, I was challenged to reflect on the reality of schooling in refugee camps and learned much from reading about their experiences as described in their forum writings.

Students' portrayal of schools in camps in their memories from their youth and their comments about working in schools as teachers, echo studies about refugee education in camps. Dryden-Peterson (2016) writes about how the length of conflicts in countries is

increasingly protracted. While most refugees flee their countries of origin with the intention of returning home rapidly, the average duration of exile for refugees is 17 years. . . . For refugee children, disruption of education by protracted conflict

and exile is more the norm than the exception, and it is often a precursor of educational experiences outside of the national education system of a country of origin. (p. 134)

Students spoke about the loss of their first language to English and Kiswahili, mostly the result of punishment in the camp schools where they attended. This practice of punishment, according to their comments as teachers, appeared to be ongoing at the time of their writing, a state of affairs that does not seem to have changed since they were children attending camp schools. They also wrote about an exam-driven rigid curriculum, trying physical conditions in the schools, and overcrowded classrooms often with 80 or more children in attendance. In the words of Dryden-Peterson (2016),

from analysis of classroom observation data and interview data from teachers and refugee children emerge themes of the educational experiences of refugees in countries of first asylum that are particularly relevant for their post-resettlement education: language barriers; teacher-centred pedagogy; and discrimination in school settings. . . . Refugee children spend a disproportionate amount of time learning languages while often falling behind in age-appropriate academic content. Most refugee children transition to a new language of instruction in a country of first asylum. (pp. 141–142)

The recommendations of the students asking for change in the schools where they worked makes me wonder if they believed I could influence some change or if it was a casual comment similar to those they regularly made among peers or with researchers and instructors visiting the camps. It has also made me wonder about how they perceived my power as a Canadian teacher.

The questions I am left with related to the schooling of refugee children in refugee camps are influenced as much by my communication with my students and what I learned from them, as by my memories of past experiences as a professional working in the reception and placement of refugee and immigrant students in the schools of North York in Toronto.

The loss of first languages mourned by my students in their reflections, as well as their questions about how to ensure this would not continue to happen in the schools where they were working, spoke of their disempowerment as teachers. The use of English as the language of instruction and the addition of Kiswahili as a second language to the detriment and elimination of the languages spoken by the refugee children in the schools of Dadaab and Kakuma remains as a problematic curricular decision in the schooling of those refugee children.

I can only end with the hope that as studies of the experiences of refugee children in camp schools accumulate, attention will focus on their special needs as children who have suffered immense disruptions and who deserve to be protected, cared for, and nurtured in camp schools. These schools are the very places that could ensure their right to first language and cultural maintenance and engage them with empowering knowledge that would be a welcome respite in their lives that have been affected by so much trauma.

## **Post Scriptum**

### **I**

I have written this dissertation mostly at home in the isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–22). While writing, I have scanned the news, looking for information about Kenya and the Dadaab and Kakuma camps. I also communicated via WhatsApp with former students to find out how they were doing. I have been in COVID-19 containment, as they also have, only that I seek protection against contagion in the comfort of my Canadian home.

### **II**

As I was writing the last pages of the dissertation, I read that a new Refugee Act that was signed in 2021 in Kenya had gone into effect in February 2022 and will stand to benefit some “500,000 refugees who live in Kenya” (Majanga, 2022), allowing them to access work outside of the camps. I can only hope, as well, that this act will result in beneficial changes in the lives and future opportunities of the students I got to know in the course and also for the thousands of young people living protracted lives in Dadaab and Kakuma.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Course Outline**

ED/EDST 2450 Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts

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York University

Faculty of Education

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Fall 2018

**Course Director:** Marcela S. Durán (mduran@edu.yorku.ca)

**Course Dates:** Fridays, September 14, 2018– November 30. 2018

**Course Location:** Dadaab; BHER Learning Centre, Kakuma; WTK Compound

**Course Website:** Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts

Moodle - <https://moodle.yorku.ca/>

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#### **BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism in highly-diverse societies; examines social history and cultural identity against language policy, pedagogy, and social practice; and considers how education in multicultural, multilingual societies can be redesigned for successful, cooperative learning outcomes.

#### **EXTENDED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The linguistic profile of a highly-diverse society is very complex. Migrants' urgent needs to learn the language/s of social, political and economic currency in the host society appear as an important educational responsibility. At the same time, the languages newcomers bring to a society are an elemental component of their social and cultural

make-up. Given complex settlement patterns, polyglot communities and institutions are formed, and languages from different parts of a country, continent or parts of the world form local resources.

In these diverse contexts, residents enter learning and work environments where participants have multiple languages, social expectations, cultural practices, and educational backgrounds. Educational contexts in such centres are microcosms where multiple languages are in everyday use. Increasingly multilingual educational contexts create both possibilities and problems for the educator.

This course invites an exploration of cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism in life, learning and work, inviting examination of who we are in the cultural remix, and questioning identity, history and social values. We examine existing language-in-education policy and practice, theories and pedagogies of multiple language learning and maintenance, and invite critical consideration of how we can creatively redesign education for successful learning outcomes.

This course aims to:

- examine our understandings of culture and language;
- consider cultural pluralism, and multilingualism;
- explore our linguistic landscape;
- explore ourselves as componential of the cultural remix of the contemporary classroom;
- review policy dimensions of multiculturalism and bilingualism, including conflicting agendas, and how they play out in educational contexts;
- overview how languages, and literate practices are learned in child development, second and foreign language context
- examine traditional and contemporary approaches to teaching in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom.

### **EVALUATION:**

This course includes activities, such as, personal reflections and reading responses and project-based assignments. Students are required to respond to class readings and complete assignments.

1.-Personal Reflections: A personal history of language learning. A story about a school experience. A poem about home. These reflections are an individual project in 3 parts, see descriptions below.

2.- Reading discussions and responses: Students are required to write comments about readings and /or videos assigned for each class and are also required to comment on other student's entries. Marcela will respond accordingly.

### **There are three choices for final assignment:**

A.-- Final assignment A is a discussion of the pros and cons of language teaching/learning policies and practices in schools the students are familiar with (Dadaab, Kakuma, Kenya, Somalia or other) and a personal proposal for classroom/school interventions related to multilingualism (final individual project).



B.- Final assignment B is a 3-5 mins video recording to be presented in class and posted in Moodle of languages in a market place, a sports event or a school playground. With introduction based on course readings and discussions (individual, pair or group project)

C.- Final assignment C is a linguistic landscape (map) of a school, neighbourhood and/or camp (individual, pair or group project)

## **Course Activities and Assignments:**

### **Activities (required):**

**Personal reflections:** these writings are an opportunity for students to take time to reflect upon their own life as a learner. In the **first reflection** students are asked to think about their personal history as language learners. How many languages do they speak? when did they learn them? can they read and write in all of them? which is the language closer to their heart? what language do they use at home? At work? In their dreams?

In the **second reflection** students will write about their memories of schooling and the encouragement, inclusion or suppression of their home languages. In the **third reflection** students will write a poem or personal story after listening to Warsan Shire's poem Home and viewing the film The Story Telling Class.

Reflections do not need to be lengthy, one page is sufficient as long as the content is rich and thoughtful. (30% of final grade)

### **Written responses to assigned readings and videos:**

**Assigned readings and videos:** Students will be expected to comment on assigned readings and videos and post their comments in class forum. These contributions are due within the week before class and can also be posted after the discussion has taken place on Fridays. These responses are evaluated as class participation. Each student will be expected to make a minimum of 6 comments and 6 responses to postings of other students. (30% of final grade)

### **Final Assignment:**

**Final Assignment due November 23, 2018:**

**Students will select one from assignments A, B or C. I suggest they do these assignments in pairs or a group but can also be completed individually.**

**Choices for final assignment:**

**Final assignment A:** Students will write a reflection paper discussing the pros and cons of linguistic policies in educational institutions they are familiar with (schools where they teach or schools they attended when young). They will be expected to demonstrate familiarity with the theories and readings discussed in class. If they are discussing national policies they must be able to cite the policy sources. As a conclusion of the paper students are expected to write their own recommendations or proposals for change or improvement if they consider it necessary.

**The report will be a paper; 3-4 pages double spaced (40 % of final grade)**

**Due: Class 11, Nov. 23, details will be discussed in class.**

**Final assignment B:** is a 3-5 min. video recording of a community site that will demonstrate the multiplicity of languages coexisting in the community and the choices community members make when interacting with each other. Participant students will be expected to provide a written introduction to the recording and refer to classroom readings and discussions in their introduction.

**The report will be a no longer than 3-5minute video recording posted in Moodle the week before the class of Nov. 23 to be discussed in class (40% of final grade).**

**Due: Class 11, Nov. 23, details to be discussed in class**

**Final assignment C:** is a linguistic map of the community or the area of the camp or city where they are located. The map will be a graphic description with written explanations of the linguistic and national origins found in the location. Students will demonstrate familiarity with related course readings and discussions and connect the map with the languages spoken in the local schools.

**Due: Class 11, Nov. 23, details to be discussed in class**

**Maps and videos will have to be posted in Moodle the week before the class of Nov. 23 for other students to see and comment or ask questions. (40% of final grade)**

### **Assignment Submission:**

Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Assignments are to be handed in according to syllabus above.

### **Due Dates/Lateness/Penalties & Missed Assignments**

If you cannot make a due date, it is your responsibility to negotiate with the course director.

### **Participation:**

Students are expected to read the assigned articles from course text or chapters of books for each class and to be active in classroom discussion. Each student is expected to demonstrate preparation through critical analysis and questioning of the material discussed. Students are expected to come to classes prepared (i.e. having done the assigned readings) to participate in class discussions.

### **Attendance:**

Students are expected to come to class, to arrive on time, and to have read the assigned materials in order to be prepared to take part in discussions. If you are unable to attend a class, you are expected to advise the course director by email as soon as possible.

### **Presentation of Submitted Work/Scholarly Sources:**

Papers are expected to demonstrate the use of correct scholarly conventions. Clarity and precision of thought in written form is required on all assignments. Appropriate references must be included and properly documented. Please refer to the style guides found at: <http://info.library.yorku.ca/depts/ref/refweb.htm#Style>

All papers should be typed double-spaced with one-inch margins and suitable headings. Presentation is important, grammar and spelling matter. Please have someone proofread your paper. Only original copies of assignments will be accepted.

### **Academic Conduct**

Academic honesty is of the utmost importance in any learning endeavor. Plagiarism, cheating and making multiple submissions of assignments are serious offences and penalties can be extremely severe. To familiarize yourself with York University's regulations on academic integrity, please refer to the following web site:

(<http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity>.)

### **Special Needs**

It is York's policy to support students who have identified special needs. Students with special needs are asked to contact the course director within the first week or two of classes so that appropriate arrangements can be made to help ensure success.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>ED/EDST 2450 Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts</b>	
CLASS 1  Sept. 14	<p><b>Introductions, aims and objectives, course outline, discussion of assignments.</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Readings for class 1</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harber, C. (2014). Education and International Development. Theory, Practice and Issues. Oxford: Symposium Books. <u>Chapter 17: Literacy and Language</u></li> <li>• Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi (2014) African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation? Journal of Higher Education in Africa, Vol. 12, No. 2, Academic, pp. 53-93</li> </ul>
CLASS 2  Sep. 21	<p><b><u>Home languages and learning</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Required Readings</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi (2014) African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation? Journal of Higher Education in Africa, Vol. 12, No. 2, Academic, pp. 53-93</li> <li>• Schechter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). Multilingual Education in Practice. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <u>Chapter 1: School-Based Language Policy in Culturally Diverse Contexts</u></li> </ul> <p><b>Due today: assignment #1 part 1</b></p>
CLASS 3  Sep. 28	<p><b>Language is not Neutral</b></p> <p><b>Enid Lee guest speaker</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Readings:</u></b> Lee, Enid (2001). <i>Equity and Literacy: The Challenge of the Decade</i></p>

CLASS 4 Oct. 5	<b>Community languages and schooling</b> <u><b>Required Readings</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yonas Mesfun Asfahaa and Sjaak Kroon (2011) <b>Multilingual education policy in practice: classroom literacy instruction in different scripts in Eritrea</b> <i>Compare</i> Vol. 41, No. 2, pp229–246</li> <li>• Schechter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). Multilingual Education in Practice. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <u>Chapter 3: Valuing multilingual and multicultural approaches to learning</u></li> </ul>
CLASS 5 Oct. 12	<b>Memories from home student writings</b> <u><b>Required Readings</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schechter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). Multilingual Education in Practice. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <i>Chapter 4 New Country, New Language: Writings by Multicultural Students</i></li> </ul> <u><b>Required Viewing</b></u> <a href="https://yorku.kanopy.com/video/writers-talk-chinua-achebe-nuruddin-farah">https://yorku.kanopy.com/video/writers-talk-chinua-achebe-nuruddin-farah</a>  <b>Due today: Assignment #1 part 2</b>
CLASS 6 Oct. 19	<b>Poetry and memory</b> <u><b>Required Readings</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schechter, S.R., Cummins, J. (2003). Multilingual Education in Practice. Heineman, Portsmouth, NH. <i>Chapter 4 New Country, New Language: Writings by Multicultural Students</i></li> </ul> <u><b>Required Viewing</b></u> Home (Warsan Shire): <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybTM-aaJxS0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybTM-aaJxS0</a>
CLASS 7 Oct.26	<b>What is a good school?</b> <u><b>Required Reading</b></u>

	<p>Hare, W., Portelli, J.P. (eds) (2005) <i>Key Questions for Educators</i> Edphil Books, Halifax N.S. Question 25: <i>What is a good school?</i> pp97-100</p> <p><b><u>Required Viewing</u></b></p> <p><b>Film: The storytelling class</b></p> <p><b><i>Due today: assignment #1 part 3</i></b></p>
<p>CLASS 8</p> <p>Nov. 2</p>	<p><b>Languages of Instruction. What is Education Quality?</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Readings</u></b></p> <p>Brock-Utnea, B. and Mercerb, M. (2014) COMPARE Forum Response, Languages of instruction and the question of education quality in Africa: a post-2015 challenge and the work of CASAS Compare, 2014 Vol. 44, No. 4, 676–680</p>
<p>CLASS 9</p> <p>Nov. 9</p>	<p><b>Mapping a community and connections to school</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Readings</u></b></p> <p>Dippo, D., Basu, R., Duran, M. (2012) <i>Building Community in Suburban Inner-City Schools Workshop: Scarborough as a Site for Emancipatory Practice</i> pp 50-57 in: <i>Settlement and Schooling: Unique Circumstances of Refugees and Forced Migrants in Post-War Toronto Suburbs</i>. Canadian Ethnic Studies, Volume 44, Number 3</p> <p><b><i>Discussion of community maps</i></b></p>
<p>CLASS</p> <p>10</p> <p>Nov. 16</p>	<p><b>The languages of the community</b></p> <p><b>Discussion of video recordings</b></p>
<p>CLASS</p> <p>11</p> <p>Nov. 23</p>	<p><b>Back to Clive Harber and Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi articles and our opinion after 11 weeks</b></p> <p><b><u>Required Readings</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harber, C. (2014). Education and International Development. Theory, Practice and Issues. Oxford: Symposium Books. <u>Chapter 17: Literacy and Language</u></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neo Lekgotla Iaga Ramoupi (2014) African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation? <i>Journal of Higher Education in Africa</i>, Vol. 12, No. 2, Academic, pp. 53-93</li> </ul> <p><b>Final assignment due today</b></p>
CLASS 12  Nov. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wrap-up</b></li> <li>• <b>Course Evaluations</b></li> </ul>

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## **Appendix B**

### **Student Poems on Home (Reflection #3)**

Poems written as Reflection #3 (not included in the dissertation). Not included here are two poems that were reproductions of favourite poems by other authors, and one poem in a first language only.

**Salim:**                      **Khinno Mar Dha-Anywaa (translation)**

Home is the best nothing best than it  
It is the pride of person and play well when I'm at it  
Even if one is not at home still feel it  
Home is the identity of person  
No one try to rid you from it and take on

**Barre:**

**Home**

I hail from a beautiful place  
Called "home"  
Betrayed my heart and soul,  
Neglected and hated my dwell.

I hail from a beautiful home  
Looted my property and everything,  
Stranded me in foreign countries,  
And made me a "homeless alien"

I hailed from a beautiful home  
Waged me a civil war.  
Killed my family.  
And all inspirational goals.

"Home," beside your evil  
Dilemmas around me  
Either resettles third world nations,  
Or, go back to you.

World leaders address and hold summits,  
Nothing sustainable  
"Home" happiness shows your direction,  
Child memories and homesick,

But, never betray  
Lead to war.  
Neglect and hate again.

**Tawfiik:**

**Poem about home**

Home is the manifest of human life  
Horses and all that go hell for leather often end up desperate without home  
Home is a garden that sourced all human needs,  
Human dignity and integrity is covered and protected by home,  
Home is a guide that never exposes people into danger.

People always wish to stay at home but their disgrace and biases deprive  
them to remain unity at home,  
But whenever I see bats looking for shelter, I yearn for my home beyond  
the dark part of one's imagination  
Bits and dance is worthy when one enjoys and experience with those  
shared similar experience  
Birds that fly in all directions and all animals on land and those in sea  
have one thing in common and that's home . . .

**Bashiir****Home values**

Home, home, home I love you home  
 Because you grew me up home  
 Desired- is home  
 The foundation for a good life.

Best place, home- is it.  
 Protection, maintenance,  
 Hope and happiness  
 Home provides.  
 What a place!  
 The comfort I feel while at home-  
 Delicate issues I share with:  
 My caring mother,  
 Who loves and nurtures her children,  
 That is home  
 Proud I am to be at home.  
 The sickness I feel when away from home.

Very important I am, while at home  
 Confidence, guidance, advice and monitoring tool is home  
 Creating love and concern.

The home home home place for no discrimination  
 Home home home see you again and again home  
 God place home every time

Home for peace and prosperity  
 Home I will never forget you  
 Home is the best of human life  
 Warm and welcoming and friendly space  
 For growth and development  
 I wish for you all the best home  
 Home home home people should be appreciated  
 Your support and home are all about life.

**Ahmed:**

**Home is Honey**

Nobody leaves home except if  
Home is a risk to your life  
You keep running for the neighboring countries  
When you see the entire home in succession  
No one looks back to pick his or her belongings  
Home is sweet . . . as honey

Nobody prefers foreign land  
The families are in dilemmas  
Staying in prison without a sentence  
Because prison is more secure  
Than a town of flames  
Besides, men who bear  
A resemblance to their land  
Will keep in touch with them for safety  
Home is sweet . . . as honey

Home will never chase you  
For it's the inheritance  
That one gets from his  
Ancestors, it has a unique  
Sweetness than other homes  
That one calls a home  
Home is sweet . . . as honey

**Maryaam:                    Agahinda Gusa (Pain Only) Translation**

1. Snakes, Cockroach, you supposed to die!  
Do the work fast, least they may escape  
Rape, Kill and finish  
Bad snakes, you Cockroaches
  
2. Ooooooooooh! They are slaughtering him! yooooo! look at her she is  
also dead!  
God help us! Protect us from this heartless people!  
God heal Rwanda which you yourself created. Heal it from the Devil's  
virus.  
Because we are finished, we are gone forever.
  
3. Home! home! home! home smells it scares  
I can see the dead bodies, in the eastern part is blood only  
Carcasses, Heads, are scattered, no!no!no!no!  
I am leaving, escaping, I will never come back home I am gone  
Carrying pain with me! oooooooooooooo! Pain Only!

**Aaron:**

**Paac a paac (Home never be bad) Translation**

You brought me up. Fed me and you took care of me,  
 You are more than my blood circulation;  
 My faith, soul and thought is tied unto you with a superglue,  
 nothing can separate my love with you  
 without you no more of me.

My respect for you is strong more than myself.  
 I stay awake through the night praying for your blessing to cover your  
     people.  
 I cry about you uncontrollable and tears run down my cheek without your  
     intention,  
 Without you no more of me.

Your natural pride is seen from the top of mount Everest,  
 shining from one side to another, preaching the true love to your sons and  
     daughters.  
 I was forced to leave you but your whole being is written with ink on my  
     heart.  
 I remember when I look back the time of my flee, I saw you calling me  
     back and that  
 calling is still ringing in my heart like school morning bell,  
 without you no more of me.

Gambella, you are everything; My peace, justice and my freedom,  
 You had swallowed my pride. When I thought about you I felt home sick.  
 In equality and in love you, in difficulties you stood with me and you gave  
     the opportunity to  
 have you as my home. Your firm foundation is my strength, I grew up and  
     live with your fruit  
 without you no more of me

You are mother and father of natural virtue.  
 I shall protect you because I have the duties to look after your well being.  
 Long live Gambella my home  
 Without you no more of me.

**Yasmiin:**

**Poem (translation)**

The former leaders of Somalia their seatbelts were cut off, cut off  
 Their people have become destitute  
 Idiots have cheated both country and the people, the people  
 Your brother-in-law and his son went beyond the area, the area  
 Their wives' have worsened the situation, worsened, worsened  
 The economics didn't harmonize, misuse, misuse  
 Oppression increased and no mercy at all, at all  
 The poison they were spreading affected us, affected us  
 The base of the country and the people were robbed, starved, starved  
 The people have been unable to withstand his abuse  
 Slept in his father's home and threw his mother from her home  
 Threw the Ulama in prison and jailed, killed, tortured, murdered . . .  
 The chief leader has demolished the people, the religion and the nation  
 The Ulama's advice guides to the right path, right path  
 War demolishes, brings collapse, collapse  
 Women and children seek peace from the heartbreak, peace, peace  
 Let us not be undermined, interclan will not be a government, government.  
 Golden opportunity is on our forehead, dumbfounded, startled  
 May almighty Allah prevent all sorts of evil from us . . . war, killings,  
 torturing,  
 war-based inter-clan, dishonest government  
 We need peace, peace, peace.