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## Language contact outcomes in Sierra Leonean and Somali Communities in the Netherlands

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Language plays a defining role in the way speakers construct and negotiate their individual and group identities, including their gender, ethnicity, and national origin (Fishman, 1999; Fought, 2006). This paper examines language, belonging, and identity in Sierra Leonean and Somali communities in the Netherlands. For many in these communities, much of their lived experience has been characterized by time and space—moving from one place to another, waiting for prolonged periods, and being permanently “temporary” without any guarantee that their legal status will ever be regularized. These diasporic communities, connected by a shared sense of disconnectedness, find themselves in ever-changing linguistic and cultural *contact zones* (cf. Mary Louise Pratt). In this permanent temporariness, language plays an essential role in the process of identifying oneself to others and articulating and renegotiating one’s identity at different points along their life journey and thus functions as one of the most important markers of identity for African diaspora communities in Europe. Using in-depth ethnographic and sociolinguistic observation, this paper 1) analyzes how certain African diaspora communities articulate and negotiate various aspects of their identity in relationship to others both within and outside of their community and 2) shows what language and linguistic interactions can reveal about the relationship of members of these communities to one another and to the broader structure of the society in which they live. Examining the linguistic and cultural interactions of members of these communities will contribute to the growing body of research on how African diaspora communities negotiate identities, citizenship, and belonging in the face of ongoing societal changes, while providing insight into the practices and beliefs of diasporic communities across global contexts.

### References:

- Fishman, Joshua. Ed. *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Fought, Carmen. *Language and Ethnicity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. “Arts of the Contact Zone.” *Profession* 91 (1991): 33-40.