

Introduction: Language and decoloniality in context

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In this introduction, the broader context, or landscape, in which to place discussions about language, culture, decolonisation and decoloniality, is sketched in order to demonstrate the interconnectedness of language with human rights, oppression, dehumanisation, historical awareness, and heritage. In so far as colonialism and decoloniality systematically degrade the value and significance of non-European societies and their cultural practices, language cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Its relative importance may be contested, but cannot be ignored, when issues of the decolonisation of the curriculum and of the mind dominate public discourse in the African diaspora and elsewhere, and while the Rhodes Must Fall campaign continues to reverberate around Oxford's Oriel College.

From the start of modern colonisation, with the worldwide expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century, language suppression and cultural incomprehension have characterised the colonial project. With an invincible sense of self belief and predestination the Spanish exercised their God-given right to rule over the indigenous peoples of Central and South America, informing them that they had a duty under the natural law to submit to the religious authority of the papacy and the political authority of the Emperor Charles V. If they refused, they would be responsible for the violent and brutal consequences that ensued. The '*Requerimiento*' was read out to the indigenous peoples in Spanish in the presence of a notary, without any concession to the complete ignorance of the natives of the language. The first recorded use of the 'Requirement' was at Darién in 1514, the year after it was written. Hernán Cortes, between 1519 and 1526, for example, in his letters from Mexico, reassures the Emperor that he has properly used the 'Requirement' in subjugating the native population (Boucher 2016). We must not, however, fall into the trap of believing that a 'general theory' of coloniality and decoloniality will explain each instantiation of the relation between coloniser and colonised. The lived experience of each liberation movement, and the centrality of language to its character and identity, is always contingent and circumstantial. Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam; Freire in Brazil and Chile; Fanon in Martinique and Algeria; Cabral in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde; and Guevara and Castro in Cuba, to mention only a few, were sensitive to the uniqueness of circumstances of each colonised people and the contingencies that required different theories, ideologies and responses in the struggle for liberation. Castro, for example, contended that every people must adopt the thoughts and theories they consider most appropriate to themselves, including the language which best suits their struggle (2017: 58). Cabral emphasised the need for detailed knowledge of the circumstances in order to begin the process of transforming the lived reality of the colonised. While each revolution may have much to be admired

‘national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities’ (1979 [1966]: 121). Ho Chi Minh contended that all of the natives under colonialism are equally oppressed and exploited, but they differ considerably in their intellectual, economic and political development: ‘Between Annam and the Congo, Martinique and New Caledonia, there is absolutely nothing in common, except poverty’ (2011: 8–9). However, the harsh method of land confiscation; the reduction of local peasantry to serfdom; the cruel exploitation and extermination, which amounted to a system of pillage, were nevertheless widespread in African territories under Italian, Spanish, British and Portuguese colonialism (Ho Chi Minh 2011: 78).

While colonialism and imperialism have been extensively explored in terms of their economic and political motivations, decoloniality and strategic instruments for combatting them and achieving liberation objectives are the undercurrent that provide the focus for this volume of essays, particularly the importance of countering the suppression or manipulation of the languages and cultures of the colonised peoples. The systems of exploitation inherent in colonialism and imperialism, and of coloniality and decoloniality, depend upon the devaluation of the languages and cultures that they portray as inferior and almost worthless in comparison with the sophistication of their western counterparts. South Africa provides an interesting case study in that historically, language was used not only used as a tool of domination, but also to promote segregation and apartheid (see Ngqulunga and Sithole in this volume).

Until the arrival of Europeans, colonised countries, on the whole, were deemed by their colonisers to have little or no history worthy of world historical note or significance, or if they did, their civilisations had degenerated to the point where they required western intervention and salvation (the Americas and Asia). Philosophers throughout the centuries were complicit in perpetrating such myths, including Hegel and Marx, and more recently, during the post-World War II resurgence of decolonial agitation throughout the world, by Hanna Arendt. Her concern for human dignity, and insistence on the right to have rights – citizenship rights – did not extend to Africa. For her, the African past was ahistorical, exhibiting no accomplishments, ‘living without the future of a purpose’ (2011 [1951]: 248). Africa was the exemplification of the worthless activities of natural men who had ‘vegetated for thousands of years’ (2011 [1951]: 253). Africans were human beings who lacked a specifically human character. Civilisation had evaded black Africans, which for Arendt was evidenced by their general lack of human culture and morality (2011 [1951]: 243–258).

By implication, the peoples whose practices constituted the cultures, and who spoke the native languages, were considered inferior for not having developed a civilisation comparable to that of the west. In order to justify and rationalise the brutality and sheer inhumanity of colonial practices, and the imposition of alien cultures on peoples it sought to exploit, a process of dehumanisation was perpetrated against subject populations, even to the extent that those who were oppressed were psychologically manipulated into believing that they became more ‘civilised’ the more they aspired to acquire the colonisers’ manners, values and language. In relation to those black men and women who had been duped into believing the white man’s myths, Fanon’s stated

aim was 'the liberation of the man of colour from himself' (Fanon 2008: 2), a self that had acquired an inferiority complex, which had been internalised, by what he called the 'epidermalization – of this inferiority' (Fanon 2008: 4).

The dehumanising process was a combination of deliberate policy and deeply embedded beliefs and attitudes, articulated by the political, religious and intellectual elites of the coloniser countries, and disseminated throughout their social strata in justification of denying the colonised basic natural, or human rights; in believing it the duty of 'superior' civilisations to civilise the savage; in believing that by under exploiting natural resources, indigenous peoples were in violation of their duty to God and humanity as a whole; in denigrating indigenous religions as heathen and blasphemous; and of converting the colonised to Christianity as an act of humanitarian intervention. It was no coincidence that wherever Europe extended its boundaries, Christian missionaries followed in fulfilment of the obligation, imposed upon them by St Peter, to spread the word of the Lord.

There were always critics, of course. Those whose moral compasses and consciences were uneasy with the justificatory stories, with biblical foundations, about the hierarchy of peoples, or the naturalistic Darwinian foundations of the right of the stronger to rule over the weaker, a point of view that had never been devoid of proponents from Thucydides to the present, who believed that nature teaches us certain moral imperatives, a confusion that Hume called the naturalistic fallacy.

At a time when colonialism and imperialism were at their most rampant, towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, when the British Empire ruled over almost a quarter of the world's surface, and exercised significant influence by manipulation far beyond, as for example in China, Iran and Afghanistan, there was a barely articulated set of beliefs and assumptions that provided the backdrop for debates and discussions about colonialism and imperialism. In the minds of colonisers there was a strata of colonies at the top of which were the white settler communities which had almost eradicated the indigenous populations in their colonies, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Central and South America, and also the United States of America. The latter of which the likes of Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Milner thought might be brought back into the fold, by force if necessary (Brown 2015). In these white settler communities where indigenous peoples constitute minorities internal coloniality survived external uncoupling from the mother country.

South Africa, although having two white minority populations, considered itself a small nation along with Wales and Ireland within the Empire. Milner, for example, saw the different countries in this stratum as equivalent to, and having the same cultural status as, English counties such as Kent or Surrey, and was proud to identify himself with Rhodes as an English white supremacist, superior to other white races, particularly the Afrikaans.

The second stratum generated a good deal of ambivalence because the majority of the populations, and the reliance upon them for governance and administration, were not white, but nevertheless could boast, sometime in the past, evidence of advanced

civilisations. The contention that they had now fallen into moral, political and religious decay, which served as the justification for subjugating them to British rule, or what was known as the military fiscal state in India. Britain's dominance of the subcontinent enabled it to become central to the emerging integrated global structures of trade, investment and security.

The third stratum comprised 'primitive' peoples whose resources should be exploited for the benefit of mankind, and whose capacity to do so, in the view of the coloniser, was severely limited, requiring white intervention to act in 'trust' for them until they attained the level of competence for self-rule. This stratum comprised largely African countries.

The conscious process of colonisation gave rise to the adjective 'European' becoming released from geographical constraints. Europe could be found anywhere in the world, and because of the labour intensive industries to which this process gave rise, Africa, or at least the African, through the mass transportation of slaves, became much more than a continent, leaving behind not merely geography, but also languages and cultures, only the remnants of which were sustainable in their new multi-lingual and multi-cultural surroundings, where communication arose of necessity in many instances through the pidginisation and creolisation of languages (Hymes 1971). This diaspora was celebrated by Marcus Garvey (2004), the Jamaican born descendent of slaves, and leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association; W. E. B. Dubois (1994) and the New Negro Movement in America; the Pan-African Movement; and Haitian Renaissance; as well as the Negritude movement that emerged in the 1930s emphasising Africa's achievement independent of Europe (Rabaka 2015).

Some liberationists, nevertheless, recommended the appropriation of European languages, and French in particular, as a method of subterfuge and subversion, transforming the languages of the coloniser into African languages, as for example Aimé Césaire in Martinique and Léopold Senghor in Senegal, as well as Amilcar Cabral who favoured Portuguese as the language of communication in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. Such attitudes gave rise to denunciations, especially by the Créolité movement in the Caribbean, for privileging European languages over local and regional creole. Fanon lamented this tendency because of his recognition, or belief, that language is the carrier of culture, and that to adopt the coloniser's language is inadvertently to adopt the conceptual structure of the coloniser's world (Fanon 2008: 9, 25; also see Sibanda, Chukwumah and Egya in this volume).

The picture is far more complicated than this, of course, as the contingencies and necessities of the different situations in which poets, artists and theorists found themselves required pragmatic and often contradictory strategies.

Senghor as a poet and theorist is most closely associated with the francophone literary Negritude movement. His admirers praise, and his detractors denigrate, his 'double allegiance' to France and Africa in his determination to promote the variety of cultures that arose out of French colonisation, and further his belief in the possibility of the emergence of a new and diverse international culture arising from decolonisation –

ideas that are encapsulated in the fundamental concepts of *négritude*, *francité*, and *civilisation de l'universel* (Forsdick and Murphy 2009: Chapter 12).

Senghor, despite his francophilia, was highly sensitive to the unique character of African languages and the linguistic cultural nuances they carried. In his contribution to the First International Conference of Negro Writers and Artists he emphasised the importance of indigenous languages. There can be no thought or emotion, he argued, independent of a verbal image, nor free action that is not somehow conceptualised in thought. 'Language', Senghor contended, 'is a power in Negro Africa. Spoken language, the word, is the supreme expression of vital force, of the being in his fulfilment' (1956: 58). An outstanding feature of African languages is the richness and wealth of their vocabularies, with multiple words for objects related to changes in weight, form, volume or colour. They are languages in which the 'words are pregnant with images' (Senghor 1956: 59; also see Sibanda in this volume).

The systematic suppression, or manipulation, of indigenous languages, whether native or creole, constituted one element in the dehumanisation process that denied Africans their human rights, and deprived them of their culture and history. However, such suppression paradoxically strengthens resistance and the desire for emancipation. Cabral contended that 'political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural repression practiced by the colonial power have brought about a crystallization of culture and an exaggerated sense of identity among some of the dominated groups as a consequence of the arrest of the historical process by imperial domination' (2016 [1972]: 116). Culture, Cabral maintains, is the cornerstone of the liberation movement, and only those individuals and groups which have preserved their culture are able effectively to mobilise and organise against colonial domination.

For the Brazilian educational reformer and revolutionary writer Paulo Freire, inspired by Fanon and Memi, critical consciousness (*conscientização*), is a process of dialogical learning and knowing, requiring an intellectual curiosity about the objects of knowledge and a realisation that dehumanisation is not only ontologically possible, but is a historical reality (Freire 2014: 131). Freire was convinced that everyone, however downtrodden, had the capacity to look critically at the world in dialogical encounters with others. Adopting the revolutionary aim of Fanon, to transform the 'wretched of the earth' from having lives lived for others into lives lived for themselves (Macedo 2017: 25), he argues that it is within history, and with the critical consciousness of one's history, that humanisation is acknowledged as an incomplete process, and must be embraced as the vocation of the oppressed peoples in attempting to recover their humanity.

Freire contends that dehumanisation is a distortion of humanity, not only for those from whom it has been stolen, but also in a different way for those who have stolen it. Dehumanisation, although occurring within history, is not an historical destiny, but the result of systematic injustice, oppression and violence (2017: 46). The oppressed must overcome the fear of freedom that they have internalised, rejecting the dominant image of the oppressor and the rules and conventions imposed, and replace the image

of dependency with one of autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is the condition of the quest for humanisation, human completion. The oppressor himself is dehumanised in the process of oppression by denying humanity to the oppressed and negating their own. There would be no oppressed had there been no condition of violence that shaped the concrete situation of subjugation. 'Violence is initiated', Freire argues, 'by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons' (2014: 55). For the oppressors, humanity refers only to themselves, and to their right to live in peace, alongside the concession that the oppressed have a right to survival, only in so far as survival of the oppressed is necessary to the existence of the oppressor (for a critical analysis, see De Araújo in this volume).

Freire is critical of those liberation writers who fail to see the significance of rejecting the banking concept of education and the dehumanising effect it has. By this he means the idea that education is simply a matter of conveying information to be stored in the recipient's mind, without critical engagement, or without a dialogical relationship with the teacher. Some revolutionaries, he argues, brand as reactionaries, or dreamers, those who challenge the banking concept. They perceive the people as empty vessels to be filled using the methods of domination, namely propaganda and slogans to be deposited in their minds in the name of liberation. Humanisation, he maintains, is not another deposit. Liberation is a 'praxis' which entails reflecting upon the world with the intention of transforming it (2014: 79). And this was best achieved through the use of their own languages.

The dehumanisation project in the minds of liberationists is essentially a fascist act. Albert Memmi, born in Tunisia in 1920 under the French Protectorate, contended that every colonial nation is nascently fascist because the whole of the administrative and political machinery has no other goal than systematic oppression for the benefit of the few. The relationships which hold between the coloniser and colonised 'have arisen from the severest exploitation, founded on inequality and contempt, guaranteed by police authoritarianism' (Memmi 2016: 106). In other words, in the view of Césaire, a civilisation that colonises is 'already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased' (2000: 21).

On the eve of World War II, and in its aftermath, several black African Americans drew parallels between European fascism, white racism and imperialism. W. E. B. DuBois, a black American civil rights activist, argued that fascism was not an aberration, but a logical consequence of western civilisation, emerging out of slavery and imperialism, entrenched in a global system driven by the capitalist political economy and racist ideologies. He drew parallels between the colonialism of France and Great Britain and the use of racial prejudice and exploitation by Hitler and Mussolini (Du Bois 1968: 305–306). The atrocities the Nazis committed in concentration camps, defiling women and corrupting children, had already been practiced by Christian civilisation against black people, the white race claiming superiority and a God-given right to rule the world (Du Bois 1947: 23).

The European Allies who fought against fascism and nazism saw no contradiction in championing the freedom and human rights of Europeans, while at the same time denying them to their colonised peoples. Liberation theorists largely agree that European colonisers demoted the 'native' to the status of sub-human. Rejecting fascism in Europe, the Allies practised its methods and subscribed to its ideology in their colonial territories. Resistance to decolonisation in Africa was brutal in its methods, involving levels of violence that transgressed the precepts of international law, which was itself the construct of the colonisers. Martial law and violent suppression was commonplace in resisting decolonisation, despite the fact that it was antithetical to colonialism's claim to be a civilising force in bringing the rule of law to 'barbaric' places (Kohn and McBride 2011: 11). Detention without trial was prevalent, as were torture, mass executions and collective punishment. Because they regarded the peoples of Africa as being uncivilised and savage, the colonisers were not constrained by the moral standards of conventional warfare.

From the West Indies to Africa these sentiments were echoed. The movements for national liberation throughout the world exposed the hypocrisy inherent in liberal imperialism. In fighting for the principles of freedom and self-determination advocated by the Allies in their fight against the Axis powers, the Allies continued to deny the same freedoms to their colonies (Fanon 1967: 171–172).

Decolonisation was not the prelude to the end of imperialism, but instead the facilitator of neocolonialism. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana after independence, argued in 1965 that the old type of colonialism was on the retreat in Africa, and while some bastions remained it was unlikely that new colonies would be created. Instead, 'in place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism' (Nkrumah 2004: ix). Neocolonialism is the worst type of imperialism because those who practise it exercise power without responsibility, while those who are subjected to it suffer exploitation without redress (Nkrumah 2004: xi). Indeed, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001), among other things, is a comprehensive condemnation of African leaders and nationalist parties complicit with their former colonisers in perpetuating the old structures under new guises. Colonialism, then, transmuted into neocolonialism under the guise of decolonisation. Nkrumah contended that the essence of neocolonialism is that the State appears to have international sovereignty, but control is exercised over it by economic and monetary means, most often but not invariably, by its former colonial ruler. In South Vietnam, however, France was the former imperial power, but neocolonial control was exercised by the United States of America to avert the spread of communism (Nkrumah 2004: ix–x).

Neocolonialism is perceived to be a significant problem in contemporary Africa, despite United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 which proclaimed in 1960 that 'colonialism in all its forms and manifestations' should be brought to a swift and 'unconditional' end on the grounds that the alienation, 'subjugation, domination and exploitation' of people constituted a fundamental violation of human rights, contravening the right of all peoples to the self-determination of their own political

status and freely to pursue 'their economic, social and cultural development' (UN 1960: paras 13, 16, 17).

Despite such explicit condemnation of colonialism, its persistence in the form of neocolonialism has continued to shape the landscape of modern Africa, and this is not only because of complicity between elites, but also because subjection to colonialism and its re-presentation of their histories, degraded, dehumanised and penetrated the psyche of the colonised. This was a danger Fanon identified more than sixty years ago. Colonialism gets under the skin of the colonised. Decolonisation did not free the former colonies from the yoke of their colonisers; on the contrary, the preponderance of national liberation theorists argued that the appearance of the attainment of state sovereignty was no more than the disguised suzerainty of the former colonialists operating through a native elite bourgeoisie which had vested interests in maintaining close relations.

The concept of coloniality denotes a wider frame of reference than the term colonialism, which denotes a political and economic relationship subjecting one nation to another. Coloniality designates long-standing patterns of power that are consequent on colonialism (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243). The relationships that characterise coloniality and decoloniality reflect different dimensions of power, of dominance and dependence. Foucault, in his *The Order of Things* (1970), had shown that power, almost deterministically, does not merely emanate from the top of a social hierarchy to be imposed on the masses, but instead permeates laterally throughout society in everyday speech and activity. Thus unmasking, or making visible, these channels may reveal a level of communication previously buried or hidden, and which may be invested with an identity with moral, aesthetic or historical significance and value (Spivak 1988: 285).

Anibal Quijano, the Peruvian sociologist, develops a theory of the subjectivity of knowledge, in which he put forward a matrix of four interrelated spheres of coloniality of power. The first dimension is the control of the economy, including natural resources, appropriation of land and exploitation of labour. The second is control of authority, which includes social and governmental institutions, including the army. Thirdly, control of sexuality, which means control of the family, sexual mores, and education. And, finally, control over the subjectivity of knowledge, the being there in the world of the subject, epistemology, ontology, and its communication (see Lamola in this volume). Anibal Quijano's concept of coloniality points us to colonial patterns of power and inequality that transcend the spatial and temporal confines of empire (Quijano 2000).

Going beyond the coloniality of power and knowledge, the Argentinian, Walter D'Ávila Mingolo, emphasised the importance of primarily focusing upon the lived experience of colonisation and the effect it had on language, that is, the coloniality of being. He makes it clear that what is referred to as science, that is, knowledge and wisdom, is inextricably attached to language. Languages, for him, are much more than cultural phenomena in which individuals find their identity: 'they

are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something we have but rather something of what human beings are, coloniality of power, and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being' (Mingolo 2003: 669; also see Ndlovu in this volume).

Fanon, without using the same concepts, articulated the same phenomena in challenging Hegel's ontology, and expressing the lived experience of Martinicans and Algerians (Fanon 2001; 2008). In *A Dying Colonialism* (1965) he characterised the lived experience, or non-being there in the world, of the wretched of the earth. Fanon contended that 'the colonised person...perceives life not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death...[which is] experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future' (1965: 128). The relevance of the ontology of the colonial being to language and having a voice in the world is elaborated by Achille Mbembe's idea of the *pou(voir)*, or seeing power of race. He contends that the people we choose to see or hear do not speak for themselves, but are spoken for, made intelligible in our language. Instantiated colonial power consists in having the power, the sovereign power, to see and not to see, and render invisible what one chooses not to see. Mbembe argues that the impact of 'seeing power' is that the persons we have chosen not to see and hear cannot exist or speak for themselves. When required they must be silenced: 'their speech is always indecipherable, or at least inarticulate. Someone else must speak in their name and in their place so that what they say makes complete sense in our language' (2017: 111). It is what Muneeb Hafiz describes as a non-human condition. If Fanon's aspiration of the creation of a new human being is to be realised, those who are not seen and heard must liberate themselves from the non-human condition (2020: 137). The chapters in this book rise to the challenge by exploring strategies for taking possession of language(s), and breaking the silence that the *pou(voir)*, or seeing power of race has imposed on the invisible and inaudible.

Decoloniality adds a dimension to colonialism that accounts for the creation of nation states that emerged out of colonialism, but did not escape from it, at first in North and South America, the Caribbean, and Australasia, and later in Asia and Africa, giving rise to internal colonialism, where white settler communities, in which an elite of European descent dominates, or in what Ania Loomba calls administrative colonies (2015: 23) in which black elites take control of the matrices of power. Many in the postcolonial world are critical of the anticolonial nationalist discourses that resulted, not in greater equality, but in a new elitism, as was the case, for example, with Ghandi, who ensured that Indian democracy would be elitist in character (Loomba 2014), and in South Africa where blacks, the marginalised majority, now becoming critical of Mandela's 'sell-out'. White settler and black states, however, occupied unequal positions on the international stage. Both white and black elites in their respective states, which were invariably multilingual, exercised internal colonialism, including the promotion and suppression of languages and the worlds they projected.

Language oppression, including language erasure, by dominant cultures and elites is a common phenomenon consistent with other forms of oppression effecting race, nation, colour and ethnicity (for the South African instantiation, see Ndlovu in this volume). Gerald Roche contends that the concept of language erasure is central to the study of imperialism and colonialism in explaining how indigenous 'subaltern' peoples are written out of the historical record, their sovereignty nullified and their 'contemporary presence rendered invisible' (Roche 2019: 489). The general perception that Tibetans in the People's Republic of China speak a common language is, for example, the result of a deliberate act of erasure by both China and the global Tibet movement. Manegacha, for example, is one of Tibet's languages undergoing erasure, with a community of 8 000 speakers in four villages in the northeast Tibetan plateau, but with children in schools learning Tibetan instead, the existence of their first language is threatened. All of Tibet's minority languages suffer similar language oppression and are undergoing language shift to Tibetan or Mandarin (Roche 2019: 492 and 512). Similarly, Mongols constitute one of the 56 ethnic groups or nations in the People's Republic of China, yet speak at least six distinct languages. Only one, Chakhar Mongolian, is designated the spoken language of Mongols. All minority languages within the People's Republic of China are in differing degrees under threat because Putonghua (Mandarin) is universally privileged, and is the only language named in any of the country's legal requirements for language learning, with a target of 80% which was achieved in 2020 (Roche 2019: 496).

The chapters in this volume reflect the internal colonisation of decoloniality and for the most part through their different perspectives recalibrate the focus away from Europe as the touchstone of intelligibility (Bowman 2019: 232) (for the European context, see Williams in this volume), by exploring in some detail how the decoloniality of being translates primarily, but not exclusively, into a South African context, through different disciplinary matrices.

The manipulation, suppression, imposition, denigration or valorisation of language is contingent upon the circumstances, and dependent upon acknowledging that colonial, creole and indigenous languages may be means of communication, and/or carriers of culture (see Boucher and Egya in this volume). For a Frenchman, for example, the French language is a carrier of culture. To speak it is to be imbued with and saturated by French manners, intonations, subtle meanings, and unique sentence structures resonant of the culture. In a context where many languages are spoken, each of which carries the culture of those who speak them as their native tongues, French, as a second, or third, language may merely be a means of communication, enabling diverse peoples to converse in a common language. Steve Biko, for example, wanted to make a clear distinction between languages such as isiXhosa and isiZulu as carriers of culture with their own specific nuances and emotional intensity, and the use of English as a means of communication which was unable to carry these nuances in translation. He maintained that African languages do not put emphasis upon specific words, but take their meaning from the whole paragraph, conveying an emotional attachment to situations. The English language, on the other hand, is analytical, relying upon

precise words to convey precise meanings. Communication between people who speak different languages requires a common language that they all speak, 'Not to any degree of sophistication but to some degree' (Biko 1987: 117).

It may be the case, of course, that the colonial language itself becomes so thoroughly impregnated into a society and becomes transformed into a language that carries the culture of the colonised. This was how French came to be considered among the leaders of the Negritude movement, such as Césaire, and Indian writers, such as Rushdie, came to view English. In other words, the language itself is colonised by the colonised!

The ground that is contested, Boucher demonstrates in his contribution to this volume, is over whether language, particularly native and creole languages, are integral to national consciousness as expressed in a whole range of activities, including literature, art, music education and philosophy, or whether such consciousness and consciousness raising may be considered possible through the vehicle of adopted languages. In the chapters that follow, issues surrounding language and culture are explored from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives, philosophically, historically, literary, musically, and through policy formation and implementation, from African, Caribbean, American, and European standpoints. We will see how competing pressures, definitions, and redefinitions of central terms such as colonialism, coloniality and decoloniality take on significant nuances, and even how the encouragement and support of languages may not be wholly without sinister pretexts (Ngqulunga and Sithole in this volume).

De Araújo's chapter focuses on the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who worked on language policy and national literacy programmes under the auspices of the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches in the former Portuguese colonies of Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tomé and Angola. De Araújo's starting point is consistent with that of bell hooks, the black feminist theorist, who critiques the underlying sexism of the language and paradigm of liberation in Freire's writings. De Araújo contends that we must take seriously hooks' insightful remarks that Freire's arguments invite interrogation with all their flaws, without dismissing them. The fascination of Freire is that he is at once a theorist and a historical figure whose contradictions underpin his thinking and politics. As a human being in the process of becoming, Freire maintained, he had a right to be contradictory, just like any other person. The author of this chapter interrogates three words from Freire's lexical universe to determine whether concepts formulated in a colonial language and derived from the western philosophical tradition are capable of doing the political and epistemological work necessitated by resistance and creativity expressed by Southern epistemologies. The three concepts are *Oprimido* (oppressed), *conscientização* (conscientisation) and *libertação* (liberation). They are concepts with interlocking and complementary meanings in Freire's thought. Each requires the others in order to function, yet they have different political and intellectual histories.

Lamola's provocative contribution to this volume looks at the implications of the language question *in* African philosophy and *for* African philosophers, and contends that the problems are far more acute than they are for African Literature, in that there is an immediate unveiling of the colonial subject's existential alienation, manifest in a psycho-cultural estrangement, the consequence of a people living through a foreign thought medium. Lamola contends that until there is full engagement of African philosophy with the valence of language, and its full methodological and moral implications, it is and remains an intractably defective practice. This is because African philosophy emanates from the historical context of a traumatised people, and needs to overcome the psycho-political effects of language so forcefully articulated by Fanon and Ngũgĩ.

Sibanda's chapter employs the decolonial tools of border thinking and pluriversality in order to facilitate the co-existence of colonial and indigenous languages as part of the new non-imperial universality where all languages have their space and recognition outside the racialised hegemonic linguistic hierarchies. Decoloniality, Sibanda argues, celebrates language differences, which together comprise pluriversal existence. Decoloniality strives to create space and recognition for all languages on an equal footing, by unmasking and eliminating racialised linguistics. Conversely, nativism and Afro-radicalism similarly need to be confronted because of their exclusionary hierarchies. Decoloniality as a philosophy and practice aspires to liberate the decolonised and the coloniser. The author argues that it is a myth to consider decoloniality as a type of barbarism that seeks to destroy everything western and white-skinned. The future of both colonial and indigenous languages requires elevating indigenous languages to their rightful place at the linguistic table, and not the banishment of colonial languages. The point Sibanda wants to make is that decoloniality should be considered a collective redemptive project bringing together the global south and those who resign from the global north to think, create, and act together to disrupt the coloniality of language.

Tshivhase considers the language of personhood and the moral value of individuals in community, and warns against the social dangers of using the neuter pronoun 'it' to refer to children. Using 'it' to refer to children and babies withdraws them from the moral world and exposes their vulnerabilities. The chapter objects, in particular, to the work of Menkiti and suggests that the use of 'it' in this context is incompatible with most African languages and culture, and a distortion of African thought systems. To take decolonisation and decoloniality seriously we need to go beyond race talk (or writings). The point is this: a bewildering array of theories are offered for understanding society better and for promoting harmony in society. The ills are so many and prevalent, however, that there comes a point when our theories, especially, our moral theories, require reassessing, in order to analyse their relevance in relation to the complexity of what is really going on around us.

Chukwumah argues that the first generation of African writers initiated the incorporation of indigenous resources in their works, despite writing in alien modes of expression. The question that arises for the author relates to how these works

may best be read and what interpretive strategies to adopt in making sense of them in the broader African literature context. The African literary intelligentsia for over half a century has derived relatively few modes of reading from within the textual space of these works. The author attempts to identify the distinguishing features that represent the uniqueness of African literature in contrast to that of the west, and attempts to formulate an Indigenous way of making sense of African literature by using the riddle and other embedded African cultural elements to render this literature self-interpretive. Using Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), the conclusion is offered that autochthonous reading models indigenous to Africa can be generally beneficial in reading its literature. It is suggested that the protocol and code of representation of the riddle-proverb enhances an Indigenous interpretation of African literature.

Egya's contribution argues that the inception of African literature in European languages generated the great language debate, inaugurated by Obiajunwa Wali's 'The Dead End of African Literature?' Wali contends that African literature written in non-African languages is not authentically African. There were those who called for a total rejection of the use of foreign languages, such as the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o; and those, on the other hand, represented by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, who argued that Africa's cultural and linguistic heterogeneity required the use of European languages, duly domesticated in order to capture the uniqueness of the culture in which it is produced. English has become the most prevalent language of literary production of modern literature in Africa. Egya's chapter returns to the great language debate to consider the process of domesticating English as a literary language in Africa. The central argument is that increasing globalisation and deterritorialisation has diminished English as a literary language for Africa, which is now barely able to lend itself to domestication, and the promotion of African cultures. The language debate is in fact a cultural decolonisation debate consequent on the diasporisation of African literature in the twenty-first century, and requires the revival of literary production in Africa in order to further facilitate the bending of European languages to assimilate the African experience, while also supporting the writing of literature in indigenous languages and generating cultural decolonisation.

Kumalo turns our minds towards the language of South African music, particularly of Busi Mhlongo and Letta Mbulu as a constitutive part of the Black Archive, which prompts three considerations. Firstly, it gives rise to the definition of the archive, which in turn raises the issue of coloniality/colonialism in South Africa, and of what legitimate epistemic tools decolonialists may employ when considering the denial of access Blackness/Indigeneity to the university in the apartheid state organisation. Secondly, Kumalo considers the conceptualisation of theory and its development in order to analyse Busi Mhlongo's and Letta Mbulu's music, which evidences the contention that black South African artists theorised the *Fact* of Blackness despite being excluded from the institutions of higher education. Thirdly, Kumalo's analysis initiates consideration of the possibility of a historical artefact, namely, music, enabling decolonialists to develop theory, and raises the question whether an artefact

itself provides us with theoretical propositions. Kumula's analysis demonstrates how Indigenous languages are a rich epistemic resource that is neglected in South Africa, and by implication, elsewhere.

Ndlovu's contribution considers colonialism's success in transforming cultural differences into substantive socio-economic and political forms of difference, and the transformation of Africans into colonial subjects. The emphasis of the chapter is upon how this paradigm of difference and colonially-inherited identity continues to shape the efforts of reasserting African languages and culture. Using the example of South Africa, the author demonstrates the reproduction of patterns that shaped the politics of belonging and reinvention of cultures by colonialism, and like other postcolonial societies, South Africa was trapped in widespread colonially inherited identity narratives that shaped the contours of its cultural experience and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa.

Multidisciplinary researches have demonstrated how coloniality, long after formal colonial rule, persisted with the reinvention of African experiences, lives and reality. Current scholarship provides invaluable insights into how the paradigm of difference dominated all others. The author argues that the paradigm provides an important starting point to explore the full implications of colonialism and coloniality for African cultures and languages, revealing deeper, enduring and complex parameters within which African cultures and languages were stripped of their primordality in order to sustain the colonial project. The chapter argues that it is precisely through these parameters that the spectre of colonialism still haunts and crafts patterns of belonging in ways that are inextricably tied to language and culture in South Africa. The concept of inclusivity in South Africa that aspires to promote and reassert African languages has instead replicated patterns of dependency that are circumscribed by the boundaries of the legacies of coloniality that need to be unmasked in the process of reasserting indigenous languages and cultures.

The following two chapters by Ngqulunga and Sithole demonstrate the importance of historical studies in unearthing the strategies of language policy and subterfuge, showing how state institutions and indigenous cultural leaders collaborated in invoking tradition to control and circumvent political radicalism in the South African context. Ngqulunga investigates how the *kholwa* (converted Zulu Christians) and white leaders in Natal, principally in the 1920s to the 1940s, turned to tradition. The process began in the early 1920s by establishing the *Inkatha ka Zulu* (the Zulu National Congress), and was reinforced by the establishment of Zulu Society in 1936 by the NBTU (Natal Bantu Teachers Union) with the support of the Native Affairs Department. The influence of rapid urbanisation and consequent radicalism caused the *kholwa* and state to become deeply concerned, prompting them to turn to tradition, by promoting the Zulu language. Indigenous culture and traditional customs were viewed as bulwarks. For both the black middle class and South African state, the embrace of indigenous institutions marked fundamental policy shifts. Jan Smuts and other leaders of the state saw culture and tradition as powerful instruments for controlling and governing the indigenous population. The strategies

they adopted constituted a rejection of the politically dangerous move towards creolisation. The establishment of the Zulu Society and its support by the state was explicitly an attempt to suppress creolisation by embracing language culture and tradition in dominating and controlling conquered indigenous people. Despite the decline of the Zulu Society a decade after its establishment, the value of mobilising language, culture and tradition for political ends informed the Afrikaner political elite and became the cornerstone of apartheid policies.

Sithole's historical investigation of the negative impact of the politics of publishing on the Zulu language and the Cultural Society's attempts to contribute to knowledge production in the IsiZulu language in the late 1930s and 1940s is informed by Pamela Maseko's arguments that language in both written and spoken forms is the depository and resource of a people's shared values, thoughts and opinions, encompassing their physical, social and spiritual environment. Language is the resource and lens through which ideas, beliefs and thoughts are constructed about the world around the speakers. Sithole demonstrates that the Zulu Society's ambitions to achieve its goals led to a complete dependency on the segregationist state for financial resources. This dependency undermined the efforts of the Zulu Society to contribute to knowledge production, enabling the state with its segregationist policies to divert it from its primary objectives, especially during World War II. The study corrects the oversimplified received understanding of the Zulu Society as an archaic, primordial Zulu nationalist movement, lacking wider appeal, showing instead that a broad range of constituencies, including the radical youth and working class formations, as well as its conservative older members, supported it. As a broad church it lacked a coherent approach to knowledge production and failed to fulfil its original mandate, which prompted the hostility of the Native Affairs Department during the second half of the 1940s.

Having focused almost wholly on the African diaspora, and on South Africa in particular, we turn to Europe which was itself subject to colonisation, and by comparison with Africa has a much longer experience of promoting, protecting and regulating minority languages. Williams contends that this does not mean that this has resulted in long-term stability and vitality. Interactions between hegemonic and minority languages have had significant implications for the character and possibility of language revitalisation, which is not without its challenges to achieve. The tension revolves around the idea of normalisation, which is central to the theory and praxis of the redistribution of power between linguistic majorities and minorities. There are, Williams contends, three main conundrums that need to be addressed directly in order to facilitate language revitalisation, and place it on the same par as employment, regional development and social welfare. These conundrums relate to how to manage success and expectations in language revitalisation; how to manage the navigation of the mainstream; and how to ensure that revitalisation includes specified outcomes as well as outputs.

Such considerations need to be cognisant of the fact that one of the central components of European state building was to impose hegemonic languages and prohibit, or

undermine, indigenous tongues. In other words, internal colonisation. Minority language revitalisation is a reaction to the dominant language and culture, and may be conceived as a counter-struggle for political and territorial control. The author argues that the most powerful contemporary expression of such a struggle is the attempt by Catalonia to achieve self-determination as an autonomous polity, a struggle in which both language defence and identity politics have entwined arguments for economic growth and independence within a reconfigured European Union.

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