

Language ideologies in formal and informal educational places

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Language ideologies

- Influential ideas regarding 'correct', 'appropriate' or 'proper' ways in which language is expected to be used
- Linguistic norms defined by powerful groups
- Appear to be universal and ahistorical
- Reproduce the social order by justifying existing hierarchies

Language ideologies

- Nation-states: “one territory, one culture, one language” ideology
- Led to: ‘standard’ languages
- A standard has been reached; more prestigious than other versions
- Promotes uniformity, circumscribed borders of a language, deters speakers from deviating

Language ideologies

- Good quality languages: pure, unmixed, free from contamination by other languages, especially those spoken by the working classes or people of colour

Semiotic processes that mediate language ideologies (Gal & Irvine 1995)

- Iconicity: social and linguistic characteristics become bound together; form ideological representations that appear to be inherent
- Erasure: linguistic practices simplified and homogenised; Counter-examples/ exceptions repressed and removed
- Recursiveness: representations that repeatedly portray social and linguistic phenomena as oppositional, bifurcated

What language ideologies communicate to young people

- 3 educational 'places' in one Cape Flats community
- A school
- A hip hop group
- A radio show

Place 1: At school

Map Jacobs' Christmas, compulsory grade 12 text written in Kaapse Afrikaans:

- P: In Christmas [Map Jacobs' Christmas] they speak like us. I can relate to them.
- I: Is it important to read books like that?
- P: In a way yes and in a way no. That Afrikaans isn't right. It's not at the standard that it must be. You can't write in Kaapse Afrikaans in your [examination] question paper. The terms must be right.
- I: Why?
- T: If we look at the other subjects. It's here and there maybe alright. But you can't mix your language. We can't speak like that. Your marks go down immediately. They will penalise you [repeats in English], they will penalise you.

(Translated from the Afrikaans: focus group discussion.)

“Iconicity” and “erasure” at school

Iconicity:

- Colouredness: mixed race and mixed language; bound together and deemed to be inferior
- ‘Mixed’ language: impure, sub-standard, not right
- Standards: an ideology of standards originated in colonial era; certain forms of language and culture perceived to be sub-standard

Erasure:

- this is an Adam Small play; it’s okay sometimes but generally not- counter examples ignored

At the radio show (after watching Afrikaaps documentary)

- G: That's the problem, you want to lower the standards, the standard has been set and now we want to lower it, it's wrong.
- T: The thing is (ALL SHOUT AT ONCE) the thing is we are being taught, we have to learn to get to those standards. So they have to come to our standards to bring us up.
- G: We wanna come and simplify Afrikaans in the most wrongest way by bringing this slang about ... Afrikaans is the formal language, it's the legal language, it has its own set of grammar and everything of how it should be spoken, now suddenly you want to come and say "no it's a bit too difficult".

At the radio show

- Recursiveness: oppositional terms created for the two versions of Afrikaans: formal, legal, grammar
- Yet languages become standardised and given constitutional/legal power through political processes not linguistic ones
- All languages have a 'grammar'
- 'Suiwer', pure Afrikaans versus 'Kaaps'

Doodvenootskap rap group

- *My self-confidence se boosters het bruises, ek is n problem as ek wil unique is...*

(My self-confidence boosters have bruises, I am a problem if I want to be unique)

- *Babies lost their toys want their tannies wil rattle.*

(Babies lost their toys because their mothers want to rattle.)

- *Organisations are competing doing it for charity*

and

- *My porridge bowl is nou (now) a satellite dish.*

Doodvenootskap rap group: Hip-hop and language ideologies

- CT hip hop crews have created alternative values, ‘standards’, linguistic excellence
- Reject race and class-based norms, connect with everyday experiences of Black youth:

“When we do interviews and speak gamtaal that shit’s on purpose so the kid at home can say, ‘they’re speaking my language,’ you know? They’re representing, you know, what comes out of the township. So if some middleclass motherfu*er comes ‘Oe god, skollietaal’ (‘Oh god hooligan language’), the shit’s not for them, you know what I mean? I don’t care if some white-ass dude at home thinks, ‘Oh shit look at this . . . uncultured’, you know? I want some kid from the ghetto to think, ‘Naa, we can relate to that’”.

(Shaheen, Prophets Of the City, Quoted in Haupt, 2001)

*“Instead, then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in **networks of social relations** and understandings... where a larger portion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself.”*

Doreen Massey

Places as networks of social relations that shape language ideologies

- Schools: the nation state, its visions and aspirations for citizens
- ...But schools 'travel': elite schools at the radio show
- Doodvenootskap: the social relations, values and politics embedded in SA NGOs and hip hop culture
- Analysing place-based linguistic ideologies has liberatory educational potential