

# Linguistic Citizenship as Utopia<sup>1</sup>

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“The capacity to live with difference is, in my view, the coming question of the 21st century” (Stuart Hall).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A major challenge of our time is to build a life of equity in a fragmented world of globalized ethical, economic and ecological meltdown. In this context, language takes on singular importance

whereby we may engage ethically with others across encounters of difference. However, there is an important sense in which the crisis of humanity we are experiencing as a crisis of diversity and voice is deeply entwined with a subterranean crisis of language itself. As Giorgio Agamben has pointed out, although language is the foremost realization of our humanity, our current understanding of language distorts rather than elucidates this humanity. Thus, if we are to engage seriously with the lives of others, an imperative is reconceptualizing language in ways that can promote a *diversity of voice* and contribute to a *mutuality and reciprocity*

of engagement across difference. This requires that we critically engage with the modes of ‘knowing language’ that remain deeply entwined with (other) processes of subjugation that have accompanied centuries of colonial violence, and that rest on the racial logics of the founding thinkers of the enlightenment. Grosfoguel (2013) (citing Dussel, 2005) has detailed the larger framing context for enlightenment-colonial thought generally. He writes about how the development of the human, social and physical sciences has gone hand in glove with the four genocides that Stratton (xx xx) calls ‘typifying features of the modern world’; the expulsion of the Jews from Spain; the Spanish conquest of the Americas; the Witch burning of the Middle Ages; and the Black Atlantic slave trade. One consequence of the genocides was to engineer a violent proliferation of Otherness – a systematic creation of insurmountable difference and division.

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Grosfoguel (2013) emphasizes how the genocidal 200 years (1450 – 1650) of “I conquer, therefore I am” (the war machine) was the necessary precursor of the Cartesian challenge to Christianity’s authority of knowledge in the words ‘I think therefore I am’ (the God-eye view of eternal, decontextualized knowledge).

The study of language was one of the Cartesian knowledge structures that undergirded the global project of subjugation, and remains a powerful tool of governmentality. Colonial linguistics crafted language as a technology for constraining and containing the diversity of others. Languages were described in speech forms indexically linked to identity and place in ways that sorted speakers hierarchically into categories of social class, ethnicity, and race. Processes of linguistic codification and translation construed local languages in terms of Western categories of thought and cut to the same cloth as metropolitan languages (Harries, 2007; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007); By determining what was ‘sayable’ within and across languages, processes such as these *re-voiced* the colonial other, silenced their histories and distorted their cosmologies. Speakers’ local knowledges about their language were invisibilized, comprising to all intents and purposes an effective form of *epistemicide* (de Sousa Santos, 2010) the erasure of a body of knowledge through epistemic violence. Not surprisingly, the imposition of alien structures and meanings onto local languages, and the revoicing of local knowledge, produced in the colonial subject a sense of existing “absolutely for the other” (Fanon), a Fanonian psychic split characterized by feelings of disconnect from a dignified sense of self and human value.

Contemporary understandings of multilingualism, the nomenclature *par excellens* of how we have come

to conceptualize and regiment our relationship to different others, continue to engage and contain diversity through techniques of (linguistic) distortion, erasure of voice, epistemological violence and humiliation and shame. Multilingualism as a politico-legal notion remains a *de facto* mechanism whereby essential features of colonial social logics are reconfigured in contemporary ‘postcolonial’ societies. This means that any attempt to address the existential problem of how to ethically engage with others across encounters of difference must comprise a critical and fundamental rethinking of the idea of ‘multilingualism’ itself.

This chapter offers the notion of *Linguistic Citizenship* as a blueprint for a conceptual space within which to think differently about language and ourselves, and for how we thereby might relate more ethically to others through language. In what follows, I provide a short chronological overview in section 2 of the idea of Linguistic Citizenship. I emphasize how novel practices and representations of language do not only challenge many of the ideas we hold about language and multilingualism, but also contribute to an agentive and transformative understanding of citizenship. In section 3, I illustrate this argument further with a case-study of Kaaps, a stigmatized variety of Afrikaans spoken in the Cape Flats of South Africa. The section offers an analysis of a performance of a Hip Hop Opera called Afrikaaps, as well as a documentary commentary on the making of the performance that shows how a new sense of language emerges simultaneously with a new sense of self and dignity of citizenship.

In the final section of the chapter, I discuss how the idea of Linguistic Citizenship might contribute to a

construal of ‘multilingualism’ as a *space of vulnerability*. This is a space where speakers meet different others in disruptive and unsettling encounters that *interrupt* the status quo (Pinchevski, 2005), and where senses of self may be juxtaposed and refashioned as part of the deconstruction of dominant voices and more equitable linguistic engagement with others.

## 2. LINGUISTIC CITIZENSHIP

Linguistic Citizenship is an invitation to rethink our understanding of language through the lens of citizenship at the same time that we rethink understandings of citizenship through the lens of language. As we shall see, the conjuncture of these two terms troubles both our conventional ideas of the ‘linguistic’ as well as how we think about ‘citizenship’.

The concept of Linguistic Citizenship arose out of the contradictions surrounding programs and practices of Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in the 1990s in the context of the geopolitical South. The contradiction lay in the fact that identical investments and efforts by NGOs and government departments in language teaching provisions for Mt/bilingual education, such as literacy materials, grammars, orthographies, dictionaries, teacher training programs, and infrastructure delivery, resulted in very dissimilar outcomes. Findings suggested that a key parameter distinguishing successful from failed programs was whether, and to what extent, community members found vernacular/local language provisions useful in their everyday management of issues such as employment, economy and (local/provincial) politics of housing, education and health (Stroud, 2001). Importantly, the longer-term viability of

Mt/bilingual programs was dependent on the degree to which the community itself was actively involved in developing and administering the program, for example, by contributing to the establishment of orthographic conventions or choice of curriculum content (Stroud, 2002). A good example of this was the mother tongue program developed in conjunction with an HIV prevention program for youth and adults - also involving an adult literacy program - by a consortium of stakeholders (including Lufthansa, Nestle and a German NGO), the success of which was due to the local community engagement it inspired. Findings generally highlighted the importance of an engaged, committed and agentive community for successful program outcome, a *modus operandus* that contrasted with the then prevailing models of top-down interventions designed in the North, and administered by foreign NGOs and aid organizations. In fact, importing models and training programs (and forms of evaluation) from the North that failed to address the priorities of local stakeholders emerged as a stark recipe for failure. The notion of Linguistic Citizenship was thus born out of the felt need for a perspective that situated linguistic practices and representations of speakers firmly within their everyday sociopolitical strivings for agency and transformation. It was such a perspective that provided the impetus for a critique of the predominant framing of the political philosophy of language at the time, Linguistic Human Rights (LHR).

Subsequent developments of Linguistic Citizenship have engaged critically with (LHR) which is in all essentials a form of (affirmative) politics of recognition. The main thrust of the critique, which resonated with

many other voices of the time (e.g. Blommaert, 2001; Pennycook, 1998; May, 2001, 2005), was that LHR tended to promote selective agency, ignore the material and economic constraints in the implementation of rights, and rest on understandings of language as ‘standard’ that reproduced disadvantage among speakers of other, non-recognized varieties (Stroud, 2001, 2009; Stroud and Heugh, 2004). A South African postapartheid example illustrates some of the problems associated with LHR processes. This is the case of the Northern Ndebele National Organization that lobbied parliament to accord official status to SiNdebele in the South African constitution. In response, the state agency responsible tasked the speakers of the language themselves to *prove* that SiNdebele was *de facto* a distinct language and therefore eligible to be considered for official recognition. This led to the community actively contesting an earlier classification of SiNdebele as a ‘variety’, thus creating a situation of conflict and division both within and between the designated linguistic. The example shows language to be a fundamentally constructed and contested object, the socio-historical outcome of debate, legislation, competing ideologies and social conflict. This is not adequately theorised in the LHR framework.

One consequence of this lack of theorisation is that LHR continues to the dynamic of a colonial linguistics. LHR discourses are subject to all the exigencies of how power is exercised in a State, and the resulting technologies of language description and tropes of deliberation themselves impose specific political notions on how languages can be construed. Jaffe (1999: 28) has noted how “forms of language activism that reproduce a dominant language ideology also reproduce the structures of

domination”. Within the LHR paradigm, a linguistics of standardization, officialization and intellectualization reconstructs minority languages in the image of official standard languages so as to embody the social ideologies, class differences and standard/non-standard distinctions - the very notions of language that have led to the oppression of these languages and the hierarchization of their speakers in the first place (Woolard, 1998). Thus, the politico-legal sense of multilingualism in an LHR framing emerged as one technology among a broad battery of disciplinary and regulatory practices (Comaroff, 1998:32) deployed by the state in pursuit of its continued reproduction. As illustrated by the examples here, LHR, which is supposedly ‘universal’ is highly contingent on local states and their institutions and specific histories. However, LHR remains mainly silent on the issue of how it is imbricated in the replication of existing institutional power structures of particular nation-states.

In contradistinction, the notion of Linguistic Citizenship is a richly political concept designed to capture the idea that language falls firmly within citizenship discourses, and that it is, in fact, the very medium whereby politics is enacted and performed (Stroud, 2009: 217). The initial analyses of Mt/bilingual programs mentioned earlier strongly suggested that an important dimension of the political is the potential for political action to bring about alternative worlds, what Anderson (2002) has referred to as the ‘utopian surplus’ in the notion of citizenship. The ever-widening scope of what is covered under the umbrella of citizenship is a testimony to this utopian surplus. A *political* notion of citizenship accompanied the vote, and linking citizenship to economic rights and obligations accompanied the rise

of trade unions and the development of welfare legislation. In the earlier years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, and in the wake of the women's suffrage movement, the notion of citizenship was extended to also encompass issues of gender. Reflecting on the fluid nature of citizenship, Isin (2009, see also Isin & Nielsen 2008) argues that "our dominant figure of citizenship has changed throughout the 20th century" (2009, 368) and that we need a "new vocabulary of citizenship" (2009, 368). He notes how in today's world.

new actors articulate claims for justice through new sites that involve multiple and overlapping scales of rights and obligations (...). The manifold acts through which new actors as claimants emerge in new sites and scales are becoming the new objects of investigation (Isin, 2009: 370).

Isin's emphasis on the fluidity and dynamism of the "fields of contestation around which certain issues, stakes, interests etc. assemble" (e.g. sites, such as gender, sexuality, and language), and the "scopes of applicability (so-called 'scales') that are appropriate to these fields" (going beyond conventional scopes such as state, nation, to include also sub and supranational groupings) is borne out by the contemporary multiplication of 'citizenships', such as *sexual citizenship*, or *intimate citizenship*, and similar constructions. Each of these extensions in the meaning of citizenship has brought different ways of 'knowing' political subjects onto arenas of public and political discourse, with important consequences for key reforms in the social, political, economic or sexual

rights of citizens<sup>2</sup>. It is in this sense that 'citizenship' is used in conjunction with 'linguistic' - as an acknowledgement of the deeply entangled dependencies between language and politics, and as a pointer towards how a different construal of language may open up for new political scenographies, where attention to complexities and subtleties of language (just as with an appreciation for different sexualities) can initiate and sustain state remedies for a more encompassing and inclusive forms of citizenship agency and participation.

The other side of the coin is that alternative construals of language are mediated through more diverse and complex configurations of citizenship outside of the conventional understandings of politics. Isin introduces the notion of "acts of citizenship" to refer to those "deeds by which actors constitute themselves (and others) as subjects of rights" (2009, 371), or alternatively, as those with "the right to claim rights". Today, the actors of citizenship are not necessarily those who hold the status of citizen (as in Isin's conception citizenship is not a status, but an act). He argues that "the manifold acts through which new actors as (rights) claimants emerge in new sites and scales" forces us "to theorize citizenship as an institution in flux embedded in current social and political struggles that constitute it" (Isin, 2009: 368). This point is well illustrated by the recent years' insurgent citizenship (Hollis, xxxx) movements: from Occupy movements, such as the Greek *Outraged* or the Spanish *Indignato*, through movements such as *Black Lives Matter*, to Fall movements such as *Rhodes Must Fall*, these acts of citizenship are about *shifting the location of agency and voice*, in the sense

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of sexual citizenship, for example, was successfully used by LGTB activists in many countries to extend marriage and adoption rights to gay couples.

that new actors enter the contest and determine a new course of events. In this respect, 'acts of citizenship' contribute to 'transformative' remedies or strategies in the sense of Nancy Fraser (1995: 85), *viz.*, remedies that attempt to change or restructure the political economic structure and transform the social relations underlying production.

These new fields of contested stakes and interests may be articulated in unconventional, non-institutionalized, uses of language and other semiotic practices. In like manner to the complexities of citizenship, Linguistic Citizenship recognizes that speakers express agency, voice and participation through a variety of semiotic means, wrestle control from political institutions of the state, as well as put forward claims for new forms of inclusion by using their language over many modalities (cf. Williams and Stroud, 2012, 2016 for an analysis of performance genres, such as stand-up comedy, in this regard). Importantly, in the process of engaging with the social and political issues that affect them deeply, speakers reconfigure language through the creation of new meanings, the repurposing of genres and the transformation of repertoires. In other words, just as the term 'citizenship' points to a fluid space of contestation, so should the term 'linguistic' not be confused with the abstracted idea of conventionally understood language as the artefactual product of formal linguistic analysis. Speakers use a spectrum of expression outside of what is normatively (and narrowly) considered institutionally appropriate to express agency, voice and desire for inclusiveness and participation that everyday institutional processes, such as political deliberation, education, and the like need to recognize and be cognizant of. Linguistic Citizenship encourages

us to critically rethink the notion of 'linguistic' in favor of some such notion as 'repertoire', a broad palette of semiosis, incorporating what people do and think about language, as well as other forms of (embodied and material) semiosis.

As I noted above (e.g. with reference to sexual citizenship), there is an important sense in which citizenship has, what Andersson has referred to as, a 'utopian surplus'. I take him to be referring here to how the fields and issues of contestation in 'acts of citizenship' – in Isin's terminology – *prefigure* a better world. A productive sense of utopia is not the conventional non-place in a non-time usually associated with the concept, but the condition detailed by Ernst Bloch (1968) that references a better way of living that is *foreshadowed* in the present (and past) but as yet *unrealized* (cf. Anderson, 2006). These foreshadowings may often be experienced as aesthetic or euphoric resonances of subjectively experienced events or states: Andersson gives the example of somebody washing dishes to the vibrant beat of a Cuban song playing in the background. Momentarily, her imagination transports her into a sensuality of a sun-drenched beach – only to rudely return, as the music dies down, to the reality of the kitchen sink. Linguistic Citizenship carries a utopic surplus in this sense. It is about the experiences that people may have of language practices and representations from another 'angle' and that capture – however fleetingly – a different significance of language to life. Thus, the conjuncture of 'citizenship' with 'linguistic' is meant to allude to an idea of language that has disruptive and interrogative qualities (cf. Anderson, 2002, 2008; Bloch, 1986) and that functions as an affordance to point us toward how language and speakers might appear 'otherwise' (cf. Povinelli, 2011).

It is this utopian dimension of Linguistic Citizenship that is illustrated in the next section in the analysis of the performance of the Hip Hop opera *Afrikaaps* as represented in a documentary that followed the production of the piece. Performance/popular culture is a key site for a politics of the everyday that bears many resemblances to other acts of citizenship where “actors seek to constitute themselves as subjects of rights”. Speaking of the African context generally, Dolby (2006) argues that “people’s everyday engagements with popular culture [...] must be a central component of understanding emergent public spaces and citizenship practices in Africa, present and future” (2006: 34), as it is a site of struggle, a place for the negotiation of race, gender, nation and other identities and for the play of power” (Dolby, 2006:33). Simone (2008) talks of popular culture as a “form of collective endeavor that converts differences of power and legitimacy into forms of which everyone can participate and benefit from without the outcomes being the product of consensus, conciliation or brokered deals” (p. 76).

The musical *Afrikaaps* is such a politically significant performance, and it is an excellent example of Linguistic Citizenship in action. In the performance, the refigurement of language is an integral part of contemporary identity politics. It is one where contentious issues in the practice and representation of a local and racially stigmatized version of Afrikaans are at the heart of speakers’ search for a politically transformative agency, a new sense of self and a future – conceived through an alternative idea of language - that is significantly different from both the past and the present. This is the core sense of Linguistic Citizenship.

### 3. AFRIKAAPS

In order to grasp the import of the event of *Afrikaaps* (performance and documentary) for Linguistic Citizenship, it is necessary to contextualize it in the racialized history of South Africa. Postapartheid South Africa inherited a complex, shifting and divisive system of racial classification at independence in 1994 that continues to seep into the minutiae of everyday life of the majority of South Africans. The structural category of race remains a primary mould into which everyday interactions and identities are cast, providing an enduring and familiar trope, a point of certainty amidst the messy ambiguities of post-apartheid transformation. Despite the perpetuity of race as a lived category, *discourses of racialization* that is the words and ways through which people construct and navigate race on an everyday basis are fluid, shifting and entangled, “a complicated multiplicity of identifications producing, reproducing and transforming identities under changing social and historical circumstances” (Walker, 2005).

Practices and representations of language comprise a particular category of racialization discourse. It is against this that the documentary *Afrikaaps* is of interest for understanding the idea of Linguistic Citizenship. The documentary presents a richly alternative representation and celebration of Afrikaans that shifts the significance of racial categories. *Afrikaaps* is fundamentally about reclaiming ownership and authority over Afrikaans – a powerful tool of White racial hegemony throughout South Africa’s history, and in so doing, rethinking race.

Afrikaans was one of the two official languages of South Africa up until the transition in 1994, when the

new constitution recognized 11 official languages. It is a language born out of slave creole contact between speakers of Early Dutch, Portuguese, French, English, Malay, Tamil and Arabic, with local speakers of Khoi and San language, forged through colonial language and ideology struggle, and consolidated in the hegemony of apartheid. (Giliomee, 2005). This lineage, however, does not figure strongly in mainstream representations of Afrikaans, which remain predominantly resonant with discourses of ethnic/racial purity. Its creole origins notwithstanding, or rather because of this, Afrikaans has been stringently policed with white Afrikaans practices designated as 'pure Afrikaans or Standard Afrikaans, and offset against particular ideologically loaded named varieties closely tied to coloured identity that were seen as distorted speech. (Adhikari, 2005, 2006; Alexander, 2013).

It is in this complex of race and language that Afrikaans gains its significance. The *vulnerability* of fragmentation, uncertainty and confusion said to accompany the notion of Coloured (e.g. Adhikari, 2006) finds rich expression in contestation over the 'stigmatized' language of coloured speakers: Kitchen Afrikaans, Coloured people's parlance or patois, Coloured language, Coloured Afrikaans, "Capey" or "Gammat-taal" (Small, 1972; Blignaut 2014, 2; see Hendricks, 2012 and Dyers, 2008: 52; Alexander, 2012; Prah, 2012 for a debate on mainstreaming Afrikaans and the focus on its varieties; Hendricks, 2012)). *Afrikaans* is the more recent articulation of these contests, one which dares to question the very ownership of Afrikaans itself.

Afrikaans, the documentary, is directed by Dylan Valley. It highlights the story of Afrikaans (its history and language structure and contact) via its

Creole roots. By drawing on hip-hop, traditional Malay humour and personal narratives, the documentary follows the staging of the Afrikaans theatre (the participants involved in it), the expert and non-expert definitions of Afrikaans, and the history of Afrikaans from colonialism into post-apartheid South Africa.

According to Valley, speaking at the 2010 Encounters film festival, the documentary aimed at offering an alternative narrative about Afrikaans by recuperating lost meanings, sounds and denotational meanings:

On the surface, Afrikaans appears to be a theatre piece within a film, based as it is on the creative processes and performances of the critically acclaimed stage production of the same name. But rather than depending on the drama on stage and the production's prominent characters to carry the narrative, Valley finds revealing moments from the cast's and production crew's personal narratives that transcend what happens on stage. Afrikaans, the film and the stage play, breaks ground by boldly attempting to reclaim Afrikaans – so long considered a language of the oppressor – as a language of liberation. (see encounters website: <http://www.encounters.co.za/>).

The theatre production, Afrikaans, which involves hip-hop artists Emile YX?, Jitsvinger, Bliksemstraal, Blaq Pearl, and artists Jethro, Kyle Shepherd, Moenier Parker and Shane Cooper, weaves a simple story out of the complicated history of Afrikaans. It is a non-expert representation, although informed by academic research. Importantly, language is embedded in the everyday political and historical realities of the speakers, thus underscoring an important



feature of Linguistic Citizenship. One of the artists involved in theatre production, Jitsvinger, speaking at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Heal the Hood Hip-Hop Lecture Series held at the University of the Western Cape stated that Afrikaaps is a documentary that reflects on the use of language:

For me, I think this documentary teach kids to think more about themselves and the rest of society. Language is just one aspect of this thing.

For Valley, the making of the Afrikaaps documentary and the theatre production involves a personal journey as well as understanding the history of his own community:

I think that young South Africans especially will enjoy it, particularly the “coloured” community as it might reveal parts of their heritage they have never known about. I myself certainly never knew the extent to which the Malays, the Khoi and the San had shaped the language until I started researching this for myself.”(see <http://www.acpfilms.eu/htdocs/uploads/Afrikaaps.pdf>)

The documentary follows the temporal unfolding of what came to be known as the Afrikaans language: from its creole beginnings and its Arabic scripture to its latter-day standardization. The opera reflects the turbulent history (cf Stroud, 2015) of Afrikaans in encounters of difference and the juxtapositions of contesting voices – the slave-owners, the Khoi inhabitants and the various migrant demographics. Rather than ignoring this turbulence, the documentary structures its representation around this trope throughout – in its choice of voices it chooses to highlight, the personae it casts as commentators, and in the themes and contents of the lyrics it presents. This is

emphasized by Catherine, the producer, in her introductory comment

The purpose of the show is that we deal with the history of Afrikaans and it goes on Into the 50s where people are then not only dispossessed of their language but they are also dispossessed of their homes and in that process their identities are fractured.

This is hammered home through the insertion of old newsreel shots of the demolition of District six, a Coloured area in Cape Town out of which residents were forcefully removed under the apartheid Group Areas Act.

Neville Alexander, the iconic Director of the Program for Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), one of the country’s most influential language activist, remarks explicitly on the turbulent emergence of Afrikaans,

As die Kho, die San, en die Slawe veral nie gedwing was om Hollands of Nederlands te leer nie of te praat nie, dan sou die taal Afrikaans eintlik nie ontstaan het nie.

If the Khoi, the San and especially the slaves had not been forced to learn Dutch then Afrikaans would not have existed

Moenier, one of the participants in the opera, brings out the power differentials between entangled protagonists, and the violence exercised in the birth and consolidation of Afrikaans in the following verse;

### MOENIER:

1. Ek is ’n number met ’n storie ou pel  
(*I’m a number with a story old pal*)
2. Van hoe my mense hulle *feelings* en geheime vertel  
(*About how people talk about their feelings and secrets*)

3. Ek was gebore daar in *Europe* met 'n ander taal (*I was born in Europe with a different language*)
4. Maar innie Kaap was ek gekap met 'n creole style (*But in Cape Town I was produced with a creole style*)
5. Ek is ook baie gesing met 'n ghoema sang (*I've been sung a lot with a ghoema song*)
6. Ek vat jou hand Zanzibar en Dar Es Salaam (*I take your hand from Zanzibar to Dar Es Salaam*)
7. *Dutch Sailor Boy*
8. wat sing jy daar? (*What are you singing?*)
9. Sal jy mind as ek vir jou 'n klein vragie vra (*Do you mind if I ask you a question*)
10. Sing jou *song* gou weer, en dan 'n **nogger** keer (*Sing your song again, and then again*)
11. Nou kan ek mos al my broese dai *song* leer (*Now I can teach all my brothers that song*)
12. Oor 'n uur of twee sal ons dai *number* ken (*Over an hour or two well know that song*)
13. Met 'n *smile* sing ons hom *now and then*
14. We'll sing that song

Moenier traces the origins of Afrikaans in migration and creole entanglements, with roots stretching from Zanzibar and Dar Es Salaam, with important milestones celebrated in the *ghoema* song. The *ghoema* harks back to the musical culture of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Malay Slaves, and was a celebration of their being granted freedom in 1834. Moenier draws attention to how one effect of cycles of disruption, re-formation, and

juxtaposition is that no single group of speakers can lay claim to ownership or authenticity, as successive and layered encounters and entanglements of speakers have historically contributed to the rhizomatic character of Afrikaans today.<sup>3</sup>

In telling the story in this way, the production presents an account of Afrikaans that not only challenges the taken-for-granted trope of Afrikaans as a 'European' language, but also (albeit indirectly) interrupts ideas of language as an abstract and disembodied entity. The participants in the documentary are laying bare the disruption and violence - the darker side of a politics of institutionalized linguistic recognition - to which they have been subjected and silenced throughout history. At the same time, they are rethinking the relationships of power underlying particular practices and understandings of language(s) - such as who may decide what a language is, or which speakers count as legitimate. This illustrates a central aspect of Linguistic Citizenship, namely a critical stance towards totalizing ideas of language, that open up for a broader based engagement, and new-found sense of ownership of a language, by speakers.

Another aspect of Linguistic Citizenship is evident in the way in which Afrikaans is presented in the documentary as practices "attuned to multitude of identities, subject positions, and positions of interest (Stroud 2009, 213). This multivocal imaginary of Afrikaans is framed emerges as *entanglements* of circumstances and people, as something that gives voice

<sup>3</sup> The documentary uses clever strategies to insert Afrikaans into the quotidian reality of South Africa. Valley recounts, for example, how a cast member was arrested during the production of the theatre piece, and how this event was stitched into the documentary as an illustration of the 'racial' unfairness of South African justice.

to, articulates, a diversity of life-styles and life-forms, rather than a hegemonic monologue. The following verse from the scene production by **Emil XY?**, perhaps one of the best known rappers in South Africa, highlights the complexities and extent of entanglements;

### **EMILE YX?:**

1. Ek is dai dammies player (*I'm that dominoes player*)
2. Kennetjie en als doels (*Kennetjie en other games*)
3. Ek was 'n ANC supporter (*I was an ANC supporter*)
4. En nou se ek sy Ma se... (*Now I say they're Mother...*)
5. Ek is dai Boesman taal tolke (*I'm that Bushman language translator*)
6. Corner Broker
7. Gooi nee jou tol (*Throw down your spinning tol toy*)
8. Want hiesa gaan djy stoeke (*Cause here you'll have to play*)
9. Ek is dai m□ss murderer (*I'm that mass murderer*)
10. Tyre Burner
11. Minimal wage, sub-economic earner
12. Ek's dai dokter, lawyer, politician (*I'm that doctor, lawyer, politician*)
13. Innie ghetto (*In the ghetto*)
14. Wait a minute
15. Most of them moved out
16. Awe! (*Cool!*)

In the above, Emile performs his lyrics indexing local cultural practices and performances. He rhymes about favourite past-times and games: playing dominoes and little chin (kennetjie), the latter a children's game where an opponent hits a short stick with a longer stick in the air to be caught by fielders. In lines 2 and 3, the performer suggests that he was once an ANC supporter but

now he chides them. He further rhymes that he sees himself as a translator of Bushman language (possibly Khoi or San languages), and suggests that that when people encounter him what they will expect is that he is able to stylize his language like a Corner Broker (line 6). (A Corner Broker, traditionally defined, is an informal trader who sells fruit and other affordable products on the corner of streets in the townships of Cape Town). This may be a reference to the forced identity conversions of Bushmen into Coloureds by legal means, also suggesting Corner Brokers are constantly using language in a playful manner because people who encounter Corner Brokers will have to play with their language (stoeke). Furthermore, the large portion of his lyrics reference the class struggle "innie ghetto", the various stereotypical middle class economic roles assigned to Kaaps speakers and the pains of upward economic mobility working class Coloureds experience when doctors, lawyers and politicians move out.

There is an embodiment of language and linguistically mediated identities in this skit. These do not manifest as narrow racializations, but rather as a corporeal kaleidoscope of entangled selves. The significance of Emile YX?'s verse lies in his breaking down of identity stereotypes by merging and mixing different personae in the body and voice of the same speaker. He is using Afrikaans to literally mediate an embodiment of diversity (cf. Jean Nancy's 'being singular plural) – ethnic, racial, social class - in contradistinction to how the language is usually represented as located solely in the body of the White, middle-class, 'Afrikaner'.

Thus, rather than promoting a story of an emerging and focused

linguistic standard, and far from fixing the language to a specific time, place or embodied identity, the various characters that personify Kaaps celebrate a broad span of non-standard ways of talking, made up of a wide range of registers (criminal argots, children's rhymes, and poetic adoptions of Khoisan languages, playful exercise of clicks), forms of play and musical gigs, dance moves and comic forms and rhythms. We witness a highly chronotopical rendition of the 'language', fluid and scripted for and by the different individual histories, repertoires and biographies. Rather than a singular, determinate authenticity with an immaculate and unsoiled pedigree, Afrikaans is represented as heteroglossic and polyphonic which gives an 'authenticity of historical encounter' to the language.

The re-representation of Afrikaans illustrated in Moenier and Emile's verses, highlighting complexity of entanglement, the rhizomatic roots of Afrikaans and the turbulence and disruption that has accompanied

its various historical unfoldings and branchings is illustrative of Rose's 'minor practices of citizenship linked to 'a politics of cramped spaces, of action of the here-and-now, of attempts to reshape what is possible' (Rose, 2000: 100). This is a core dimension of Linguistic Citizenship that emphasizes citizenship/language as the syncretic outcome of "a capacity to act *in relation*' (Osborne and Rose, 1999: 758) on the cusp, and in the fissures, of public, normative regimes of language and citizenship.

Evidence of Linguistic Citizenship is also present in the documentary in the tropes and genres through which knowledge of Afrikaans is reclaimed. We are treated to a wealth of alternative ways of understanding Kaaps, layered into different genres and articulated across a range of semiotic, multimodal, resources - poetry, Hip Hop, song, dance, and speech styles in character sketches. In the following plates, the learners are demonstrating their skill in an age-old genre of dance performance - *Ghoema*



The three pupils are dancing to the rhythm of a banjo, with the pupil on the left swinging his arms, the one in the middle slapping his chest and the pupil on the right acting a fool by making funny and weird faces. This is all in the spirit of *Ghoema*, a dance celebrating the liberation of the Malay slaves, and a central feature of contemporary Cape Coon dance culture. Their performance intimately glues together Afrikaans, body movement and facial expression into a chronotopical and embodied representation of Afrikaans that reaches back to, and indexes a historical reenactment of *Ghoema* dance.<sup>1</sup>

Dance, song, gesticulation, mimicry allow for the embedding of current practices and their speakers in a multidimensional historical narrative on the origins, continuities and ruptures of language. The dance, gesture

and facial expressions also bring an aesthetic framing to Afrikaans, a form of reclaiming of an authoritative voice, unconventionally articulated, that offers an appreciation of Afrikaans that goes well beyond standard accounts of what it means to 'know' a language.

At the same time, knowing a language 'bodily' comes with a physical sense of well-being. Throughout the documentary, we note an ecstasy of liberation, dignity, autonomy, agency, and inclusivity as the one voice after the other tells its story of Afrikaans on in the documentary, morphing Afrikaans into a vision of *Afrikaaps*. The *linguistic reconnect* of self and language through Afrikaaps is something very different to the experience of *alienation* and disempowerment that typified the Fanonian colonial condition of a linguistically induced 'psychic split'.



<sup>1</sup> An interesting take in the documentary, visible in the plates, is that the backdrop to the Kaaps presentation is the Afrikaans lesson on the board behind the students teaching Afrikaans comparatives.

Together with the emergence of 'Afrikaaps', selves are refigured and a new, vocal, political voice that seeks to reclaim ways of speaking deeply entwined with alternative thinking of what it means, and has meant, to be a speaker of Afrikaaps emerges. The rethinking of Afrikaans takes place together with an articulation of a utopic and disruptive act of (inclusive) citizenship. Both the musical itself and the documentary reveal ways of living differently through language, going against the grain, working in cramped spaces.

In the following excerpt from the opening scene of the documentary, we perceive the transformative potential of difference in and through language in the voices of the school children. After watching the play *Afrikaaps* at the Baxter theatre in Cape Town, three pupils briefly reflect on how the play has overturned some of their preconceived ideas of not just the language they speak, but also their sense of self.

#### **Multiple School Pupils:**

Pupil 1: I feel "Uh!" (*It was mind blowing*)

Pupil 2: Ek het noot gewiet van my voorvaders **Praat** deur my nie. (*I never thought that my forefathers **speaks** through me.*)

Pupil 3: Ek gat nie meer soe skaam wees om te praat soes ek praat nie. (*I will not be shy anymore to speak the way I speak.*)

Ek gat nie weer compromise op die taal vir ander mense nie. (*I will not compromise anymore on the use of my language because of other people.*)

From initially expressing strong surprise and bewilderment, the first two pupil's comments reveal how they see themselves and their forefathers differently through their 'discovery' of

Afrikaaps. The third pupil goes one step further by stating she will never shy away from the way she speaks or compromise on her language for other people who may think she should do otherwise. We see here how acts of Linguistic Citizenship serve to carry cowed bodies and souls into a transformed space where speaking Afrikaans allows participants to - momentarily at least - feel and act with dignity.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Afrikaaps, then, is an act of Linguistic Citizenship that gestures towards a way of doing and thinking language 'otherwise'. It is about an ontological refashioning of what it means to be an Afrikaans speaker through engaging in practices of language that 'interrupt', and that refigure language as a *repertoire* of multiple registers and varieties, linguistic or multimodal/transmodal. It is about realizing the potential of these alternative figurings of language to shift power relations, to relegitimize voice and to insert oneself into a space of dignity. Linguistic Citizenship reframes semiotic practices of citizenship away from a totalizing sense of language.

The processes at work in rethinking Afrikaans illustrate are not those of any one social identity or political alignment, but emerge out of a web and multiplicity of relations and histories. The participants collectively disrupted a well-established regime of language that for years has relegated Cape Flats Afrikaans to a 'kitchen jargon' and reconstituted it as something removed from the straitjacket of the artefact of language. This turbulent event rides on the wave of deep historical and racialized tensions and a more general transformative dynamic in contemporary South Africa. Each choice of a linguistic form gains its

significance against the backdrop of this juxtaposition of different histories and different presents.

Linguistic Citizenship not only interrupts and reshapes forms of speech and practices of speaking, but also unsettles the existing power relations bound up in linguistic forms. What has been perceived or presupposed as a stable regime of structure and meaning is opened up for contest. The re-voicing of Afrikaans means that authority over and ownership of the language is – momentarily at least – ‘shifted’ away from the grammarians and lexicographers to the *speaker* of Afrikaans.

It is here that we might see the relevance of Linguistic Citizenship to a rethinking of multilingualism more generally. Immanent to a conventional sense of language is a closing off of voice and a refusal to acknowledge vulnerability. On the other hand, characteristic for Linguistic Citizenship, as we have noted, is an interruption of normative regimes of language and an inclusiveness of voice in ways that repairs and rejuvenates relationships to self and others. Herein lies the germ of the ‘utopian dynamic’ of Linguistic Citizenship, where encounters can be reconstituted as an arena for the negotiation of difference rather than the imposition of commonality (in language, speech norms, or social identity) (cf. Stroud, 2001). This is the utopian sensibility (expressed in euphoric moments) of how ‘being-through-language’ could be, in the words of one student, “mind-blowingly” different.

Multilingualism seen through the lens of Linguistic Citizenship can be understood in like manner as a site where respectful and deconstructive negotiations around language forms and practices build a mutuality and susceptibility to alternative forms

of being-together-in-difference. By engaging meaningfully with the lives of different others through alternative forms, practices and evaluations of language, senses of self and other are (re)fashioned at the same time as alternative ways of relating to the susceptibilities of others is created. This is tantamount to the ethics of alterity for language that Kulick in a note on Levinas underlines with “to engage in language is to enact and express dimensions of the vulnerability and mutual susceptibility that are constitutive of human existence” (ms nd).

In this sense, multilingualism would comprise sites of *vulnerability* in the sense that no common ground can be assumed – all participants relinquish monologic control over the exchange and open themselves to the inevitable fact that the significance of any instance of language may evolve outside of the control or intentions of any one single participant at any one moment of interaction so that interlocutors need work with provisional meanings and significances (that are ‘negotiated’ or appear at the moment of encounter). A multilingualism framed against the notion of Linguistic Citizenship would therefore be one response to the imperative to avoid the colonial imposition of meaning through practices of re-voicing, and a step towards an epistemology and ontology of language guided by an ethics of alterity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The lack of affordance in mainstream Western understandings of language to entertain diversity of thought, and a frail ethics for living with difference through language suggests that our conceptual frameworks of language are ill-suited to the complexities of living

in an increasingly entangled world. In this chapter, I have wanted to draw out a perspective on a notion of Linguistic Citizenship as a framework for research on the necessary conditions for the realization of a more democratically and ethically based transformative, ontology of language, and as such provide a basis for a revitalized politics of linguistically mediated diversity.

Linguistic Citizenship could easily be 'construed' as a flight of fancy, an imaginative excess. It refers to a "pre-dawning of language and society that is 'not-yet-conscious,'" (Anderson, 2008) and for which the material and objective conditions of fulfilment may not yet exist. However, it is precisely in this utopic potential that the notion of Linguistic Citizenship finds its rationale. As an idea of language that has disruptive and interrogative qualities (Andersson, 2002, 2008; Bloch, 1986)) it points us toward how language and speakers might appear 'otherwise' (cf. Povinelli, 2011). In the philosopher Grosz's words, "we need to politicize the present by finding a future *outside* (my italics) of this present" (Grosz, 2011: 73). LC seeks to do exactly that: It invites us to talk about language in visionary and utopian terms by encouraging reflection on the ways in which the humanity of each of us depends on respectful recognition of, and engagement with, the linguistically mediated humanity of others.

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