Whose Language Counts? Cultural Colonialism and Contemporary Realities.

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To my family, my support system here in Europe, and my home country.

Abstract

The following thesis explores how colonial languages shape the everyday access to local-level governance in Khayelitsha, South Africa. The debates around linguistic hierarchies, power imbalances, and inequality are of note as one links this to the overarching theme of the everyday individual in the International. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: How do colonial languages, such as English in South Africa, perpetuate power imbalances in access to local-level governance? Grounded in post-colonial theory the thesis explores concepts of cultural colonialism as well as power, identity, and 'othering' to contextualize language as a tool for power. Using a qualitative document analysis of ward meetings in Subcouncil 9, Khayelitsha, the access to language, translation, and community engagement is analyzed in understanding the role of English as the language of governance. Moreover, power imbalances and linguistic hierarchies are noted in the community as an isiXhosa speaker undergoes hindered understanding, lack of representation, and opportunity. The thesis highlights the disregard for colonial legacies and education of the community, as language functions as a tool for power and enforcing the 'othering' of indigenous languages, therefore imposing itself into one's everyday life in the community.

Keywords: Cultural Colonialism, Linguistic Hierarchies, Power Imbalances, Post Colonial Theory, the 'everyday'.

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1. Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

The everyday in the international and the way individuals make sense of the world has become a developing field in International Relations (IR). Rather than focusing solely on institutions and states, the way ordinary individuals experience the world holds the potential to have a wider understanding of politics. In this sense, the way the legacies of colonialism infiltrate one's culture, education, and history is of key importance (Björkdahl, & Svensson, 2019, pp. 107-113). Within this framework, the colonial legacies of language, as a key tool of cultural colonialism, affect the everyday individual's experience of life through accessibility, knowledge, and participation shaping the understanding of global politics (wa Thiong'o, 1994, p.16).

In South Africa, a state with 12 official languages, the language distribution contains communities, such as Khayelitsha, where over 90% of the citizens speak isiXhosa as a first language and have limited understanding of other languages due to colonial legacies of underfunded education (Alexander, 2005). Yet, public meetings, school correspondence, and government notices are all presented in English on an institutionalized level. This daily linguistic dislocation echoes the colonial past of South Africa and the legacies of Bantu Education, during Apartheid, a system that entrenched English and Afrikaans as dominant languages, marginalizing indigenous languages (Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 141-166). Moreover, in post-apartheid South Africa, English as the de facto language sparks debates of power, progress, and opportunity. Indeed, in communities such as Khayelitsha, privileging English reinforces linguistic hierarchies and shapes everyday access to services and local-level governance.

This debate on linguistic hierarchies represents a broader pattern across many post-colonial states where colonial languages retain symbolic and material power (Phillipson, 1992). Indeed, certain languages hold power over others, leading to greater inequality and control. By speaking the 'right' language, in contrast to others, certain opportunities in employment, education and politics are given to individuals. Cultural aesthetics and certain linguistic traditions or expressions are also linked to the reinforcement of global hierarchies rooted in colonial legacies (Phillipson, 1992).

The work of post-colonial scholars such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Frantz Fanon, and Edward Said examines the link between language and colonial domination. Indeed, the positioning of colonial languages as superior impacts one's view of indigenous languages, such as IsiXhosa in South Africa. Based on this, there is a particular need to know how colonial hierarchies are still manifested in multiple ways (Fanon, 1963, Phillipson, 1992, Said, 1978, Thiong'o, 1986). As a result, one turns to the everyday impact of cultural colonialism and access to local-level governance. Indeed, discrimination and inequality are consequences of this hierarchical ranking of languages (Bourdieu, 1991). Ultimately, this thesis aims to explore how linguistic hierarchies persist in contemporary South Africa, particularly in access to local-level governance. Moreover, the link to the enduring legacies of colonial rule within the international is explored contributing to the broader debates on cultural colonialism.

1.2 Problem statement.

This thesis aims to examine the use of language as a tool for power, particularly at local-level governance, through accessibility. It explores how colonial language hierarchies impact the everyday individual in institutional practices in South Africa. While existing literature discusses language inequality in the broader field of colonialism, this thesis focuses on how these dynamics manifest themselves in the local-level context in the Khayelitsha community, South Africa, such as ward meetings. Where linguistic exclusion can affect an individual's everyday life in the international through knowledge and engagement.

As a multilingual individual, one observes the use of language hierarchy in daily conversations. Indeed, as people deem certain languages more impressive to master than others there is value and superiority added to the 'right' languages. This, therefore, makes one question how language is used as a tool for power and how colonialism has allowed certain languages to hold a space of superiority, particularly in post-colonial states. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the institutionalizing racial segregation and the suppression of indigenous languages, especially in the education system implemented during the Apartheid regime creates a form of hierarchy in the languages spoken and taught (Open Technology Fund, 2023). Therefore, today, despite contemporary language policies and a multilingual constitution there is inadequate progress in indigenous languages on a societal level. This leads to fueling marginalization and inequality. The

supremacy of colonial languages, such as English and Afrikaans, over indigenous languages form the post-Apartheid landscape of the country, with a gap in the representation of previously disadvantaged linguistic communities (Open Technology Fund, 2023).

1.3 Research Question

How do colonial languages, such as English in South Africa, perpetuate power imbalances in access to local-level governance?

1.3a Subsequent Research Question

How does the legacy of cultural colonialism, through the persistent dominance of colonial languages, continue to impact the lives of ordinary South Africans in their interactions with local governance?

To answer these proposed research questions, the following thesis will explore these questions through a case study analysis of ward meetings in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. This case study analysis will be used to investigate how language shapes access, understanding, and engagement at the local level. The case study of Khayelitsha is of note due to its linguistic composition and a justification for the chosen case study will be made in the thesis methodology section.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

To provide a comprehensive analysis of how colonial languages continue to impact an individual's everyday access to local-level governance in South Africa, as well as establish a background understanding of cultural colonialism, a framework of post-colonial theory will be applied to the thesis. Post-colonial theory will be used as a foundational theory, as the theory acknowledges the strong link to power and hierarchy between colonial and postcolonial states, or colonizers and the colonized (Lye, 1997). For the chosen case study, an emphasis on the use of language as a tool for power is viewed through a post-colonial lens. Using the main assumptions and elements of post-colonial theory, such as power, identity, and 'othering', the following thesis will be informed by the theory's ability to examine the lasting effects of colonialism on former colonies. A

strong critique is made of colonial ideologies or traditional ideologies that continue to shape global politics (Eusebio, Carlos, 2024).

This thesis aims to situate language within the broader framework of International Relations by engaging with the 'everyday' in IR. Therefore, emphasis on how global structures manifest themselves in daily life is of note. As one draws from post-colonial scholarship, language is viewed through a lens of power and cultural colonialism. Therefore, by focusing on how individuals in post-colonial states experience colonial languages one seeks to understand how the international shapes the local.

1.5 Methodology

To address the proposed problem statement and research question, the following study will use a single case study design as a research method. Regarding research, the case study will analyze documents in the form of qualitative research. The collection of qualitative research will include information in the public domain, such as academic journals, academic books, or articles as well as alternative sources such as government documents, agendas, budget presentations, and meeting minutes. This will enable a detailed discussion and analysis of the research question. The use of Qualitative research allows the researcher to examine theories in depth, studying the nature of the phenomena by researching works and concepts rather than numbers (Burnham et al., 2004:180; Neuman, 2014:50).

The case study chosen for the research includes a post-colonial state impacted by multiple language influences, namely subcouncil 9 Khayelitsha community in South Africa. This makes the unit of analysis from the South African local government sector of Khayelitsha, subcouncil 9, and a sample size of n=1 for the research study (Burnham et al., 2004:192; Neuman, 2014:52). The local-level governance will focus particularly on the ward meetings of subcouncil 9, Khayelitsha community, and the use of language in meetings. Through this case study, a methodology of document analysis will be applied to the analysis of the thesis in analyzing relevant local-level government documents, meeting minutes, presentations, and signage used in ward meetings. In this document analysis of language an establishment of how language is used in the community is made and then evaluated in reference to language as a tool for power and cultural colonialism within the community and in the greater everyday in the international.

Moreover, this in-depth case study analysis will use post-colonial theory as a framework to analyze local-level governance and the use of language as a tool for power in the Khayelitsha community, South Africa. The use of post-colonial theory will be linked to the continued impact of cultural colonialism, language hierarchies and inequality.

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations

One must acknowledge the benefits and limitations of the chosen research method, single case study design. Single case studies allow for an in-depth understanding of a specific case, capturing a complex reality (Burnham, P et al, 2004: 192). Moreover, the insights and direction of the study are flexible. However, the limitations of a single case study design include the risk of researcher bias in data collection and analysis methods as well as the limitation of generalizability, as findings are difficult to replicate and apply beyond (Burnham, P et al, 2004, p. 192).

In the case of Khayelitsha, South Africa, the limitation of generalization may be positive, as one cannot research the entirety of the African continent and colonial history due to its vast diversity. To address this limitation and narrow focus, one must establish a clear understanding of the international, cultural colonialism, and linguistic hierarchies to justify the focus on Khayelitsha subcouncil 9 in South Africa and the case study selection. In this regard, one can then link the case study to cultural colonialism and a case for further understanding colonial languages and their power imbalances (Burnham, et al, 2004, p. 192).

1.7 Thesis Structure

The Thesis will consist of the following sections.

Chapter Two: This section includes an in-depth literature review of the study, placing it within the existing literature. Sections such as cultural colonialism, linguistics hierarchies, and language inequality/ discrimination will be presented.

Chapter Three: Establishing the chosen Theoretical framework of the post-colonial theory and highlighting the main assumptions and elements most important to the thesis.

Chapter Four: The sociolinguistic content and language matter of post-colonial South Africa and the linguistic background of the state, analyzing the rise of English (and Afrikaans) as colonial languages.

Chapter Five: A document analysis of the Khayelitsha subcouncil 9 ward meetings documents and sources to establish how language inequality and power imbalances are perpetuated in access to local-level government.

Chapter Six: Discussion of the analysis with a clear understanding of what has been discovered in the research, ultimately an answer to the research question, and the link to the everyday in the international and cultural colonialism.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations of what to research further summarizing the findings of the Thesis research.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To answer the proposed research question and identify the impact of cultural colonialism in post-colonial states, a preliminary review of existing literature will be made, establishing themes of power, hierarchies, and control within the theme of language. Drawing on existing scholarship on cultural colonialism, this literature review identifies works that explore the 'everyday' and colonial structures, linguistic hegemony, language in colonialism, education and social hierarchies, and discrimination through language. This will establish the role of cultural colonialism, and more specifically, language in colonialism. Ultimately, the literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of language as a tool for power in post-colonial states.

2.2 Everyday Life and Colonial Power Structures

Colonial power structures not only shape the international system but also influence the everyday lived experiences of individuals beyond the field of International Relations. Through this one recognizes the work of scholars in establishing the 'everyday' in the international and how this relates to colonial legacies. Within the research of the 'everyday' scholars such as Philip Darby and Arlene Tickner are of particular importance. Indeed, Darby plays an important role in discussing the way one can look at IR and the international from a different approach. The connection to cultural colonialism is established through Darby's exposure to the discipline of IR and its colonial roots. Darby emphasizes the dominance of Western intellect and knowledge in the field of IR (Darby, 2003, pp. 141-166). In the larger field of cultural colonialism, one notes the impact of entanglements of Western/ Eurocentric connections and thoughts in post-colonial states. Indeed, Darby recognizes post-colonial theory as directly tied to explaining global cultural relations, and the everyday individual's identity (Darby, 2003, pp. 141-166).

Building on this, Darby examines how international institutions affect the life of an individual in postcolonial societies due to Western or colonial frameworks disregarding the local context (Darby, 2003, pp. 141-166). This imposition of frameworks of development, peace, or education leads to policies that silence local knowledge (Darby,

2003, pp. 141-166). Ultimately, the top-down influence reflects a form of cultural colonialism, where Western norms are treated as universal truths. In the greater debate on colonial hierarchies, Darby highlights how individuals in the Global South may internalize these hierarchies and conform to colonial standards in education, politics, and even identity (Darby, 2003, pp. 141-166). This form of cultural colonialism impacts everyday life and shapes one's identity.

In addition to Darby's insights, the work of scholar Arlene Tickner, in her article "Seeing IR differently: notes from the third world," acknowledges the 'everyday life' beyond typical IR academia. Through her work, Tickner argues that the everyday lived experiences of individuals produce knowledge of the world. Therefore, those living in a state with colonial legacies, war, or chronic instability have enabling factors that influence their everyday life. The realities of South Africa and its Apartheid Regime's influence on the education sector and political persecution of academics shape the everyday reality of individuals in the state (Tickner, 2003, pp. 295-324).

2.3 Cultural Colonialism and Linguistic Hegemony

The colonial legacies in post-colonial states form part of cultural colonialism. Cultural colonialism relates to the extension of colonial power over another culture (Amsler, 2008). This includes the imposition of culture through cultural activities and institutions. According to Sarah Amsler, the term is used synonymously with cultural imperialism. (Amsler, 2008). Indeed, this term is also seen in the work of Kenneth Coutts-Smith as he defines cultural colonialism as all cultural productions determined by Western civilization. Through his view, Coutts-Smith sees cultural colonialism as synonymous with the Westernization of the globe (Panayotopoulos, 2009, pp. 181-194). In addition to this Westernization approach, scholar Federico Gay discusses the impact of being culturally conquered and the indoctrination of the colonized. In his work, Gay explains that the culturally conquered try to create a culture affirmed by the colonizer to achieve superiority and recognition of values (Gay, 1974). The concept is therefore understood, by these scholars, as part of larger colonial legacies and the imposition of Western culture through power and force.

However, this form of colonialism is not always evident in everyday life. In the work of Gramsci, he explains culture is seen as a hidden style of government and a way of

leadership through thoughts and ideologies (Zhao, 2016). Indeed, building on this Edward Said recognizes the role culture plays in the development of an empire, as the national consciousness that comes with cultural teachings is used and seen as an extension of imperialism. Said recognizes this by urging individuals to write about their history and culture in a new way as colonial history impacts one's cultural and social understanding (Zhao, 2016). In this regard, these scholars see the cultural manifestations that come with cultural colonialism as unspoken and hidden assumptions; however, they provide an important perspective on colonial history (Dirk, 1992).

In relation to language, the link is made to language as a tool for perception and cultural imposition as well as forced language assimilation. Scholar Jinadu affirms this explaining the link between language, culture, and power. Jinadu explains how language is used as a tool for cultural domination by the colonizer (Jinadu, 1976, pp. 603-614). Indeed, the languages of the colonizer hold status and preserve the status quo, linking directly with cultural colonialism (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007, pp. 137-156, Phillipson, 1992. wa Thiong'o, 1986).

2.4 Language in Colonialism

Of specific relevance to this thesis, some scholars have focused on the linguistic aspect of cultural colonialism addressing how language serves as a tool for cultural domination as well as a medium through which power is structured and maintained (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007). This invites a close analysis of the processes in which language reflects power. One, therefore, turns to debates and themes of linguistic hegemony and language as a tool for identity and culture. Shakib explains that language as communication and cultures are products of each other (Shakib, 2011, pp.117-123). Languages, therefore, play a part in one's character and specific relationship with the world. Language is a tool for identity as it allows the conveying of thoughts, beliefs, and customs (Shakib, 2011, pp.117-123).

2.5 Linguistic Discrimination and Social Hierarchies

In analyzing the greater field of cultural colonialism, a focus must be made on linguistic theories. Scholars, such as R.A Hudson, delve into sociolinguistics, discussing the role of language use and social hierarchies (Hudson, 2010). Hudson delves into the idea that societal hierarchies exist in language differences (Hudson, 2010). Indeed, due to different

language varieties, certain perceptions are formed, fueling social inequalities. The marginalized languages face disparities as well as more severe societal biases due to separation in representation and therefore opportunity (Hudson, 2010).

Linguistic discrimination is defined as practices or actions that share a common core of unfair treatment of a person based on their language (Drożdżowicz & Peled, 2024, pp.1459-1482). Building on Hudson's social structure analysis, Anna Drożdżowicz and Yael Peled examine the topic from a psychological point of view, explaining how language links to identity formation (Drożdżowicz & Peled, 2024, pp. 1459-1482). Drożdżowicz and Peled agree with Hudson's understanding of language contributing to the perpetuation of marginalization in institutional, social, and political settings (Drożdżowicz & Peled, 2024, pp.1459-1482). However, both arguments neglect the exploration of language as a political tool of power, instead focusing on a sociolinguistic perspective of discrimination.

2.6 Language and Education in Post-Colonial States

Some scholars focus on the role of language in education as part of the colonial project. In the field of education, language is used to promote hegemonic relations between those who can afford to learn the colonial language and those who cannot (Philipson, 1992). There is, therefore, a linguistic superiority in the education system and a clear distinction between elites, who have access to language and education, and the rest. According to scholar Phillipson, this is the concept of linguistic imperialism. Phillipson explains that in post-colonial states, there is a notion that certain languages dominate internationally over others, leading to discrimination in everyday governance and access to resources (Philipson, 1992). The consequences of linguistic imperialism led to colonial languages, such as English and French, being rooted in African culture, with people communicating in colonial languages rather than indigenous languages (Sayeday, 2021, pp. 134-138).

According to Frantz Fanon, language is the building block of one's collective national identity. Reflecting on his own experience, Fanon describes alienation due to speaking a subordinate language according to the French colonizers (Skubic, 2020). Fanon implies that the control and adoption of the colonizer's language impacts culture and the decline of indigenous cultures. Indeed, Indigenous languages were usually forbidden after colonization happened, with a single colonizer language being taught in schools and spoken at work (Skubic, 2020). Fanon explains, “The language of my education was no

longer the language of my culture" (Skubic, 2020). This depicts the hierarchical process of languages in control and culture. This sentiment is echoed in the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who describes the reality of colonial language in the Kenyan education system (wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 11). Indeed, the highest positions in society were reserved for those who excelled in English (Skubic, 2020). Therefore, by forcing children to learn this language, a new generation is created completely subordinated to the language and the culture of Europe.

The debate of language in education and the use of the colonizer's language is noted in the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. On one hand, scholar wa Thiong'o emphasizes the use of indigenous languages in writing as a form of resistance to cultural imperialism (wa Thiong'o, 1986). He argues, in correlation with Fanon, that language carries culture and memory, and that colonial languages alienate people from their heritage. On the other hand, scholar Achebe supports the use of colonial languages such as English in education. He highlights their repurposing to reflect African realities and reach global audiences, having the power to give opportunities to Africans beyond their states (Qin, 2018, pp. 26-33). By recognizing the African realities Achebe views colonial languages as opportunities rather than oppression and notes their purpose beyond the African context (Qin, 2018, pp. 26-33).

Yet, some scholars provide important counterpoints and expand the conversation. Mohammad Khosravi Shakib's 2011 article, *The Position of Language in Development of Colonization*, explores the role of language as a carrier of culture and its link to identity, history, and culture (Shakib, 2011, pp.117-123). In the context of colonial states, the use of colonial language asserts dominance and control over minority languages. This control allowed the power of colonizers over the colonized (Shakib, 2011, pp.117-123).

2.7 Linguistic Imperialism in Africa

Relating the link between language and inequality to the African context, as desired in the proposed research question, Ekkehard Wolff's 2017 article explores language politics and ideologies in the context of post-colonial Africa. His key arguments explain the differences in approaching language ideologies from European nation-state ideology, which emphasizes linguistic and cultural homogeneity, and post-colonial African Renaissance ideology, which highlights Africa's recognition of local languages (Wolff,

2017). In recognizing these differences, Wolff critiques the use of Eurocentric language policies as colonial powers imposed their languages and ideologies on African states (Wolff, 2017). In addition to this, the work of Kofi Agyekum addresses the politics of language use in Africa. Agyekum highlights the role of power in the choice of language and the linguistic imperialism that accompanies this (Agyekum, 2018, pp. 87-104). Agyekum and Wolff recognize the need for language decolonization and revitaliys as both scholars view European languages as language imperialism.

When it comes to the education sector in most African countries, the language of instruction is a contentious issue. Colonial languages remain the dominant language despite clear evidence that they negatively impact the acquisition of school knowledge (Thiong'o, 1986). Moreover, there is a clear divide between those who speak the language of power and those who do not. The dominance of colonial languages, therefore, brings about issues of hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1991, Phillipson, 1992). Scholars also note the labelling of languages such as vernaculars or dialects for African languages, whereas European linguistic forms are called languages. This terminology falls as part of the greater stigmatization of African languages compared to European languages (Mazrui, & Mazrui, 1998).

Regarding this, within the African context, there has been strong literature and critiques on the use of colonizers' language in education departments, such as Kenyan writer and critic, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's essay, 'On the Abolition of the English Department'. This scholar calls for the establishment of African languages and literature as autonomous disciplines at the university level as a way for African languages to gain credibility (Brydon, 2015, p. 3). This view is placed within the need to promote indigenous languages and calls for an evaluation of languages in African states, education systems, and local-level governance (Brydon, 2015, p. 3).

2.8 Conclusion

The above literature surrounding research regarding cultural colonialism, linguistic hegemony, education, and social hierarchies allows for a greater understanding of key scholars and ideas. Moreover, one can place the proposed research question in the existing literature and identify the research gaps, as well as the role of power imbalances through language in post-colonial states. Ultimately, by exploring the major contributions of

scholars such as Darby, Fanon, Philipson, and Thiong'o in the theoretical field of cultural colonialism as well as the connection to linguistic inequalities, one can understand the role of language as a tool for power and its impact on post-colonial states.

However, to answer the proposed research question, a note is made on connecting the everyday interactions of individuals. Therefore, an emphasis is made on the connection between cultural colonialism and linguistic hierarchies and the everyday experience in the international. Following this a clear establishment of the everyday colonial legacies will be made in the proceeding chapters.

3. Chapter three; Post-Colonial Theory

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework of post-colonial theory is of key importance in informing the analysis of cultural colonialism and the legacies of colonialism in post-colonial states. Regarding this, the following section will unpack the main assumption of post-colonial theory concerning the proposed research question. The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework informing this thesis, as well as identifying the key assumptions and elements in the theory, such as identity, 'othering', and power, that apply to the analysis. In relation to this, a mention is made of the theory's link to how although formal colonialism has ended, the legacies and repercussions are still essential to understand the everyday in the international. In exploring this link, one can establish the framework and main elements for the analysis which will use document analysis of local-level governance to examine the use of colonial languages in perpetuating power imbalances in access to local-level governance.

3.2 Understanding Postcolonial Theory

Post-colonial theory has various themes and elements that emerge in its critique of colonial powers. However, to answer the proposed research question and guide the analysis the following thesis will pay attention to the main elements of identity, 'othering', and power in post-colonial literature. These assumptions link to the theme of power imbalances and inequalities due to the presence of a dominant group (Rana 2021). Post-colonial theory aims to provide a platform for the voices of previously colonized people to be heard and acknowledged (Rana 2021). In this light, the thesis is informed by post-colonial literature that challenges traditional narratives by highlighting the complexities of identity, culture, and history shaped by colonial encounters (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007).

Post-colonial theory looks at the socio-political, psychological, and political impact of colonial legacy in the present day. The field is based on the works of prominent voices such as Edward Said, who discusses the link between colonialism and its influence on cultural and political practices (Dergisi 2013). Said's writing of Orientalism urges the

protection of victims of post-colonization as well as encourages natives to take control of their independence (Dergisi 2013). The theory recognizes the perspective of those who lived and experienced colonial powers by addressing the aftermaths of colonialism. In relation to this, scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explores the silencing of subaltern voices in the works of *"Can the subaltern speak?"* (Spivak, 1988, p 271-313). Spivak's contribution to post-colonial theory focuses on language and epistemology in post-colonial structures in the life of the subaltern. Moreover, Frantz Fanon focuses on the psychological trauma of colonialism, with a particular focus on race, language, and the internalization of inferiority through personal experience.

3.3 Post-Colonial Theory assumptions and elements

Building on these scholars' work, the identity of an individual is linked to post-colonial theory. Indeed, the fight for one's own identity amidst colonialism is of key importance within the theory (Dizayi, 2019, pp. 79-86). In his work, Fanon looks at the identity of the black man under the effects of colonialism as he argues that Western power impacts culture and self-regard. This crisis of identity fuels sentiments of inequality between the colonizers and the colonized (Dizayi, 2019, pp. 79-86).

Moreover, in relation to identity the element of the 'other' is emphasized within post-colonial theory. Post-colonial theory's description of the 'other' recognizes the way Western imperialists view the individuals of colonized states (Hadejia, 2022). Indeed, through the labelling of the 'other,' an assumption of uncivilized and uneducated is given to individuals in colonialized states. This labelling therefore creates a direct link to the 'us' versus 'them' narrative of colonizers versus the colonized (Hadejia, 2022, Said, 1978). Through this categorization of 'us' and 'them,' there is a mentality of colonizers to impose worldviews, traditions, and cultures onto the colonized. This forms a direct link to the notion of cultural colonialism and cultural imperialism as one sees the 'us' versus 'them' narrative connecting to the colonial language imposition in colonized states (Hadejia, 2022). Academic debates based on language discrimination, emphasizing the distinction between 'us' versus 'other' in cultures and colonizing languages, are highly significant and relevant (Rehman, 2013, pp. 129-147). Scholars question, particularly who is the 'other'. In political discourse, the 'other' is the one who remains outside of

colonial parameters of acceptability (Rehman, 2013, pp. 129-147). There is an aspect of power that comes with ‘othering’ and therefore emphasizes the difference.

The element of power relations is central to post-colonial theory as it links to both identity and ‘othering’. Through colonialism, only the dominant group can enforce norms, practices, and traditions disregarding the ‘other’ (Hadejia, 2022). Moreover, in incorporating the three elements there is a strong emphasis on hybrid identities, cultural displacement, and struggle due to the remnants of the colonial past (Dergisi 2013, Panwar, 2024). Through colonial legacies, there are power relations between institutionalised structures and an individual’s everyday life. However, post-colonial theory emphasizes this power imbalance acknowledging colonial histories and therefore understanding power dynamics and implications for society (Prabavathy et.al, 2024, pp. 5559-6664).

Narrowing the theory into the field of language, one can see how language serves as a tool for power with the theory’s link to power, identity, and ‘othering’ (Dergisi 2013, Panwar, 2024). This linguistic hierarchy formed by colonial languages continues to shape an individual’s cultural attitudes today. In language, there is a direct link between creating an ‘other’ as colonial languages hold power disregarding any indigenous languages. There is, therefore, a deliberate undervaluing of native, indigenous languages and a conscious elevation of the colonizer's language (Rehman, 2013, pp. 129-147). In asserting power with the colonizer's language, there is an association with power, prestige, and success. Indeed, in speaking the language of the colonizer there is a sense of achieving a master's mode of communication (Rehman, 2013, pp. 129-147).

3.4 The Everyday Impact of Colonial Legacies

Post-colonial theory brings about various elements that relate to the broader field of cultural colonialism. This then allows for the link to the everyday life of individuals in the portrayal of language power imbalances and the impact this has on cultural/ personal identity. Indeed, the key thinkers of the theory Edward W. Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha apply and develop the theory based on their experiences as marginalized voices and how this promotes acknowledging colonial history and legacies in everyday life.

Relating to the theme of the everyday in IR, as seen in the literature review through the work of Darby and Tickner, there is a recognition of the enduring features of colonialism in post-colonial states. Indeed, the structures of law, economics, and culture based on European colonialism create the enduring legacies which impact the individual in post-colonial states. The legacies of control, power, and 'othering' are still seen in healthcare, trade, education, and diplomacy as Eurocentric colonial structures shape much of the standard of development (Tickner, 2003, pp. 295-324).

Post-colonial theory and its discursive treatment of colonialism link to the international as one sees the process of extension of ideas of cultural colonialism beyond a certain state (Darby, 2003). In the everyday setting, post-colonial elements can be reflected through the view of language as a cultural bomb erasing memories of pre-colonial cultures and history. As noted in the literature review, language carries culture, and culture holds values in the way one perceives oneself in the world (Qin, 2018, pp. 26-33). This links post-colonial elements of identity, 'othering', and power to language and culture and how one views themselves in the international. This approach is therefore used as a basis for the following thesis and case study analysis, as one recognizes the importance of post-colonial theory as a theoretical framework and foundation for linguistic colonialism.

3.5 Conclusion

To answer the proposed research question, the theoretical framework and foundation of post-colonial theory are established as one note the theory's main assumptions and elements in relation to language and cultural colonialism. In identifying the theory's main assumptions one can proceed into the case study analysis of the Khayelitsha community, in South Africa. The following chapter will therefore address the sociolinguistic context of South Africa and the language history of the state to justify and inform the chosen case study.

4. Chapter Four: The Sociolinguistic Context of South Africa and the language question

4.1 Introduction

To answer the proposed research question and the impact of colonial languages in access to local-level governance in South Africa, one must establish the sociolinguistic context of the state. Indeed, by understanding the rise of colonial languages and their implementation at the local level of governance and education one can further analyse language as not only a means of communication but also cultural control. Delving into South Africa's sociolinguistic landscape, researchers view the importance colonial languages play as a tool for power imbalances (Léglise & Migge, 2007). Therefore, the following section will unpack the historical use of language in South Africa, the rise of the Apartheid language policy, and its impact on education for the everyday individual living in South Africa.

4.2 South African Colonial Languages

The arrival of Dutch and British colonizers brought about forced language assimilation which created elites in South Africa. Indeed, the 1910 constitution of the Union in South Africa saw the entrenchment of two official languages, Dutch and English. However, as Afrikaans replaced Dutch, a wider section of society benefited from the official language policy. This constitution and two official languages were then implemented in education and governance, creating the criteria linked to employment and social mobility in South African local governance (South African History Online, 2011). However, only a few South Africans practiced these two languages, and the racial and linguistic divides of education and schools further exemplified the linguistic elites and 'other' (Heugh, 2013, pp. 215-237).

During Apartheid, English and Afrikaans were used as languages of political power and dominance. Indeed, language was used as a tool to divide and rule South Africa. The formation of Bantustans removed Blacks from South African citizenship and placed them in areas with their ethnic language (Lilly, 1982). South Africa, therefore, saw a divide between colonial languages and indigenous languages. The formation of Afrikaans is seen as a colonial language as was the language of oppression during Apartheid and the

imposed language during the Bantu Education Act (Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 1-15). However, the origins of the language are not disregarded as a direct result of opposition to Portuguese and Malay-Portuguese in 1658. As Dutch became the official language in South Africa, all indigenous Africans were forced to speak the language. Over time, slave-master communication blended into what is today called Afrikaans in South Africa, having local and colonial influences in the language. (Bundy, Cobbing, et al., 2025, Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 1-15). Ultimately, although the Afrikaans language originated through opposition to Portuguese and Dutch the evolution of the language as the language of power and oppression during the Apartheid regime justifies its status as a colonial language (Bundy, Cobbing, et al., 2025, Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 1-15).

4.3 Apartheid South Africa Language Policies

The start of Apartheid and the NP political party in power saw the development of Afrikaans as a language elevated alongside English. Language policies impacted educational policies, as in the fifth year of schooling, either English or Afrikaans took precedence as the language of the African child (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). Indeed, the education policy explained that 'the teaching and education of the native must be

grounded in the life and world view of the whites… the two official languages must be taught as subjects … and the keys to the cultural loans that are necessary to his cultural progress (Hlatshwayo 2000: 54, 56). This reasoning fuelled the Bantu education through the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97).

In the imposition of the Bantu Education Act English and Afrikaans were the languages of education. However, the Black majority favoured English over Afrikaans (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). Afrikaans was seen as the language of the oppressor while English, on the other hand, was seen as the international language of liberation (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). Therefore, Africans rejected Afrikaans as a medium of teaching and learning. To counter this, language policies issued documents co-equating Afrikaans and English as media of instruction to curb the dominance of English in Black schools (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). The reaction to the policy was met with insurmountable opposition in the Soweto uprisings. The students argued that if Black students must learn Afrikaans, then B.J. Vorster, the Premier at the time, should learn isiZulu. The aftermath of the uprising and violence of the South African Police resulted in the apartheid government withdrawing its language policy (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). In line with this, Black

schools were given the right to choose the language they preferred as the medium of teaching and learning. The result called for ninety-six percent of schools to choose English as the language of instruction. While this shows strong opposition to Afrikaans and the viewing of the language as the language of oppression, this policy still forced black South Africans to learn two additional languages and use languages that do not reflect black culture, values, and heritage. Indeed, the individual identity was still affected by the assimilation into new languages and disregard of the mother-tongue language (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97).

The enforcement of English and/or Afrikaans in education was fuelled by the Apartheid government's resistance against Black unity (Makoni, Smitherman, Ball, & Spears, 2003). In addressing the dominance of colonial languages, such as English and Afrikaans in South Africa, one links linguistic colonialism with issues of language as a tool for power (Makoni, Smitherman, Ball, & Spears, 2003). Maziwisa delves into the topic by considering to what extent language is a source of conflict in South Africa. Indeed, Maziwisa explains how English is, in fact, a minority language in the state with no group domination, therefore, it should not be the cause of conflict. However, the underrepresentation of indigenous languages in educational settings causes language to be a tool for power and accessibility (Maziwisa, 2022). Indeed, the legacies of Bantu Education during Apartheid fuels the underrepresentation of indigenous languages which translates to the everyday life of individuals. Therefore, due to language restrictions individuals must deal with barriers such as the lack of job opportunities (Maziwisa, 2022, Mufwene, & Vigouroux, 2008, pp1-22, Thosago, 1999, pp. 103-115).

4.4 Conclusion

In relation to the proposed research question, one views the language matter of South Africa and links it to broader aspects of cultural colonialism and forced language assimilation. The use of language in the history of the state leads one to understand the relevance of linguistic hierarchies, inequality, and power imbalances. Therefore, this background is vital in addressing the everyday impact of colonial languages in local-level governance as one understands the context of the chosen case study in the use of the colonial language of English in South Africa and the colonial legacies this perpetuates.

5. Chapter Five; Case Study Analysis.

5.1 Introduction to Analysis and Framework.

To answer the proposed research question; how do colonial languages, such as English in South Africa, perpetrate power imbalances in access to local-level governance, one recognizes the use of documents and presentations in local-level governances and institutionalized governance. Through these documents, presentations, budget speeches, and meeting agendas the everyday individuals can not only participate but also be informed of the projects, proposals, and issues happening in their community through access to information and knowledge. These documents and presentations are therefore made available to all individuals in the community either online or during community ward meetings to allow for equal access and participation from the public (a key outcome of the ward meetings) (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2023).

However, to assess this access to information this thesis has collected qualitative documents presented at local-level ward meetings of a community, namely case study subcouncil 9 Khayelitsha community South Africa. These documents and their outline, structure, and presentation will be analysed to evaluate the use of languages, particularly the colonial language of English. In addition to this, the texts are viewed through the lens of postcolonial theory and the elements of identity, 'othering', and power as one examines how the information distributed in ward meetings may perpetuate power imbalances through language use.

5.2 Application to the South African Context

Considering the foundation of post-colonial theory and the link to cultural and linguistic colonialism and hierarchies, one turns to the case study of Subcouncil 9, Khayelitsha community. Khayelitsha is one of South Africa's largest townships, with a linguistic makeup of 90% isiXhosa as a first language (Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 1-15). The case of ward meetings and governance in Khayelitsha, South Africa, represents a poignant case of the legacy of linguistic colonialism. Referring to the language matter of South Africa, one notes the legacies of the Bantu Education Act in underfunding education in Black

communities during Apartheid (Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 1-15). Indeed, in South Africa, there is a clear colonial bilingualism in the state. The languages of English and Afrikaans are seen as the dominant languages in governance and education, while Indigenous languages are marginalized (Alexander, 1996, p.11). The emphasis on linguistic hierarchy between indigenous languages and colonial languages relates to identity and culture. Indeed, the hegemonic dominance of one language over others fuels the post-colonial theory of the link to identity, 'othering', and power as one view language as a tool for power.

In relation to this, the case study of Khayelitsha is chosen as there is a direct link to the legacies of oppression and inequality for indigenous language communities in South Africa. As one of the largest townships in South Africa with a predominate isiXhosa speaking population, the community exemplifies the marginalization of indigenous languages within the post-Apartheid context. The community's linguistic makeup and demography versus the institutionalized governance and use of language provide a microcosmic view into the impact of colonial languages and forced language assimilation in community governance.

Furthermore, the historical development of education under Apartheid and colonialism continues to impact accessibility to education and services in indigenous languages. Therefore, the use of IsiXhosa as a local language and its representation in language policies or governance is considered versus English in the document analysis, relating language application in policy versus practice. This case is ideal for analyzing inadequate progress in the recognition of indigenous languages, and most significantly the accessibility on the local level. Khayelitsha serves as a critical site to examine linguistic hierarchies and inequalities fuelled by colonial and Apartheid-era legacies (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97).

Therefore, the chosen case study will analyse the ward meeting procedure and local-level governance services in Khayelitsha to address and analyse access to governance through language. Therefore, a particular focus is given to the documents presented in local level governance ward meetings, evaluating the accessibility, translation, and interpretation services and community engagement to the everyday citizen. Through a document analysis of Qualitative research such as ward meeting presentations, meeting minutes and budget planning the following analysis notes the use of language in these sources and the

relation between language hierarchy/ cultural colonialism and the everyday impact on individuals living in the international.

5.3 Linking to the everyday

In developing the analysis, particular importance is given to the everyday effect this gap in access to the local level of governance has on individuals. Through language use one makes note of the perpetuated power imbalances of colonial legacies in the post-colonial state of South Africa. Therefore, throughout the analysis, a close reference to the research question is given as one aims to answer: How do colonial languages, such as English in South Africa, perpetuate power imbalances in access to local-level governance? As well as the subsequent research question: How does the legacy of cultural colonialism, through the persistent dominance of colonial languages, continue to impact the lives of ordinary South Africans in their interactions with local governance?

The analysis of ward meetings and local-level governance will therefore address the discrepancy between everyday local language use and local-level governance being conducted in English. Indeed, in communities such as Khayelitsha, the continued privileging of English in ward meetings reinforces systemic inequality and perpetuates a hierarchy of knowledge rooted in colonialism and the elements of identity, 'othering', and power. In using post-colonial theory as a foundation, one can expand the theory into analyzing how colonialism continues to impact the everyday. Therefore, a clear analysis of language use in ward meetings and government notices in Khayelitsha will be reviewed evaluating access to resources shaped by language policies.

5.4 Case Study Analysis: Access to local-level governance

Using a method of document analysis, the following analysis will use documents presented in the Khayelitsha ward meetings to answer the proposed research question.

The documents presented in the appendix consist of.

Subcouncil 9 Minutes (Nov 2023 and March 2025) – Records of local-level decision-making and community interaction.

Ward and Subcouncil Allocations Policy (2024/25) – Governing framework for local-level budget and decision-making.

Budget Presentation 2024/2025 for Subcouncils and Wards in Western Cape.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10qcsJvg_B70Edy4xvi1noaDT_uedP0DU?usp=drive_link

5.5 Language accessibility

In relation to post-colonial theory and the link to the element of power, a note of the language accessibility of ward meetings will be made. Indeed, power links directly to cultural colonialism and the extension of a colonial power over another as well as the superiority and recognition of one culture over another (Amsler, 2008). Therefore, in viewing the ward meeting documents through a view of language accessibility a note is made to language as a tool for cultural domination upholding a status quo.

The structure of ward meetings in Khayelitsha Subcouncil 9 follows a standardized format: opening, prayer, leave of absence note, confirmation of minutes, chairperson's report, matters receiving attention, progressive capital expenditure report, rules of order, and progress reports on any past matters (City of Cape Town, 2023). These proceedings, including the minutes, presentations, and reports, are consistently presented and recorded in English (City of Cape Town, 2023). Moreover, the gathering of documents in the analysis taken from the official City of Cape Town websites and archives consisted of solely documentation in English on the institutional level (City of Cape Town, 2025).

This exclusive use of English in documentation creates a linguistic barrier between citizens and governance in the Khayelitsha community. Referring to the linguistic reality of the community and the isiXhosa majority, one notes that none of the documents presented were in isiXhosa. Therefore, a link to the element of power is noted in the hindering of public access to the documents by creating a linguistic barrier for those who may lack formal education in English (refer to chapter 5, subsection 5.2) and subsequently hindering participation. The exclusive use and access to English in ward meetings perpetuate a form of linguistic gatekeeping as citizens unable to engage in English efficiently are excluded from knowledge, governance dialogues, and decision-making processes as their indigenous language is underrepresented.

The exclusive use of English in documents becomes a mechanism for power imbalances between the everyday citizen and the government sector/ state. The documents and topics

presented in the ward meetings take note of crucial sections for community accountability and involvement. However, by viewing the following documents and agendas in the presented language, English, as well as the presentation, one takes note of how this may fuel language barriers and power imbalances. The presentation of key documents such as the Ward Budget Allocation and the Ward and Subcouncil Allocation Policy is exclusively in English (City of Cape Town, 2025). These documents use technical jargon, such as terms like *"progressive capital expenditure"* or *"District Spatial Development Frameworks,"* hindering understanding and assuming a level of education in citizens, thus disregarding the colonial legacies of underfunded education and access to education in the community (City of Cape Town, 2024). Viewing these documents from a lens of post-colonial elements of power there is a significant power imbalance in access to information and documents for non-English speakers in the community and a clear disregard for the community sociolinguistic context. Indeed, the community of Khayelitsha and its everyday citizens is hindered in understanding and information if they do not possess a certain level of English proficiency as in document accessibility there is no other language alternative in documentation.

5.6 Translation/Interpretation Availability

In addition to language accessibility, the issue of translation is analysed in the chosen documents presented at the ward meetings. This link to translation once again refers to the element of power in language hierarchies and recognition. Moreover, through translation one can link to elements of identity and 'othering' of one's language. Indeed, through translation one has access to knowledge and information as well as recognition of one's language and its importance. Therefore, the documents presented in the ward meeting will be analysed with a note of any relevant translation and interpretation available, with this in mind one keeps the notion of power, systemic bias and cultural dominance as well as 'othering'.

The chosen council documents note in their publication; *"Decisions of council, subcouncils and committees will be made available upon request in Xhosa and Afrikaans*" (City of Cape Town, 2023). As well as all '*the official records of debates of the Provincial Legislature and Municipal Councils must be kept in the official languages in which the debate took place, and a translation therefore in any one of the 11 official languages must be made available on request, by the Secretary to the Provincial Legislature or the*

Municipal Manager' (City of Cape Town, 2023). This disclaimer relating to the translation of documents and presentations shared in the ward meetings sets the scene for the burden of accessing information in isiXhosa in the Khayelitsha community (City of Cape Town, 2021).

Indeed, relating to power and 'othering' elements of post-colonial theory the burden of translation and information clarity is placed on the citizens noting the inadequate implementation of language policies and linguistic awareness. During the 19 February 2025 ward meeting, the budget for the 2025/26 financial year was discussed using PowerPoint slides that contained large numeric data and complex terminology with minimal translation or explanatory visuals (City of Cape Town, 2025). Moreover, in the documents presented the language and translation disclaimers are seen in the footnotes not in the main document layout simply guiding the citizens to the official City of Cape Town website (City of Cape Town, 2025). As the ward meetings discuss matters of urgency, such as natural disasters, emergency relief, and community structures, the issue of clear interpretation and translation is vital to understanding (City of Cape Town, 2024). In this regard, councillors address the need to work together and report to SC09, appealing to members of the public to report issues to community leaders. However, these decisions and appeals are once again recorded in English. This fault in the implementation of translation services links to the viewing of the 'other'. Despite a concrete language policy in the Western Cape acknowledging English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa, the lack of interpretation services, particularly in the Khayelitsha community brings about clear imbalances in the practical acknowledgment of other languages outside of English.

Through the lack of translation and interpretation of the isiXhosa language a link is made to the 'othering' of the isiXhosa language and the imposition of Colonizer worldviews, cultures, and language onto the 'other' (Alexander, 2005). The underrepresentation and value of isiXhosa fuel the power relations between English and IsiXhosa. In a community where 90% of citizens speak isiXhosa the lack of translation and the default of English as the language of governance reflects the broader systemic bias that marginalizes isiXhosa-speaking residents in Khayelitsha. Through this lack of interpretation and translation in ward meetings and documents, there is a power imbalance of languages in the community and the assumption that the everyday citizen understands English fluently. The 'other' or the IsiXhosa language is not recognized in institutionalized governance and therefore perpetuates the imbalance in linguistic hierarchies.

The element of identity is linked to this ‘othering’ in isiXhosa as the disregard of the language on the institutionalized government level creates a strong emphasis on hybrid identities, cultural displacement, and struggle due to the remnants of the colonial past (Khan, 2015, pp. 40-45, Panwar, 2024). Indeed, through the disregard of isiXhosa, the everyday citizen in the Khayelitsha community feels ashamed of their native language ‘When I'm starting to talk/communicate in my language at town, they look at me like I'm stupid…’ (Netshimbolimbo, 2017). In this sense, there is an enforced view of English as the language of business and opportunity. Moreover, the uneducated assumption many hold of the isiXhosa language relates to the use of linguistic hierarchies. Through the sole use of English in governance there is a negative attitude towards Indigenous languages by individuals further perpetuating power imbalances (Sayeday, 2021, pp. 134-138).

5.7 Community engagement

Ward meetings are intended as democratic platforms allowing and promoting citizens to voice concerns and hold government accountable (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2023). However, through the limited accessibility and translation of documents, one notes the inequalities in not only language use but also the level of education assuming citizens can understand and read English. While ward meetings, language policies, and frameworks aim to promote public engagement and inclusivity in meetings through transparent documentation and recording of meeting procedures the use of English in all documentation and official communication hinders and undermines these goals. Indeed, ward councillors stress the importance of community consultation without challenging the language accessibility of meetings. In a 2025 meeting, Ald. Sotashe criticized the failure to enact legislative requirements for community engagement, noting that “legislation in engaging the communities… is not exercised and that is failing the communities” (City of Cape Town, 2025). The Ward and Subcouncil Allocations Policy of meetings includes the need to acknowledge “local needs” and “community engagement,” (City of Cape Town, 2025). However, the reliance on English and therefore lack of accessibility to non-English natives leads to these goals of engagement excluding those who may want to use the platform most urgently (City of Cape Town, 2025).

Reflecting on the literature review one recognizes language as a tool for power. In the framework of post-apartheid South Africa, the gap in language accessibility stresses the colonial linguistic legacies of access to education and language proficiency. Indeed, as one notes the Apartheid Bantu Education Act a link is made to the limited access to education and technological access in communities, such as Khayelitsha. Through these legacies, the everyday individual is impacted by modern-day knowledge (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). Indeed, the colonial legacies of education and the current linguistic barrier seen in governance, such as accessibility and interpretation, impact the role of public participation in meetings. Due to language inaccessibility and the limited availability of documents in isiXhosa, many decisions and engagements are limited in reach and still rely on literate, English-speaking recipients to bring about engagement contradicting the meeting's need for citizens to comment. This strict institutionalized approach to ward meetings reflects the structure of governance adapted to the English language and the forced presence of the English language in governance, as the de facto business language and language of opportunity. The institutionalized format of the meeting assumes a level of English education and fluency that many Khayelitsha citizens may not possess due to underfunded Apartheid legacies (Dangbégnon, 2021, pp. 1-15). One's English proficiency therefore determines one's capacity to understand and access information shared in the meetings as well as engagement.

5.8 Colonial continuity in governance

Before delving into the discussion and conclusion one notes the pattern of themes in the presented document analysis. Primarily, there is a systemic use of English as the default language in meetings and local governance. This echoes that despite the linguistic context of the Khayelitsha community English is seen as the business language and language of governance. Through the themes of language accessibility, translation, and overall engagement a link is made to the use of English as a tool for power in imposing itself as the language of governance and the sole language accessible in ward meetings documentation. Moreover, there is a lack of acknowledgment of community linguistic needs enforcing the 'othering' of indigenous languages, such as isiXhosa, in Khayelitsha. The ward meetings operate in a strict, institutionalized format that does not consider context and rather follows the structures and framework favouring English efficiently. Indeed, through the language use of local-level governance, one notes that English

proficiency is a precondition for understanding and participation in meetings and community development planning.

The overview of documents highlights the deep entrenchment of colonial linguistic hierarchies in post-apartheid governance. Referring to cultural colonialism and the link to linguistic hierarchies, one can note the use of English, a colonial language in South Africa, as a remnant of colonial legacies and forced language assimilation. The practical realities of ward meetings and institutionalized governance in the Khayelitsha community showcase a clear imbalance in language representation and therefore the link to language as a tool for power and inequality. The use of language, and English in particular, in the meetings, operates as a silencing of other indigenous languages in the community and an 'othering' of languages.

5.9 Conclusion

The power imbalances of languages in local-level governance accessibility reflect a linguistically divided society, which creates linguistic hierarchy and inequality. The use of English as a linguistic poacher is then brought about through the enforcement of English as the lingua franca in sectors of governance, education, and politics, which leads to the endangering and disregard of indigenous languages (Kamwangamalu, 2003, p. 69). Indeed, English 'flourishes on the graveyard of other people's languages' as the colonial language is seen as a killer language hindering much-needed representation of Indigenous languages (Kamwangamalu, 2003, p. 69).

Ultimately, unless you have a command of standard English, you are disadvantaged from certain positions of status (Alexander, 2005). This creates a direct link to the proposed research question and the perpetuation of power imbalances in access to local-level governance due to colonial languages and linguistic hierarchies. Through this view, the 90% isiXhosa demographic of Khayelitsha is limited in access to knowledge and information presented (Parmegiani, 2012, pp. 74-97). In the context of ward meetings in Khayelitsha, the dominance of English reflects the broader systemic hierarchy and power imbalances in local governance (Erdocia, 2023). Indeed, this case study and document analysis provide a microcosm of broader cultural colonialism and linguistic hierarchies. This cultural colonialism and its impact on the everyday individual are discussed further as one links to the implications of colonial legacies on the everyday.

6. Chapter Six: Discussion and Findings

6.1 Introduction

Following the analysis of language use in ward meetings and the official documentation of Subcouncil 9, Khayelitsha, one reflects on the proposed research question. The following chapter relates the document analysis to the perpetuation of power imbalances in access to local-level governance and the impact on the everyday individual living in the Khayelitsha community and the international. The use of English in ward meetings, documentation, and presentations continues to dominate the public discourse and administrative communication in local-level governance. Therefore, the following findings will discuss the use of English to reinforce systemic hierarchies, which ultimately shape the lives of citizens in Khayelitsha. Moreover, emphasis is given to the everyday realities of the use of language as a tool of power. Indeed, one will make note of how language choice in governance directly affects everyday life and the wider link to the everyday impacts of cultural colonialism in International Relations.

Branching out to the Western Cape language policies and the three official languages, English, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans, one notes that in public spaces, English and Afrikaans still dominate. In the research, one sees the use of English in governance, but this also extends to other sectors of public and private institutions. (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018: 138). Indeed, through the legacies of colonialism, there is a layer of power, knowledge, and being in the colonial matrix (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Decolonial scholar, Mignolo brings about the link between European language and coloniality as he indicates the ‘political-epistemic violence of modernity’ through the systemic hierarchies imposed by language (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

6.2 Key findings

In reviewing ward meeting presentations, agendas, and reports, one notes the use of English as the prominent language (City of Cape Town, 2025). Indeed, through the lack of adequate translation and accessibility to non-English natives, there is the assumption that English is understood by many citizens in the Khayelitsha community. Indeed, the

ideology of English being understood by the majority plays into the grassroots-level understanding and experience of ward meetings and local-level governance (Piller, 2015:2, Wolff, 2017, Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, pp. 55-82). Ultimately, this ideology leads to the affected status of other languages present in the community, such as isiXhosa. As a result, isiXhosa speakers are forced to adapt and become multilingual to engage with English content. Through inadequate interpretation, isiXhosa is not recognized and marginalized in official spaces. Moreover, the language needs of the community are not being considered as real language freedom is not achieved in the institutionalized format of the meetings (Erdocia, 2023).

As the literature review analysed, language plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining political power. Language is strongly tied to identity, relating to an individual's social, cultural, and economic lives. Indeed, through language, one is perceived in a certain way (Shakib, 2011, pp.117-123). In the context of ward meetings in Khayelitsha, the dominance of English reflects the broader systemic hierarchy and power imbalances in local governance (Erdocia, 2023). As indigenous languages are not represented and accommodated there is a link to English as the language holding power and 'othering' indigenous languages. In Khayelitsha, formal and informal documentation are inconsistent in their use of Xhosa. Out of the three official provincial languages, Xhosa is not fairly represented, and therefore, the local context of the community is not considered. This lack of representation creates a hierarchy favouring English as the language of governance (Banda, 2003, pp. 106-129, Banda, 2004, pp. 10-33, De Vos, Strydom, et al., 2011, Mhlongo, 2021). Ultimately, the hegemony of English in local governance reflects broader patterns of post-colonial language politics.

In South Africa, as well as many newly independent states, a small elite controls the policy-making organs. Therefore, by imposing certain languages as the language of business and establishing language hierarchies the masses are excluded from various aspects of everyday life (Alexander, 2005). In this case, the English language is privileged over others. Indeed, by promoting and representing English only in government services, the everyday individual is forced to conform linguistically to participate in governance. English as the lingua franca and the compromising language in discussions affects the status of other languages in the community, perpetuating hierarchies and inequalities that are linked to a lack of resources (Mhlongo, 2021). As noted in the literature review,

through language, individuals experience culture, time, and space, yet by promoting a singular language, individuals who are not mother-tongue speakers miss the wholeness of society and knowledge (Shakib, 2011, pp.117-123). There is, therefore, a fragment in identity. The imposition of English, incorporating itself in every aspect of society, even in predominantly isiXhosa communities, links to the imperial nature and position of the language. The official and dominant status of a colonial language links to the hierarchies of Eurocentrism and colonial legacies in this community (Heugh, 1987). As one observes the practical/ efficient advantages of using English in governance and the ideology of a majority language, the link is made to the transmission of Eurocentric ideas opposing African languages (Heugh, 1987).

6.3 Language and Disempowerment

The link to the everyday lived experience, and relations with others is of particular importance as one uses the foundations of postcolonial theory to inform the analysis. As established in the literature review, the daily activities and improvisations of the individual takes place within the larger international context (Björkdahl, & Svensson, 2019, pp. 107-113). Everyday IR includes the small-scale, local, and bottom-up conceptions of politics. Therefore, by recognizing the everyday impact of use of language in governance and hierarchies, a link is made to the Everyday IR and the 'decentring of how politics and political relevance is usually thought' (Björkdahl, & Svensson, 2019, pp. 107-113). Hence, the prominent use of the English language as the language of local-level governance is recognized and relates to perpetuated power imbalances (Erdocia, 2023, p. 243, Nel, 2013).

The continued dominance of English leads to the disempowerment of other languages, and the notion that indigenous languages are only good enough for home usage (De Klerk, 2000: 199). In the case of isiXhosa, solely speaking the language is seen as sufficient, as English is mostly needed and crucial in governance. A clear hierarchy of languages is seen in the lack of value attached to indigenous languages. This creates a direct link to the disempowerment and socio-political disadvantage of non-English speakers. The everyday impact of this systemic hierarchy and power imbalance is seen in the portrayal of indigenous languages. IsiXhosa speakers in communities of Khayelitsha develop negative attitudes toward their mother tongue, as it comes with a lack of opportunity, as

English and Afrikaans are languages of opportunity (Björkdahl, & Svensson, 2019, pp. 107-113, Kamwangamalu 2003: 225).

6.4 Multilingualism and Understanding

In the case of Khayelitsha, one sees that the institutional and governance hierarchy of languages creates multilingual communication and practices in everyday interactions. As the resources to cater to all linguistic needs are limited, citizens develop multilingual practices and environments (Mhlongo, 2021). The development of bilingualism and code-switching is adopted as English is presented as the lingua franca, and citizens develop their language skills around this (Bekker & Hills, 2013). However, this presence of bilingualism and a multilingual environment is still hindered by the assumption that all individuals can read and write in English. Citizens in the Khayelitsha community note the inequality in language resources, as documents and notices are written in English, there is primarily an assumption that everyone can read, neglecting the historical context of Bantu Education. The grassroots-level consequences of language inequality are prevalent as English is present in all forms of governance and life, and there is little accommodation for interpretation or translation. On the everyday effect, and the research in the ward meetings, the absence of appropriate interpreting services increases the dominance of English as the main language of business (Nel, 2014).

As one looks at the everyday impact of language in governance and systemic hierarchies, a note is made to the everyday impact of education and teaching. This plays a significant role in the representation of languages. One recognizes the importance of engaging in a native, mother tongue language and the tension and potential exclusion that arise when community members are forced to engage in a ‘mainstream’ language (Alexander, 2005). However, the reality of the analysis shows the focus on efficient communication resulting in working with limited languages. Therefore, a trade-off is made between efficient communication and language accessibility. The silencing of isiXhosa is therefore perpetrated as officials do not see the need to promote and portray the language in governance. The result of this language hierarchy creates the reality of the poor urban community and poor public participation in informal townships such as Khayelitsha.

Linking back to the everyday in the international and the structure of one’s everyday life local communities play a key role in local governance and decision-making processes. In

communities, citizens must actively contribute to the common good as public participation ensures public policies and programs. The purpose of ward meetings and public meetings ensure communication and feedback to citizens to strengthen participatory local governance (City of Cape Town, 2025). In the case of Khayelitsha, "public meetings are addressed in English even in areas where there is no white person," (Netshimbolimbo, 2017). Indeed, participants felt language was a key factor in discouraging participation in public meetings "The language in the meetings is inclusive of jargon English that is not easily understandable by a layperson" (Netshimbolimbo, 2017). This limitation channels clear power imbalances in understanding and engagement of the meetings. The lack of interpreters impacts meaningful participation in public meetings. Citizens feel left out of contributing and are not given freedom of speech to have information from the city in their language of choice. Information is then distorted due to citizens not understanding the language of the presentation. The everyday individual with limited proficiency therefore is limited in exercising engagement and rights to understand the meeting agenda and policies. The linguistic insensitivity of hierarchy in the institutionalized local governance therefore creates a disadvantage in the local-level understanding (Mvuyana, & Ngcobo, 2022).

6.5 Language as a Tool of Cultural Colonialism

The emphasis on language hierarchies and imbalances ties back to the overarching theme of cultural colonialism discussed in the literature review. This colonialism and the imposition of a business language and lingua franca sparks potential barriers to the representation of language in other sectors of life. Indeed, as seen, language is a key predictor of knowledge and local-level engagement through accessibility and interpretation in everyday life. The underrepresentation of languages and the undereducation of languages, such as isiXhosa, bring about disadvantages and weaknesses in everyday opportunities. Indeed, one sees the real implications for the career opportunities, social mobility, and personal well-being of an isiXhosa individual living in the international. Ultimately, the presentation of English in institutions brings about language-based discrimination, disregarding indigenous languages.

The link to cultural colonialism is seen in the dominance of one language over others and privileged opportunity for those who understand and master the language. Certain languages are attributed with desirable characteristics or high prestige and others have

negative attitudes (Erdocia, 2023). In the case of South Africa, the colonial language of English is represented as prestige while indigenous languages such as isiXhosa are undervalued. (Erdocia, 2023). Indeed, although people are ensured by the South African constitution that they have the freedom of language choice, the dominance of English leads to languages, such as isiXhosa, losing their relevance and vitality. Moreover, in the public domain, English and Afrikaans are recognized and promoted disproportionately compared to isiXhosa. This shows the colonial legacies of language inequality and power imbalances in the everyday life of individuals in Khayelitsha, facing language barriers and hierarchies, as well as branching out to larger power imbalances in post-colonial states (Dantile, 2015).

6.6 Conclusion

Reflecting on the document analysis one notes the proposed research question and the link to power imbalances in language access. In everyday access to governance, one notes how these colonial legacies continue to perpetuate power imbalances and shape the perception of languages, opportunity, and power through the marginalization and lack of representation of indigenous languages. Indeed, the lack of interpretation of indigenous languages, such as isiXhosa, implies a majority language ideology. This leads one to link the everyday experiences and impact of language hierarchies and inequality as without a proficient level of English individuals in the community are limited in everyday aspects regarding understanding and knowledge. Moreover, the link to the greater field of post-colonial theory and power, identity, and ‘othering’ is noted in the linguistic hierarchies presented in governance.

7. Chapter Seven; Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the persistent use of English as the de facto language in ward meetings and institutionalized governance in Khayelitsha, South Africa. Through the lens of cultural colonialism, the thesis demonstrates how language functions as a tool of power, shaping access, participation, and identity of an isiXhosa individual in governance structures. Ultimately, the link to colonial legacies of imposed language and education in South Africa creates a direct link to power imbalances within language. Indeed, through the representation and favouring of certain languages in governance, such as English, there is a clear marginalization of the 'other' languages, in this case, the indigenous language of isiXhosa.

Language is not a neutral medium, and therefore the use and accessibility of language and who gets to have translation and recognition in local-level governance shapes who has power. In the Khayelitsha community, English is accessible within all documents and presentations, while isiXhosa is underrepresented. The continued privileging of English in governance is therefore linked to broader structures of cultural colonialism. As shown through the document analysis and main discussion language hierarchies shape the everyday experience of an individual in the international making it a tool for power an opportunity. The accessibility, and interpretation of information as well as education in the governance language of English influence one's community engagement as well as the identity of their indigenous language.

In the context of the international, one acknowledges the single case study as a microcosm and narrow focus on language in a community. However, the power imbalances and everyday effects of accessibility and interpretation are noted in the broader field of cultural colonialism and its imposing of colonial languages in local-level governance disregarding local context and indigenous languages. Ultimately, the chosen case study of Khayelitsha provided a way to answer the proposed research question; how do colonial languages, such as English in South Africa, perpetrate power imbalances in access to local-level governance? The analysis of documentation and interpretation and its link to

engagement and understanding from the everyday individual in the Khayelitsha community reflects the power imbalances in languages presented in governance. In Khayelitsha there is an assumed understanding of English by the governance structure. However, the reality of colonial legacies and education reflects otherwise, with the Bantu Education Act underfunding education in the community. Through this, using solely English in governance leads to hindered understanding and participation by the everyday citizen. Moreover, a lack of recognition is given to indigenous language and therefore an 'othering' of isiXhosa is seen in the community. Overall, this power imbalance creates a sense of disregard of the isiXhosa language and identity in individuals as the English language holds status in governance and opportunity.

7.2 Recommendations and Limitations

While the case study of a singular council and community in South Africa presents a microcosmic view into the impact of colonial languages and forced language assimilation in the community, as well as the historical colonial legacies of education, the research is limited in scope. Indeed, Khayelitsha's linguistic makeup and legacy of underfunded education provide a clear case for language use as a tool for power and power imbalances in access to local-level governance. However, the limitations of this single case study are not disregarded as generalizations of language use and accessibility are not produced. The insider versus outsider approach to research is noted in the thesis as the research is conducted from an English point of view and relies on qualitative online documents and articles. Therefore, the role of the researcher in this thesis is to analyse a singular, narrow case study and understand language use as a tool for power in the Khayelitsha community and response to South Africa's sociolinguistic history and colonial legacies. However, a clear framework is established of the overarching theme and cultural colonialism in the everyday to allow further research into this role of language and power impacting everyday life through hierarchies.

The implication for further research includes a suggestion of cross-community comparison within multilingual South Africa evaluating different regions' languages and access in governance. Moreover, an ethnographic approach such as interviews with ward meeting attendees as well as on-site analysis is recommended to have an insider analysis of the everyday effect of language power imbalances.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to the growing literature in the intersection of language, power and post-colonial identity. By linking cultural colonialism to language access and opportunity one can explore the hierarchies within languages and the valuing of indigenous languages both in practice and principle.

8. Chapter Eight; Bibliography

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