

**TONGUE TIED:
THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE, SUBJECTIVITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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for Claire

Police prose had improved a lot since Carvalho last had occasion to read police reports; and the language of the report compared favourably with his frequent run-ins with Contreras and other officers of the law, whose chosen mode of discourse was still much the same as it had always been, aggressive and full of threatening silences. For the umpteenth time he reflected on the hypocrisy of culture. For the writer of the report it had been easy to pick up a pen, and go into the communicative mode; but face to face, *viva voce*, his syntax would not have been quite so florid and rhetorical; the clauses and sub-clauses would have given way to grunts, heavy breathing, expletives and muttered curses. At no point did the report say how much of this information came from Belisario Bird, confidant and small-time dealer.

(Manuel Vázquez Montalban, 2008, p. 141, from the Pepe Carvalho mystery, 'Olympic Death')

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DECLARATION

Student number: **3485-769-9**

I declare that *Tongue Tied: The Politics of Language, Subjectivity and Social Psychology in South Africa* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many of the ideas explored here (perhaps the more interesting ones) have been developed parallel to the formal research work required for this thesis: in conversations and debates with friends and colleagues about language, politics, and the nature of social and critical psychology; in other (sometimes related, sometimes unrelated) academic research and writing I have done during the time that it took to complete this thesis; and in the occasional opportunities I had to participate in public debates about issues pertaining to language, democracy, nationalism and contemporary political subjectivities in South Africa. Such synergies and blurring of boundaries are perhaps unavoidable in a research project that has spanned too many years and has evolved in the midst (and occasionally in the margins) of an ongoing academic and writing career. Perhaps it has introduced a certain hesitant, meandering quality to this thesis; or created the impression, perhaps, of a text that continues to look over its shoulder, second-guessing itself, trying to find new ways of departure, rather than seeking conclusions. Perhaps, but then this has also created (at least for its author) a real sense of intellectual and political resonance, and has embedded the work reported in a context of intellectual and political discovery. In this regard I would like to acknowledge important and recurrent academic conversations on topics related to this thesis I have had with various colleagues, including Gerrit Brand, Athanasios Marvakis, Martin Terre Blanche, and Clifford van Ommen.

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ideas about nationalism and the social sciences that are developed in these pages initially took shape during those months of reading, travelling, and contact with European social scientists and activists engaged with issues related to the contradictions of nationalism in the context of transnational migration and racism in the ‘new’ Europe. In this regard I also wish to acknowledge the funding I received from the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust’s very generous sabbatical fund, which made this extended stay in Greece possible.

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SUMMARY

This thesis consists of a series of analytically independent, but conceptually interrelated studies of language ideologies across a number of different discursive terrains. The overarching objective of these interventions is to illuminate the relationship between language, politics and subjectivity from a number of different historical, philosophical, theoretical and empirical perspectives. This, in turn, is pursued with the aim to critically interrogate the ways in which social psychology has traditionally conceptualised and approached language (and language related phenomena), and to explore some of the conceptual, metatheoretical and theoretical requirements for a reconfigured, *critical* social psychology of language. Towards this end, the following specific themes are explored: (1) the political role language has historically played in South Africa, especially with regards to the articulation and political embodiment of various ethnically, racially and nationally mediated forms of subjectivity (Chapter 3); the politically productive role language has played in the emergence of nationalism, nation-state societies and the modern political order more broadly (and, vice versa, the role nationalism and the modern nation-state has played in delineating language as an ontologically, epistemologically and politically consistent object of state, academic and popular interest) (Chapter 4); (3) the way in which nationally mediated and state-oriented conceptions of language, politics and political subjectivity have been assumed, naturalised and reproduced by traditional social psychology throughout the twentieth century (Chapter 5); and (4) the way in which ordinary discussions about language in an everyday South African setting contribute (by invoking liberal and nationalist discourses, amongst others) to the continued racialisation of language and public space in this country, and to the further legitimisation of linguistically mediated forms of inequality and marginalisation (Chapter 6). In each instance the focus is on language as both constructed *and* constructive in relation to the emergence of particular social and political orders and their

associated subjectivities. The thesis concludes with a reflection on the limits of discourse and ideology as frameworks for the study of language, politics and subjectivity, and develops a number of tentative ideas about language as a corporeal component of *embodied* and *affective* subjectivities (Chapter 7).

Key terms: Language; discourse; language ideologies; critical psychology; social psychology; subjectivity; postcolonial theory; nationalism; politics; the political; South Africa; colonialism; apartheid

PART I

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PRELIMINARIES

1

Introduction: Aims, Objectives and Outline of the Study

The mouth where cries are broken into phonemes, morphemes, semantemes: the mouth where the profundity of an oral body separates itself from incorporeal meaning. Through this open mouth, through this alimentary voice, the genesis of language, the formation of meaning, and the flash of thought extend their divergent series.

(Michel Foucault, 2000a, p. 354)

[T]here is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community.

(Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, 2004, p. 8)

This thesis consists of a series of analytically independent, but conceptually interrelated (and cumulative) studies of language ideologies across a number of different discursive terrains.¹ The overarching objective of these interventions (and, thus, of the thesis as a whole), is to illuminate the relationship between language, politics and subjectivity from a number of different historical, philosophical, theoretical and empirical perspectives. This, in turn, is pursued with the aim to critically interrogate the ways in which social psychology has traditionally conceptualised and approached language (and language related phenomena), and to explore some of the conceptual,

metatheoretical and theoretical requirements for a reconfigured, *critical* social psychology of language. However, the intended outcome of the thesis is not a programmatically developed, fully-fledged social psychology of this nature. Its aims are far more modest. The thesis, across its different component studies, simply attempts to articulate and explore some of the central (historical, philosophical and social scientific) dimensions of language as a *political category* in relation to social psychology and some of its central concerns. Towards this end, the following specific themes are explored:

- (1) The political role language has historically played in South Africa, especially with regards to the articulation and political embodiment of various ethnically, racially and nationally mediated forms of subjectivity (Chapter 3).
- (2) The politically productive role language has played in the emergence of nationalism, nation-state societies and the modern political order more broadly (and, vice versa, the role nationalism and the modern nation-state has played in delineating language as an ontologically, epistemologically and politically consistent object of state, academic and popular interest) (Chapter 4).
- (3) The way in which nationally mediated and state-oriented conceptions of language, politics and political subjectivity have been assumed, naturalised and reproduced by traditional social psychology throughout the twentieth century (Chapter 5).
- (4) The way in which ordinary discussions about language in an everyday South African setting contribute (by invoking liberal and nationalist discourses, amongst others) to the continued racialisation of language and public space in this country, and to the further legitimisation of linguistically mediated forms of inequality and marginalisation (Chapter 6).

Some caveats, distinctions and particulars

I will further introduce and outline these different component studies below, along with their respective aims and objectives. However, a number of caveats for the thesis as a

whole have to be stated at the outset. Firstly, references to *language* are ubiquitous in critical social psychology. So much so, that some scholars in fact consider the close analysis of language to be the point of departure (and distinguishing feature) of contemporary critical social psychology (e.g., Tuffin, 2005). However, in by far the majority of cases, critical social psychology refers to language *as discourse*: as an abstract system of signs or as dialogically enacted speech acts. Because the focus in this thesis is on discourses (and ideologies) *of language*, discourse and language are not used as interchangeable concepts. Instead, my focus is on language in a more 'literal' (or *material*) sense: I have in mind its embodiment in idioms, accents, and the particular languages people speak – such as English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and German – and the ways in which it becomes politically encoded in historically and contextually particular ways.² In other words, my focus is not on language as an ostensibly universal feature of human beings and social life; as either a repository of meaning or a dimension of social action. Instead, my focus is on language as a *differentiating* and *reproductive* feature of social and political life; as a dimension of social difference that has accrued its own political ballast, but that also intersects and combines with *other* important dimensions of social and political differentiation and reproduction – such as class, ethnicity and race.

However, for all its references to language, critical social psychology does not seem particularly concerned with language in the way I have defined it as a focus of attention in the paragraph above. Stated differently, beyond its characteristics and functions as discourse, language is simply not a very prominent *topic* in critical social psychology. It is therefore not unusual for an introductory textbook in the discipline to include many entries for *discourse* in its subject index, but none for *language*, *accent* or *multilingualism* (Gough & McFadden, 2001). The same applies to a fairly recent (and rightfully praised) introduction to critical psychology produced in South Africa (Hook, 2004a): the political significance of linguistic diversity and the fact that subjectivity and power emerge from and operate not only in relation to discourses, but also in relation to *specific languages spoken with specific accents in contexts where linguistic differences are politically meaningful*, is generally neglected. Furthermore, this tendency is not restricted to introductory textbooks. As I will argue in later chapters, language is central to the politics of migration, national belonging and racism in contemporary Europe (e.g., Blackledge, 2005; Blommaert, Creve

& Willaert, 2006; Fortier, 2000; Linke, 2004). However, a recent edition of the *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* (Callaghan & Capdevila, 2008) – which focused on the politics of asylum and migration – does not at all address (beyond the *discursive* focus of the majority of its contributions) the role language plays in the migratory experience or in the racialisation and marginalisation of migrants. Whereas the word ‘discourse’ appears frequently across the different contributions, there are hardly any references to issues such as the contemporary practice of language testing for citizenship, debates about the appropriate language of instruction for immigrant and other minority children, the status of the national versus ‘foreign’ languages, or to particular languages like English or Urdu. As I will argue in the chapters to follow, this is a serious neglect (for a *critical* social psychology) of a very pertinent dimension of contemporary politics. In fact, to some extent this thesis could be read as an apologia of sorts for the fundamental importance of language to contemporary political considerations – and hence to critical social psychology as well.

The second caveat concerns the focus on language as a *political category*. The relationship between language and politics is not conceptualised in this thesis in a merely descriptive manner, to include only the empirically variable relationships that exist (and could potentially exist) between language, on the one hand, and particular political identities, mobilisations and struggles on the other. In other words, the focus is not on language simply as another topic of political articulation, mobilisation or struggle; as something politics is simply *about*. Although I will mention and discuss many instances of language politics (especially in relation to nationalism and the nation-state), such discussions aim to explore a deeper, more formative level of articulation between language and politics. More to the point, the focus in this thesis is on arguing that language and politics are *mutually constitutive*: conceptions and practices of language emerge and are stabilised in relation to historically particular forms of social and political order; and in turn, particular dimensions and reproductive mechanisms of especially the *modern* social and political order (including nationality, ethnicity, race and class), are deeply rooted in conceptions and practices of language. In other words, language is approached as a political category in order to explore both the *political nature of language* and the *linguistic dimensions of the political*.

This means that I am also not invested in staging a dialogue between critical social psychology and discourses of multilingualism, as some recently have done in relation to multiculturalism more broadly (e.g., Howarth, 2008; Nesbitt-Larking, 2008; Verkuyten, 2008). In other words, the aim of the thesis is not to politicise language in a particular way, such as arguing against linguistic hegemony or monolingualism, and *for* multilingualism. First of all, I am wary to simply endorse multilingualism as if it is a self-evidently politically progressive value. As Chow (2006; see also Pennycook, 2002a) states:

Such a belief in the absolute merit of being multilingual is, of course, debatable: the multilingualism essential for political surveillance and intelligence networks such as the CIA, and the multilingualism needed for purposes of religious indoctrination, as in the case of Jesuit and Protestant missionaries throughout the centuries, are but two obvious questionable examples. (p. 73)

In other words, the pressing metapolitical question explored in this thesis is not whether multilingualism is ‘better’ or more desirably than monolingualism, but how particular social worlds, political projects, and subjectivities are imagined in either monolingual or multilingual (amongst other) terms; why this occurs in a particular context; and what the discursive and material effects are of such imaginaries. Once more, the issue is not particular instances of language politics, but the more abstract and also more constitutive relationship between language and the political.

The third caveat concerns the relationship between the component studies of this thesis and its overarching critical social psychology agenda. Not all the chapters can properly speaking be characterised (in a disciplinary sense) as ‘social psychology’; nor are all the chapters explicitly *about* social psychology. The two chapters in Part II, for example, pursue historical and philosophical analyses of language in relation to South African history, nationalism, and the formation of the modern political order. In a purely superficial sense, they cannot be referred to as ‘social psychology’. However, both these chapters pursue variations on the theme of language, politics and subjectivity that are highly (and wittingly) relevant to the development of a critical social psychology of

language. In fact, these chapters directly further my critical social psychology agenda by *historicising* language in relation to particular contexts (such as South Africa), particular political formations (such as the nation-state), and particular subjectivities (such as nationality and race) – and in this way delineates and gives it meaning as an object of social scientific inquiry beyond the ‘naïve realism’ with which the social sciences sometimes tend to approach language as an objectively existing social fact (Pennycook, 2004; see Chapter 5).

In fact, I would go as far as to argue that any form of social psychology remains incomplete without historical and philosophical components, *especially* with regards to the delineation and theoretical construction of its objects of enquiry. The methodological barricading of the discipline behind either experiments or qualitative interview studies, serves only to reproduce a discipline in which the objects of inquiry are inadequately historicised and theoretically articulated. In this regard it is at the very least *intriguing* that historical sociology, historical anthropology and historical linguistics are firmly established disciplines – but that the idea of a historical (social) *psychology* is much less frequently encountered (Gergen, 1973; Graumann & Gergen, 1996). On account of the above (and seeing as I engage history and political philosophy not in order to contribute to those disciplines, but to work towards insights about the social psychology of language) I would therefore argue strongly that the historical and philosophical discussions in this thesis can (and should) indeed be referred to as ‘social psychology’.

However, the thesis is also structured in such a way that a *critical* distance from social psychology (and, in particular, the social psychology of language) is maintained. Instead of departing from the vantage point of a conventionally understood social psychology – utilising it as a repository of theories and methods that are relevant to the study of language, politics and subjectivity – the discipline is engaged with directly only in Part III of the thesis: first in the form of a critique of the conceptualisation and representation of language in mainstream social psychology; and then in the form of a discussion and application of ‘discursive’ social psychology to ideological constructions of language, nation and race within conversational encounters located in a fairly everyday South African setting. The reason for this postponed confrontation with social psychology *as a*

discipline is that it allows me to interrogate and reconceptualise language in social psychology in the light of an already developed account of language as a political category. It is only in this way that it is possible to fully appreciate the extent to which social psychology approaches the social world (and language in particular) in nationally mediated terms; and to grasp the extent to which this discipline has contributed to the ideological and political shaping of sociolinguistic orders and ‘ethnolinguistic’ subjectivities in modern liberal democratic societies.

The fourth caveat concerns the role of *South Africa* in this thesis. Although I do not pretend to develop a coherent, exhaustive empirical study of language politics, language ideologies and linguistically mediated subjectivities in South Africa, this country does of course provide a very relevant site for exploring the kinds of issues raised here in relation to language, politics, subjectivity and social psychology. The obvious reason for this is that South Africa is a linguistically diverse society, and that language has played a demonstrably important role in its political development and political struggles over more than three centuries (see Chapters 2, 3 and 6). However, South Africa is also more than merely a useful point of reference for an otherwise free-floating discussion about language and politics. Social psychology cannot exist in an abstract space from where its seemingly universal knowledge claims may subsequently be particularised in relation to so many different ‘contexts’. In this regard, I concur with Ratele (2003):

Any *social* psychology must, by definition, be *a* psychology of *a* society – that is to say, to be truly social, it must be concerned with specific contexts, contexts inhabited by real, living people; people inhabiting bodies, living in specific communities, with particular histories, not abstractions. (p. 13, emphases in the original)

Ratele (2003) is essentially arguing here that social psychology is not a universal knowledge repository which could (or should) be *applied* to particular contexts. Instead, social psychology exists only in relation to (and emerges *from*) particular contexts. This is true for the study of language also: its political nature cannot be understood in the abstract. Language is constructed and becomes politically invested in particular ways,

which may differ widely from context to context – irrespective of whether these contexts are historical epochs, geopolitical regions, or everyday conversational encounters. I will argue that South Africa is not politically *exceptional*, and that its language history links it irrevocably to European nationalism, colonialism and ethnic and racial mythologies; to other colonial, neo-colonialism and postcolonial societies, as well as to other ‘developing countries’ that are similarly affected by the demands and contradictions of contemporary neoliberal capitalism and globalisation. However, I also argue that the first step for any critical social psychology of language is to consider the ways in which language and a particular socio-political context have been mutually constituted and reinforced. In other words, South Africa is not just a context *within which* I approach processes of language; nor is it simply a context to which I apply insights produced in social psychology. Instead, I am interested in the historically specific ways in which language has attained (and maintains) its political delineations and productivity in South Africa, and the ways in which ‘South Africa’ has been (and is) imagined and (symbolically as well as materially) reproduced in relation to conceptions and practices of language – I explore this in historical (Chapter 3) as well as more situational (Chapter 6) terms.

For all these reasons (and this is the fifth caveat), the structure of the thesis departs somewhat from what could be considered ‘traditional’ to the genre of the postgraduate thesis in psychology. The ‘traditional’ structure of the thesis, which perpetually retraces the arc of positivistic research, may be characterised as follows. First, a set of clearly defined research questions are posed within the context of a neatly delineated empirical realm. These research questions are then approached by means of standardised methods of data collection and analysis – most frequently, of course, of a quantitative nature – and answered in the form of positive (empirical) results. Finally, these empirical results (or research findings), are assessed for how well they can be generalised beyond the demarcated domain of the study. All in all, such studies (standard fare in ‘normal psychology’) are valued (or faulted) for the quality of their contribution to the fund of knowledge about a more or less stable field of scientific interest.

In contrast, the current thesis does not aim primarily to contribute ‘positive knowledge’ about a demarcated object within the parameters of a fixed empirical field; or even within

a fixed disciplinary approach. Instead, it embarks on a path of problematisation: it seeks to deconstruct an area and object of knowledge production in psychology, rather than to simply add more knowledge to that terrain of study. In a manner of speaking, it problematises language in relation to social psychology, and social psychology in relation to language. For this reason the thesis is closer in style to a collection of thematically linked but freestanding research studies, and should best be approached as such. Despite developing a coherent argument across its different component studies, each chapter is conceptualised and presented as an independent exploration; a variation on the central theme of language, politics and subjectivity. Each component is therefore presented separately, posing its own particular research questions and developing its own conceptualisations and analytic strategies and procedures. The major analytic modalities engaged in in each chapter are historical (Chapter 3), philosophical (Chapter 4), meta-theoretical (Chapter 5), and theoretical and empirical (Chapter 6).

The aims and objectives of the thesis

This thesis essentially advances three broad arguments, and each of these arguments in turn informs a number of particular research aims or objectives. The first argument is that language remains an important ingredient in how the boundaries of political territory, community, and subjectivity are defined, renegotiated and reproduced in the world today. In other words (as stated before), I argue that modern politics has a linguistic dimension; just as language, in turn, has a political dimension. I locate the reason for the lasting importance of this closely knit unity of language, politics and subjectivity in the important, at times *constitutive* role language has played in the development and functioning of modern modalities of power, capture and control, and specifically in the emergence of the political matrix of nation, state and territory. Therefore, I argue that language does not only have a political dimension; it specifically has a *national* dimension. This secondary theme of nationalism, nationality and the nation-state is explored repeatedly throughout the thesis: each chapter takes it up and engages with it in different but complementary ways. The particular research objectives informed by this broad argument are the following:

- (1) To highlight the continued relevance of language as a political phenomenon (notably as a mechanism of differentiation and exclusion) for social psychology in relation to the political realities, contradictions and challenges facing nation-states in general, and post-apartheid South Africa in particular (Chapter 2).
- (2) To outline a language history of South Africa that specifically foregrounds the political productivity of language in this region, specifically in relation to the articulation of political subjectivities (such as ethnicity, race and nationality) and strategies of colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid rule (Chapter 3).
- (3) To discuss and explain the often foundational role language has played in the emergence of the modern political order – an order characterised by the emergence and institutionalisation (as nation-states) of *nationally* defined political communities and nationally mediated political subjectivities such as nation, ethnicity and race (Chapter 4).

The second argument is that the social sciences (and social psychology in particular), has paid insufficient attention to the constitutive and politically productive role (both historically and at present; both macro- and micro-socially) of language in modern societies. In social psychology, language is either outright neglected as a topic of interest, or treated as a field of specialisation separated from other topic areas. The effect of the latter is that the way in which language intersects with and reinforces phenomena like prejudice, discrimination, and racism (amongst others), goes by unnoticed, or at least remains underexplored. This argument informs the following research objectives:

- (4) To provide a detailed account of the ways in which (and the reasons why) language has been neglected in mainstream, experimental social psychology (Chapter 5).
- (5) To discuss the emergence of a social psychology of language in reference to its defining concepts (including language attitudes, ethnolinguistic vitality, speech

accommodation, and ethnolinguistic identity), and reflect on its most important theoretical shortcomings (Chapter 5).

- (6) To reconceptualise the central concepts of the social psychology of language (as listed above) in terms of the theoretical and methodological principles of a discursively oriented social psychology (Chapter 6).
- (7) To demonstrate the value of a discursively oriented social psychology of language by employing its central concepts and methods within the analysis of ordinary talk about language in a South African setting (Chapter 6).
- (8) To empirically explore the utilisation of discourses of liberalism and South African national identity in relation to the racialisation of language and public space in ordinary conversations about language and language diversity in a South African school (Chapter 6).

The third argument is that the social sciences (and social psychology in particular) do not simply neglect language, but are very frequently conceptually *ill-equipped* to approach and analyse language as a political category. The reason for this is that the social sciences too readily approach the world in terms of nationally mediated concepts and categories, treating historically constructed phenomena as ahistorical and objectively existing facts in the world. This especially has analytically stultifying and politically obscuring effects in the context of the study of language and language related phenomena and processes. In other words, it is not enough simply to plead for *more* research and theory about language in social psychology; more research in this regard simply reproduces as self-evident that which requires systematic problematisation. The research objectives associated with this argument are the following:

- (9) To analyse the ideological assumptions and normative socio-political expectations which permeate mainstream social psychology in reference to language, linguistically mediated subjectivities, and the sociolinguistic order (Chapter 5).

- (10) To explore a number of theoretical and methodological resources (notably informed by discourse analysis) with which to reconceptualise language in social psychology in ways that break with the normative political orders and subjectivities assumed and reproduced by the discipline (Chapter 6).

Besides these broad arguments and the aims and objectives they inform, each respective chapter also articulates its own aims and objectives. These will be addressed in the respective chapters.

Outline of the chapters

As I have indicated above, this thesis does not take the form of a journal article writ large. Therefore, the usual components of a text of this nature are packaged somewhat differently. Although the progression of chapters *could* be seen as roughly following a pattern of problem statement (Chapter 1), contextualisation and conceptual framework (Chapter 2), literature reviews and theorisation (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), empirical findings and discussion (Chapter 6) and a conclusion (Chapter 7), this coherence should not be overstated. Moreover, because the dissertation does not report a single (or a number of related) empirical study, there is no separate chapter for methodology. Where issues of data collection and methods arise (as in Chapter 6), it is discussed in the relevant chapter.

The study is divided into four parts. Part I consists of two chapters. This includes the present chapter (Chapter 1), which introduces the main objectives of the thesis as a whole. Chapter 2 contextualises and frames the thesis (and the broad objectives as stated in the present chapter) in relation to a number of political and analytical contexts. It starts off by discussing the contemporary political relevance of language globally and in South Africa specifically. Thereafter it provides a brief overview of the treatment (or neglect) of language in the South African social sciences, and situates the study of language, politics and subjectivity in reference to the concepts of *language ideologies*, *language regimes*, *biopolitics* and *governmentality*. These concepts are introduced because they are utilised in all the component studies of this thesis, and thus provide a certain conceptual and metatheoretical coherence to the thesis as a whole.

Part II likewise consists of two chapters, both of which attempt to move the discussion from considerations of the political *relevance* of language to the political *nature* (or ontology) of language. Chapter 3 provides a language history of South Africa, tracing the intersections between language, politics and subjectivity in the region from the earliest white settlement to the post-apartheid era. The focus is specifically on the productivity of language in the region, which included the manufacturing of linguistically mediated subjectivities such as ethnicity, race and nationality and the role of language and language *differences* in colonial and apartheid rule. The discussion in Chapter 4 probes more deeply (and more philosophically) into the constitutive relationships between language, nationalism and the nation-state, developing a coherent account of how language emerges and functions in relation to the political. Although the focus in Chapter 4 is primarily on the nation, the nation-state and nationalism, it also addresses the possible reconfiguring of the relationship between language, politics and subject by emerging conditions of cultural, political and economic globalisation.

Part III confronts social psychology directly. Chapter 5 presents a thorough overview of both the neglect of language in mainstream experimental social psychology and the emergence (since the 1970s in particular) of a subfield referred to as the social psychology of language. Besides simply presenting a descriptive overview of social psychology's bifurcated treatment of language, however, the chapter is also concerned with the ways in which language has been conceptualised in social psychology, and in particular with the normative ideas and expectations about sociolinguistic orders and linguistic subjectivities that are reproduced in (and by) the discipline. Chapter 6 introduces an approach to social psychology that radically departs from the experimental tradition, and in fact makes language its central focus and concern: discursive social psychology. This approach to social psychology is discussed in detail, because even though it too pays relatively little attention to language as a topic (in the sense that I am approaching it in this thesis), its reconceptualisation of psychological processes such as attitudes, categorisation and identification makes it highly productive for the study of constructions (and the political productivity) of language in contexts of everyday encounter.

Part IV consists of only one chapter. Besides concluding the thesis, Chapter 7 also offers a number of critical comments on the tendency in this thesis (and more broadly) to reduce issues to language, politics of subjectivity to the study discourse and ideology. It briefly explores language as a corporeal component of embodied, affective subjects, especially in the context of postcolonial societies. In this way it offers a number of alternative trajectories along which the major topics of this thesis could be pursued.

NOTES

¹In the most simplistic sense, language ideologies refer to conceptions of language and language related phenomena, which are widely shared and politically effective in the context of systemic legitimisation. The concept is explored more fully in Chapter 2.

²Despite the often encountered tendency amongst writers in English to refer to isiZulu and isiXhosa, I will not adopt this approach here – for the same reason that I write German, not Deutsch. German and Xhosa are the English translations of Deutsch and isiXhosa, respectively. This is a personal, stylistic preference, rather than a linguistic necessity or a political statement.

2

Subjects Devoid of Accent: Approaching Language, Politics and Subjectivity

Over the last 20 years, a problem that had previously been stifled or even ignored in many countries – that of linguistic diversities within the same political community – has come forcibly to the surface. Where the languages of minorities were repressed for a long time – in Spain and the former Soviet republics, for example – the importance of diversity has re-emerged, leading to multilingualism and even secession.

(Daniele Archibugi, 2005, p. 538)

Rather than assuming we must save languages, perhaps we should be asking instead who benefits and who loses from understanding languages the way we do, what is at stake for whom, and how and why language serves as a terrain for competition.

(Monica Heller & Alexandre Duchêne, 2007, p. 1)

In a recent publication, Aronin and Singleton (2008) argue that ‘the development of multilingualism in the world has reached a critical point in terms of scale and significance’ (p. 1). So much so, in fact, they deem it necessary to refer to multilingualism as a ‘new linguistic dispensation’, a reordering of the linguistic forms, landscapes, identities and practices that characterise and are indeed *required* by the

contemporary, globalising world: '[T]he present state of affairs with respect to multilingualism is in fact qualitatively different from what went before ... [it] represents in fact *a new linguistic dispensation*' (p. 1, emphasis added). This is a bold claim, and raises a number of questions for political theorists and social scientists interested in studying how language, politics, and subjectivity might be superimposed in the contemporary world: What exactly is the nature and extent of this 'new' linguistic dispensation? How does it differ from the linguistic dispensations, or the dominant sociolinguistics orders, that have preceded it? What are the dimensions of political relevance that are newly acquired (or relinquished) by language under these new sociolinguistic conditions? If Aronin and Singleton are correct about the emergence of a new linguistic dispensation, how does this impact on the language situations of *particular* societies, for example South Africa? And, most importantly (from the perspective of this thesis), how does such a restructured sociolinguistic order alter the way the social sciences ought to approach issues of language, politics, and subjectivity?

These questions are crucial for the argument developed in this thesis, and they suggest at least three themes that need to be addressed at the outset. These are, firstly, the *contexts* within which language becomes visible as a social and political phenomenon and a relevant dimension of subjectivity; secondly, the nature of the *political relevance* language acquires within these contexts; and thirdly, the most appropriate ways to *approach* language from a critical social scientific perspective. Regarding the first theme, I discuss three contexts that are most directly relevant to the objectives of this thesis. The first is a world context increasingly characterised by tensions between, on the one hand, the former cultural and political stronghold of the nation-state over definitions of society, citizenship and subjectivity; and, on the other hand, the acceleration of processes of cultural and economic globalisation as witnessed in (amongst other things) the diversification of especially urban populations, new patterns of social inequality and exclusion, and transformations in how citizenship, civil society and political community are conceptualised (e.g., Appadurai, 2001; Archibugi, 2003; Blommaert, 2003; Calhoun, 2004). The second relevant context is the language situation of a particular nation-state, namely post-apartheid South Africa. This country is characterised, inter alia, by a history of racism and racial capitalism; a constitutionally protected but radically asymmetrical

multilingual environment, and the often contradictory demands (partly on account of the constraints of neoliberal globalisation) of social and economic development and transformation (e.g., Erasmus, 2005; Heugh, 2002; Terreblanche, 2002). I will argue that these dimensions of contemporary South African society are not only linked, but that questions of *language* are inherently relevant to them all. The third and final context is that of the social sciences in South Africa. In this regard I problematise the pervasive tendency to relegate issues of language to discussions of culture, ethnicity and identity, and to disregard other important dimensions of the political and economic relevance of language in contemporary societies, and in South Africa in particular. This representational pattern applies to international scholarship as well, but the discussion in this chapter is restricted to a sample of South African social science literature. The reason for this is that the international literature – especially relating to language, nationalism and globalisation – is given ample attention in the chapters that follow. What is presented in this chapter is not an exhaustive literature review, but rather an attempt to accentuate dimensions of the political nature of language that have largely been neglected in contemporary South African social science.

The primary objective with this three-way contextualisation of language (in line with the second theme identified above) is to provide a compelling motivation for *why* it is important to study – and especially, to rethink *how* to study – the intersections and superimpositions of language, politics and subjectivity in contemporary society at this historical and political juncture: at the beginning of the twenty-first century; in a globalising world; and in South Africa specifically. I therefore develop a motivation for the relevance (in particular, the *political* relevance) of language in relation to each of these contexts. However, it is also important to emphasise right away that these contexts will not be treated in a literal, self-evident manner throughout this thesis. On the contrary. In the three chapters that follow I set out to *problematise* language in relation to South Africa, the nation-state/globalisation and social psychology; and, in turn, to problematise each of these contexts (*as* seemingly self-sufficient and language-neutral contexts) in relation to the political dimensions and (above all) the political *productivity* of language – that is, taking into account the contribution of language to the production of governmentalities, subjectivities, and patterns of mobility and inequality in a given society. South Africa, the

nation-state/globalisation, and the social sciences: these are not merely frames within which language can be isolated for attention, but categories that have emerged and exist in a much more complex, and often mutually constitutive set of relationships with language. Understanding these relationships, and exploring their relevance for (and impact on) the development of a critical social psychology of language, is the central motif and objective of this thesis.

The third issue flagged above (one that will be highlighted in this chapter), pertains to how language, politics and subjectivity should be *approached* in the social sciences. Whilst this thesis (as was explained in Chapter 1) does not employ an integrated set of methods, its part-studies nevertheless proceed according to an overarching meta-theoretical vocabulary framework, namely the study of *language ideologies* (e.g., Kroskity, 2004; Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). This transdisciplinary approach, which has flourished over the last two decades, allows for a multidimensional approach to the relationships between language, politics and subjectivity. Rather than isolating language as a readily objectifiable research topic, the language ideologies approach considers how identities, social relationships, patterns of inclusion and exclusion and normative sociolinguistic orders, are mediated through conceptions and practices of language in both micro- and macro-contexts. The study of language ideologies, in short, enables one to address language and language-related phenomena as discursively produced and politically productive, and in this way to problematise conceptions and practices of language at the various levels of analytic articulation engaged with in this thesis: historical, philosophical, meta-theoretical, as well as conversational. The notion of 'language ideologies' is therefore deployed here as more than simply another research topic. It serves as an orienting framework for addressing aspects of (and relationships between) language, politics and subjectivity, specifically in the contexts of nationalism, South Africa and social psychology.

Language diversity, nationalism and globalisation

The social and political relevance of language in the contemporary world are frequently discussed in relation to the issue of *diversity* (e.g., Kymlicka & Patten, 2003a). This is

hardly surprising. As is the case with so many other instances of political subjectivity (e.g., ethnicity, gender, and sexuality), language becomes perceptible as politically relevant (or problematic) when it introduces difference to (or marks an individual or a group as different from) an existing or ideologically projected norm of similitude. The problem of difference, and along with it the awareness of diversity, and increasingly *identity*, as political issues, is deeply implicated in the history of modern nation-state societies (Bauman, 2001, 2002; Hall, 1992; Lo Bianco, 2005; May, Modood & Squires, 2004a). Because political ideas like democracy, citizenship, recognition and rights are generally given content to (and are enacted within) the framework of nation-state institutions, it is also primarily in relation to the modern nation-state that difference and diversity become encoded as politically meaningful (May, 2001; Williams, 1999). The emergence and development of supranational institutions such as the United Nations, and even the European Union, have not wrested sovereignty away from their constituent nation-states, nor have they (yet?) managed to provide lasting substance to ideals of transnational citizenship and a truly global regime of rights, recognition and justice. Political life, to a large extent, remains nationally rather than transnationally mediated, and embodied in the existence (or the ideal) of a sovereign nation-state (Calhoun, 2004; Sassen, 2003).

Traditionally, nation-states have sought to *reduce* difference and diversity in the polity as far as possible (Barbour, 2000a).¹ Through processes of assimilation, expulsion, the privatisation of certain features of non-national culture, as well as through the sublimation of pre- or sub-national differences into widely shared national identities by means of so-called ‘nation-building’, the ideological aim of nation-states have (by and large) historically been to produce fairly homogeneous populations (Balibar, 2004; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a; Williams, 1999).² Furthermore, the national polity, especially in liberal democratic states, has traditionally been organised around the ideal of an abstracted, individualised and seemingly universalist conception of citizenship. This form of citizenship (rooted in a liberal nationalist articulation of subjectivity), functioned, and still functions, as a form of political identity that transcends especially *ethnic* particularism and mitigates other identities (Lash & Featherstone, 2002; May, 2001; Ramsey, 1997; Squires, 2002). In fact, the origins of the ‘othering’ discourses of ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘minority’ could each be traced to the emergence of the form and ideal of

the modern nation-state and its liberal nationalist articulation of political subjectivity. It was in relation to the projected homogeneous national population (defined in reference to a shared culture, language or religion) that *mismatched* populations (those who resisted assimilation to the national ideal), first became visible as a political problem, and were cast as specifically *racialised* and *ethnicised* minorities (Balibar, 1991a, 1991b; Malik, 1996; May, 2001; Williams, 1999). Race, ethnicity and minority are terms that belong (alongside their role in histories of imperial and colonial subjugation of ‘non-Western’ others) to the broader history of modernity’s stigmatisation of intra-national diversity. As Modiano (2004) observes, in relation to language diversity specifically:

The case of the nation-state in most cases results in the selection of the national language by those in power, and minority languages, in the process, invariably become stigmatized, with some eventually becoming moribund. This process can be traced throughout Europe and North America, where dominant nation-state languages have ‘crowded out’ to a considerable extent lesser-used languages. (p. 219)

In other words, nation-states typically not only problematised language diversity, but in fact actively attempted to reduce (or at least moderate) its occurrence and significance. Nationalism envisioned its territory and population as monocultural and monolingual, and set macro-processes (including language planning, language policy development and centralised, mass education) in motion that sought to produce the desired effects of homogenisation and standardisation of populations at the level of the state (Bourdieu, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1990; Joseph, 2006a). In the process, language not only became a symbol of national identity, but in fact *the principal means of participation* in the national economy, public education, and the administrative and service delivery functions of the state. In other words, language developed into a mechanism or technology (not just a *characteristic*) of national citizenship. Precisely because of its role as a mechanism of inclusion and mobilisation within a context that (despite its insistence on homogeneity) remained stratified in terms of class, race and ethnicity, language also became a powerful marker of intra-state differences and, thereby, an instrument of the production and

reproduction of inequality, marginality and exclusion within the modern nation-state (Bourdieu, 1991; Kroskity, 2000a; Philips, 2004).

However, to what extent is the nation-state still the *most relevant* context for the consideration of language, politics and subjectivity in our time? The ideal of a standardised national identity (the abstract individualism of liberal democratic citizenship), and the neat demarcation of public and private spaces, has each been thoroughly challenged (if not debunked) by the politics of decolonisation, civil rights activism, feminist and gay liberation, and by the emergence (since the 1960s) of the politics of identity and discourses of multiculturalism and minority rights more generally (Benhabib, 1996; Bennet, 1998; Fenton & May, 2002). Increasingly, ‘diversity’ has come to signify a much more ambiguous set of meanings within the national polity. Some, especially conservative national elites (e.g., Huntington, 2005), still consider it threatening to the coherence of the nation. Appadurai (2006) refers to this fear of diversity as the ‘fear of small numbers’. Others, especially cultural or lifestyle ‘minorities’ within existing nation-states, have embraced ‘diversity’ as the postmodern political value *par excellence*, to a large extent replacing the erstwhile primacy of the politics of class with a politics of identity – not only as a mobilising principle in real-life political struggles, but as a social scientific analytic as well (Bauman, 2001, 2002; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). It may be argued that this has precipitated the development of a new political paradigm, in which the central social antagonism is no longer considered to be class and issues of the accumulation and redistribution of primarily *material* resources. Instead, cultural diversity, hyphenated forms of citizenship, and the accumulation and redistribution of *symbolic* resources have come to assume more prominence (e.g., Gutmann, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Kymlicka & Norman, 1999; Parekh, 2000; Walby, 2002).³ The effects of these shifts were registered in the domains of the social sciences and humanities, where political economy approaches were increasingly challenged and superseded by emerging disciplines such as cultural studies and media studies (Heuman, 2003; Papadopoulos, Stephenson & Tsianos, 2008).

One example of a seemingly purely ‘symbolic’ struggle over language is the influential (and largely successful) campaign for bilingual road signs in Wales during the 1970s

(Jones & Merriman, 2009). However, it would be too easy to see all struggles over language as incarnations of the postmodern politics of identity. For example, struggles against the marginalisation of users of British Sign Language from state institutions, political participation and public spaces in the UK is not simply a matter of the mobilisation of group identity, but of the ability of Deaf people to claim their rights, exercise their citizenship and participate in public life in a material, not just symbolic manner; in other words, to gain *access*, not just *recognition* (Valentine & Skelton, 2007). The same applies to instances in South Africa where language obstructs citizens' access to public services such as health care (Swartz, 2005) and education (Chisholm, 2005). Struggles like these cannot simply be glossed over as examples of 'identity politics' aimed at *symbolic* gains and resources. Of course, a largely symbolic resource like 'identity' may well be invoked in order to mobilise support in struggles for material benefits and rewards, but in such cases more is clearly at stake than symbolic recognition. For this reason, scholars like Parekh (2004) and Young (1990) argue that the politics of recognition cannot be neatly juxtaposed with the politics of redistribution. The articulation of political claims in real life contexts is more complex than such distinctions allow for.

However, it is in relation to the 'symbolic politics' of identity and recognition, as opposed to the 'material politics' of class and economic inequality (if I may utilise this distinction one more time), that language is generally pursued as a topic of political reflection beyond the confines of those disciplines explicitly engaged with the study of language in society. Sociolinguistics, of course, developed in response to the linguistic dimensions of both class and ethnic inequality as far back as the early 1960s, at a time when linguistics was avowedly apolitical (e.g., Bernstein, 1964, 1975; Blommaert, 2005; Joseph, 2006a). In stark contrast, mainstream political philosophy, political science and other social sciences, have, until recently, largely neglected the role of language in discussions of rights, justice, and citizenship. In the words of De Schutter (2007), political philosophers 'have only recently become interested in language policy' (p. 1). Pelinka (2007), in turn, argues that language has 'been neglected by the mainstream of political science' (p. 130). It is also only in recent years that language rights, linguistic justice and the legal status of minority languages and ethnolinguistic groups have begun to receive systematic attention in some

areas of political philosophy, and then primarily within the context of national politics of multiculturalism, cultural identity and extended citizenship rights (e.g., Faingold, 2004; Kymlicka & Patten, 2003a, 2003b; May, 2005; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002; Paulston, 1997; Rassool, 2004). Whilst these developments have certainly foregrounded language as a relevant dimension of citizenship and issues of rights and justice, much of this work has also privileged an essentially (and often *essentialistically*) cultural as opposed to a political economic analytic (Holborow, 1999, 2006). Arguably, they have also relied too heavily on a national frame of reference, hence neglecting the effects that changing constellations of power and subjectivities under neoliberal global capitalism might have on languages and sociolinguistic orders (Cabezas, Reese & Waller, 2006).

When Aronin and Singleton (2008) argue for the existence of a new linguistic dispensation, they are not only concerned with the impact of progressive, post-liberal forms of identity politics on the ability of nation-states to practically and/or legitimately impose measures of homogenisation and standardisation onto diverse populations. They have a more radical set of shifts in mind, which they refer to as globalisation – and, more specifically, the decentralising and destandardising forces of neoliberal *global capitalism*. Globalisation, in this sense, refers to an increasingly transnational order of flows (especially of capital, information, commodities and people) and interconnections, which seemingly diminishes the ability of (especially weaker) nation-states to regulate their economies and to moderate, manage and sublimate sub-national differences (Appadurai, 1996, 2001; Blommaert, 2005; Castells, 1997; Hedetoft, 1999). In this regard, Patrick (2007) refers to the ‘unfinished business of nation states’ (p. 35), something that is increasingly characteristic of modern states – so much so, that a conservative commentator like Huntington (2005) can find an appreciative (and alarmed!) audience when he warns against the ‘cultural disintegration’ of a powerful nation-state like the USA.

One of the main ‘spatial-cultural’ effects of globalisation (partly because of the escalating occurrence of transnational migration) is an acceleration of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversification of especially urban spaces (Arthur, 2004; Block, 2008; Ong, 2006; Vertovec, 2007). Blommaert (2008), in a recent discussion of globalisation and diversity,

refers to ‘multi-everything London’ (p. 81). The same observation could be made in relation to other ‘global’ and ‘globalising’ cities as well: New York (Chen, 1992; Kasinitz, 1992; Urciuoli, 1996), Cape Town (Vigouroux, 2005), and many others, are all continuously reconstituted and re-imagined as places in relation to new flows of population and new patterns of settlement and departure. But besides such new diversities in urban spaces, globalisation has also created increased opportunities for self-articulation and rights claims for various ‘national minorities’ within existing nation-states. As Archibugi (2005) observes:

Over the last 20 years, a problem that had previously been stifled or even ignored in many countries – that of linguistic diversities within the same political community – has come forcibly to the surface. Where the languages of minorities were repressed for a long time – in Spain or in the former Soviet republics, for example – the importance of diversity has re-emerged, leading to multilingualism or even to secession. But new conflicts and demands have also emerged in consolidated democratic states such as Belgium and Switzerland. (p. 538)

In this regard, one could mention the resurgence of the regional language of Catalan in Spain after the Franco era (Vann, 1999); to the revitalisation and increasing political significance of Welsh in Wales (Jenkins, 1999); to the linguistic nationalism of the post-Soviet Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (Savickienė & Kalėdatė, 2005; Verschik, 2005; see also Khilkanova & Khilkanov, 2004); and to the recreation of separate, standardised national languages in the successor states of Yugoslavia (Bugarski, 2004; see also Tollefson, 2002). In each instance the resurfacing of repressed or marginalised languages (and language communities) can be partially attributed to the weakening of states and the collapse of erstwhile empires (Castells, 1997; Sassen, 2003). Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union and other imperial states have left many resurgent national projects in their wake, whilst the weakening of established liberal democratic states (as was mentioned above) has increased not just the occurrence but *legitimacy* of identity politics centred around ideas of minority rights, multiculturalism and hyphenated forms of citizenship (Bauman, 2002; Lash & Featherstone, 2002; Ong, 2006). Not surprisingly, the sociolinguistic literature is brimming with discussions of language in

relation to various aspects of *nationality*: the maintenance of national identity (often in the face of globalisation and the rise of English, on the one hand, and the increase of linguistic diversity due to migration, on the other) in established states such as Japan (Kawai, 2007), Belgium (Maryns, 2005), Germany (Hansen-Thomas, 2007), Switzerland (Demont-Heinrich, 2005), Sweden (Oakes, 2005), the USA (Pavlenko, 2002), the UK (Blackledge, 2002b, 2006a) and India (Brass, 2004); in relation to more recent nation-building projects such as those in Israel (Safran, 2005), Bangladesh (Imam, 2007), Singapore (Wee & Bokhorst-Heng, 2005), and the European Union (Caviedas, 2003; Hogan-Brun, 2005); in relation to the negotiation of national identities in particular sub- or transnational regions such as Transylvania (Baár & Ritivoi, 2006) and the Middle-East (Suleiman, 2003, 2006); in relation to the fate of small or minority languages within postcolonial nation-states where other, often ex-colonial languages are hegemonic such as Botswana (Mooko, 2006), Cameroon (Trudell, 2006) and Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2006); or in relation to regional language conflicts articulated in multicultural as well as ethnic nationalist terms, such as those in Catalonia (Costa, 2003; Vann, 1999) and Québec (Oakes, 2004).

Language clearly remains politically ubiquitous in globalising times. There seems to be a proliferation of debates about language, especially in relation to the meaning of citizenship, nationality and globalisation. But are Aronin and Singleton's (2008) claims about the proliferation of *multilingualism* under conditions of globalisation, despite the resurgence of minority linguistic claims and the diversification of urban spaces, not also counterintuitive? Are we not rather witnessing the alarming *reduction* of linguistic diversity in the world, an acceleration of the homogenising sociolinguistic effects of nationalism, now elevated to the level of a political and economic world system or empire? Has language death and attrition not reached such critical dimensions that the planet is indeed hovering on the verge of a dramatic collapse of its cultural and linguistic ecologies? And, is this process not the *true* core of the politics of language under conditions of cultural, economic and political globalisation? McCarty (2003), seemingly in contrast to Aronin and Singleton's idea, offers the following diagnosis about the current state of language diversity in the world (likewise linking it to globalisation):

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the world's linguistic and cultural diversity is *under assault by the forces of globalisation* – cultural, economic and political forces that work to standardise and homogenise, even as they stratify and marginalise. In the transnational flow of wealth, technology and information, the currency of 'world' languages is enormously inflated, while that of local languages is flattened and devalued. (p. 147, emphasis added)⁴

The sheer amount of attention paid (in both academic writing and the media) to language endangerment, language death and the conditions of possibility for small language survival and revitalisation, certainly seems to suggest an increase in monolingualism, rather than multilingualism, as the overriding feature of a newly globalised linguistic dispensation (e.g., Fishman, 2001; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998; Jones, 1998; Myhill, 1999; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Nevins, 2004). An almost vertiginous awareness of small languages as *endangered* amongst linguistic anthropologists, other social scientists and the public alike, is often expressed in naturalistic, biological metaphors that equate linguistic and cultural extinction to the loss of *biodiversity*, where small languages can be likened to endangered species (Cameron, 2007; Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Kriel, 2003a). The image of *the last speaker* of a dying language has achieved iconic status in the media, in much the same way as the endangered Panda bear: "Thanks to a metaphor solidly established in the academic discourse, the maintenance of linguistic diversity – and, by implication, the "survival struggle" of any individual language – has become as righteous a cause as the maintenance of biodiversity' (Kriel, 2003a, pp. 50-51).

Whilst it is undeniably so that there are languages (even many) on the verge of extinction, the deployment of discourses of endangerment is by no means confined to small, numerically vulnerable languages. In fact, it is frequently raised in reference to relatively *large* languages like Afrikaans (Kriel, 2003a; 2003b), Catalan (Pujolar, 2007), Swedish (Milani, 2007), and even American English (Crawford, 2000). This alerts one to the *ideological* nature of how languages are invoked and spoken about in public debate. Therefore, the most relevant *political* question is not whether languages are truly under threat or not, but what is accomplished by the act of invoking them as endangered: for example, safeguarding symbolic and material interests in the contexts of political changes,

new demographic forces, or shifting economic realities. As articulated by Heller and Duchêne (2007), the important questions to ask are: ‘how is [language endangerment] described, how is it legitimized, and by whom? That is, in whose interest is it to mobilize resources around the defence of language, and why?’ (p. 6). Stated somewhat differently, how does mobilising *on behalf of* and *in terms of* a language (and these are often difficult to distinguish) reflect existing political identities and interests, and how does it give rise to new forms of political subjectivities and linguistically mediated spaces, resources and entitlements in a particular social space? These kinds of questions do not just apply to debates about language endangerment, but to *all* political debates about language.

Framing questions about language, politics and subjectivity in ‘ecological’ terms unnecessarily naturalises the field of inquiry, and renders the *political* regionalisation of language – how its ‘ecological niche’ relies on the ideological naturalisation of a historically specific political orders such as the nation-state – all but invisible. The state is hereby seen as simply inheriting (and accepting custodianship over) a wealth of linguistic diversity: language is just another resource to be harnessed, exploited, managed, and (in line with more recent discourse) *protected*. Consequently, language is placed at an almost ontological remove from history and politics. Language and language phenomena are impacted upon by historical and political processes of modernisation, nationalisation and globalisation, but not approached as historically and politically mediated (and mediating) constructs themselves. In fact, the discourse of endangerment reveals the extent to which language studies are often still held captive by essentialist (and essentialising) forms of nostalgia for cultural authenticity (e.g., Buchotz, 2003; Coupland, 2003a; Moore, 2006).

To return to the question of whether Aronin and Singleton (2008) are correct, their claim about the increase of multilingualism also seems to be challenged by the increasing focus on the role of *English* in the context of cultural globalisation, economic neoliberalism and postcolonialism (e.g., Bhat, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999; Ives, 2006; Pennycook, 1994; Ricento, 2000). Whether treated as simply a neutral characteristic of a new world order (e.g., Bryson, 1991; Crystal, 2003; De Swaan, 2001), embraced as a lingua franca that has the potential to help realise the cosmopolitan vision of a global civil society (e.g., Archibugi, 2005; Guilherme, 2007; House, 2003), or decried as the linguistic harbinger of

contemporary capitalism, imperialism and ‘linguistic genocide’ (e.g., Phillipson, 1992, 2000, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), scholars of language are generally in agreement about the power, reach and centrality of English in the cultural, economic and political processes of globalisation. In the words of Tietze (2004), ‘English has become the “lingua franca” of international business and management and is the preferred means of communication and international encounters’ (p. 175). Whether ‘a fundamental tool that unquestionably brings professional success or one that oppresses us under capitalism, neoliberalism and the global market’ (Guilherme, 2007, p. 72), the fact is that the global language order seems increasingly to favour the further development and entrenchment of English as a world language phenomenon.

Aronin and Singleton (2008), however, have good reason to insist on their thesis that multilingualism is increasing under conditions of globalisation, irrespective of corresponding processes of language death and the spread of English. To begin with, English itself has become radically diversified, not despite, but exactly *because* of its globalisation. McArthur (1998) refers to ‘the English languages’ in the plural; Bachu (1983) to the ‘Indianization’ of English – defined as a process of linguistic indigenisation that is also observed in Africa and elsewhere where this language has been taken up by native and non-native speakers alike (e.g., Bangbose, Banjo & Thomas, 1995; Bautista, 1997; Bokamba, 1992). It certainly seems as if ‘English with an accent’ has become the numerically dominant form of expression in this language (Lippi-Green, 1997). In other words, even in relation to a single language like English, language diversity seems to be on the rise. At the same time, however, the diversification and indigenisation of English certainly does not imply the *political neutralisation* of the language (Holborow, 1999; Karmani, 2005a; May, 2001; Pennycook, 1998). In the words of Rassool (2004),

the issue of language rights in relation to a world linguistic order in which English dominates raises important issues concerned with rights of access to information, technologies and technological knowledges for impoverished nations in the developing world. The predominance of English within these contexts will contribute further to the divide between information-rich and information-poor societies. (p. 212)

Moreover, speaking English (or any dominant language for that matter) with an accent still marks people as different in ways that may render them symbolically and even physically out of place, thus consigning them to stigmatised, often *racialised*, social categories and restricted social and economic trajectories (Blackledge, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Karmani, 2006; Maryns, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2007). Likewise, the ‘indigenisation’ of English – as Bachu (1983) has discussed in relation to India, and Mazrui (1975, 1997; Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998) in relation to Africa – frequently contributes more to the consolidation of the elite interests of particular ethnic groups or social classes in postcolonial societies than to the democratic and economic mobilisation of the masses (e.g., Annamalai, 2004; Brass, 2004; Djité, 2008; Mazrui, 1997; Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998; Narkunas, 2005). In other words, language is still an index of inequality and a means of division and marginalisation in a globalising world. Rassool (2004) provides an acute summary: ‘Language thus remains an important site of struggle over socio-economic and cultural resources, not only within the context of the nation state but also within the global cultural economy’ (p. 212). It is precisely as a ‘site of struggle’ that language occupies my attention in this thesis; as something *about*, *over*, and *in terms of* which people wage (and ideologically articulate) struggles.

To be sure, globalisation trades (quite literally) on the production and reproduction of severe forms of inequality – both within states and across the transnational space. According to Blommaert (2008): ‘Globalisation is, as we know, a layered phenomenon and not every globalised subject is equal: some are called “cosmopolitans” and others “vagabonds” (as Zygmunt Bauman observed), and while some “visit” countries, others “sneak into” them’ (p. 81). Language is, in other words, still directly linked to the life chances (in cultural, political and economic terms) of national, cultural as well as nomadic subjects. This is the case in the established nation-states of Europe, where immigrants are confronted with increasingly strict national language requirements for citizenship, and thus with *linguistically* mediated forms of exclusion, inequality and racialisation (e.g., Blackledge, 2005, 2006a; Blommaert, Creve & Willaert, 2006).⁵ It is also the case in parts of the developing world (such as the Middle East) where English is not only a commoditised and exchangeable skill in multinational corporations and national service

industries like tourism (in other words, it is not reducible to globalisation as an *economic* phenomenon), but indeed plays a role in the biopolitical objectives of powerful Western states, such as in the so-called ‘war on terror’. For example, the teaching of English in Islamic countries has been promoted by American institutions (increasingly after 9/11) as a vital tool for producing cultural change and intensifying political influence in the Middle East. In this sense, the teaching of English forms part of a neo-imperial ‘civilising offensive’:

It has been mostly under the combined pretext of ‘educational reform,’ U.S. national security, and the ‘war on terror’ that the astonishing formulas (namely ‘more English and less Islam’) underpinning the Rand corporation’s reform initiatives have surfaced. Similar calls have also emerged in other Muslim contexts. Anwar Iqbal (2003), for instance, reports in the *Washington Times* that the Pakistani government is employing a \$255 million U.S. reform package to ‘wrest control of the country’s 8,000 religious schools from the mullahs’ by introducing ‘such modern subjects as English from primary to secondary level.’ (Karmani, 2005a, p. 100; see also Karmani, 2005b; Karmani & Pennycook, 2005; Kramsch, 2005)

It should be quite evident that language remains a politically pressing issue under conditions of globalisation, and also not simply in relation to seemingly defensive discourses of culture, ethnicity and identity. Language is deeply implicated in the political economic realities of the times; it is even deployed, as I have argued above, in neo-imperial projects of cultural domination and transformation. The continued (and increasing) political relevance of language in *both* nation-states and within the context of globalisation (and I will argue in Chapter 4 that these are not to be treated as opposites, but that globalisation instead represents the new cultural, economic and biopolitical conditions under which nation-states function) is therefore not restricted to cultural and identity effects of the last speaker of a small language or the ubiquitous speaker of broken English. It is instead the productive and reproductive role that language plays, across the *entirety of the social and political terrain*, which makes it so relevant for study in the social

sciences and social psychology in particular. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Butler (2004) describes language as ‘one of the profound political problems of our time’:

It seems to me that our social responsibility is to become attuned to the fact that there is *no* common language anymore. Or if there is a common language, it is the language of a commercialism that seeks to extend the hegemony of commercial American English, and to do it in a way that violently effaces the problem of multilingualism. This is one of the most profound pedagogical problems of our time, if not one of the profound political problems of our time. (p. 330; emphasis in original)

Language and politics in South Africa

Writing a number of years before the end of apartheid (and at the height of the repressive and violent states of emergency that characterised South Africa during the 1980s) the political activist and sociolinguist, Neville Alexander (1989), asked the following questions regarding the political importance of language in this country:

Surely, we have enough ‘questions’ or problems to worry about without adding another one to the long list? Why don’t we first try to find answers to the racial question, the land question, the housing question, the wages question, the constitutional question and to all the other important questions in our country? Why is the language question so terribly important? (p. 7)

This was not an attempt by Alexander (1989) to argue *against* the importance of the question of language in South Africa. In fact, he remains a one of the most tireless and influential language and social justice activists in the country (e.g., Alexander, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004). Here, he was advocating the *importance* of the language question for understanding the political history (and planning the political future) of South Africa. According to Alexander, the ‘language question’ couldn’t (and cannot) be divorced from other questions of social justice, liberation and transformation in the country. Three centuries of colonial and apartheid rule not only left indigenous languages

underdeveloped, but saw them being manipulated as principles of racial oppression and instruments of capitalist exploitation. Thus, according to Alexander (1989), 'If we want to fight against racial prejudice and racism we have, among other things, to break down the language barriers' (p. 10). Importantly, Alexander is not arguing the need for a single national language to transcend the 'barriers' erected *between* people by linguistic diversity. In fact, he is arguing exactly the opposite, namely that colonial and apartheid forms of linguistic hegemony (and the devaluation of indigenous languages) still serve as barriers to the economic mobility and political inclusion of the majority of the South African population. In other words, breaking down language barriers does not require the reduction of language diversity, but instead the empowerment of people through revaluing and developing their existing linguistic resources, as well as through the development of functionally multilingual citizens.

In a much later publication (and in the context of a South Africa that has seen both the demise of apartheid and the encroachment of neoliberal capitalism), Alexander (2004) writes that 'ill-considered language policies are one of the causes of dysfunctional societies and communities, victim to illiteracy, unemployment, crime, violence and drugs, among other social pathologies' (p. 123). The truth of this statement is perhaps nowhere more evident than in postcolonial Africa, where the tendency has been (with very few exceptions) for newly decolonised states to grant official or 'national' status to erstwhile colonial languages, rather than to local or indigenous languages. There were many reasons for this, which included: (i) the perception that colonial languages, because they are 'ethnically neutral', would facilitate nation-building and counteract the ethnicisation of civil society; (ii) the perception that, due to the firm entrenchment of the colonial languages in trade, industry and education, these and *only* these languages could serve the developmental goals of fledgling postcolonial states; (iii) the class interests of an educated, literate postcolonial elite, who utilised colonial languages as instruments for their own economic and cultural mobility, whilst the parallel exclusion of the majority of the (often rural) population from power, wealth, education and civil society was perpetuated, and (iv) pressure (especially with regards to the use of colonial rather than indigenous languages as media of instruction in public education) from donor institutions

such as the IMF and the World Bank (Djité, 2008; Narkunas, 2005; Mazrui, 1997; Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998).

Whatever the specific reasons, one of the major consequences of neo-colonial language policies in many post-independence African states has been the development and stabilisation of relatively small African elites and the continued exclusion (on frequently 'invisible' linguistic grounds) of the vast majority of the population from important sectors of civil society, political participation, economic life, education, health, and processes of cultural production and reproduction more generally. In other words, 'ill-considered language policies' (Alexander, 2004, p. 123) not only contribute to keeping many African countries locked in neo-colonial forms of cultural, political and economic relationships with their erstwhile colonisers, but (more importantly) add to the reproduction of colonial forms of cultural dispossession and chronic underdevelopment within the seemingly revolutionised arena of the postcolonial state. According to Djité (2008):

The fact remains that, 50 years on, Africa is the only continent where a school child can have access to knowledge and science only through a language other than the one spoken at home or in the wider community; the only continent where the majority of the people cannot have access to justice in their own language(s). (p. x)

Despite the ease with which people refer to 'English-speaking' and 'French-speaking' Africa, these languages are frequently very thinly spread amongst the local populations. As Djité (2008) observes (in relation to French): 'the imposition of the French language in Africa is seen and constructed by some as an unchangeable fact of life, even though less than 20% of the people in the so-called "French-speaking Africa" are proficient in it' (p. ix). Thus, there is little doubt that the political relevance of language in postcolonial societies extends beyond issues of 'culture', 'ethnicity', 'heritage' and 'identity'. On the contrary, language is a political, economic and developmental issue through and through, and is relevant to the material transformation of postcolonial society in the spheres of education, health care, the labour market, the stabilisation of participatory democracy,

and the development of an inclusive and vibrant civil society. In the words of Alexander (2003):

Everywhere in Africa, there is a struggle taking place between those of us who realise that, for the next few generations at least, there is no hope of English becoming the universal second language of the continent, on the one hand, and those, on the other hand, who cynically, or even sincerely, promote the illusion that this is possible. (p. 7)

At first glance, South Africa's post-apartheid language policy seems to depart quite significantly from the neo-colonial language order described above. It seems intent on ensuring that language (unlike so many postcolonial African states) does not function as a barrier to the social and economic mobility of individuals, the socio-economic development of the country as a whole, and the entrenchment of a culture of empowerment, human rights and participatory democracy. What is more, despite its emphasis on linguistic justice and language empowerment, the post-apartheid language policy also aims to defuse the potential of language to ignite ethnolinguistic passions, not by privileging an apparently 'neutral' national language over 'sectional' languages, but by granting parity of esteem to *each* national language. In the words of Kamwendo (2006):

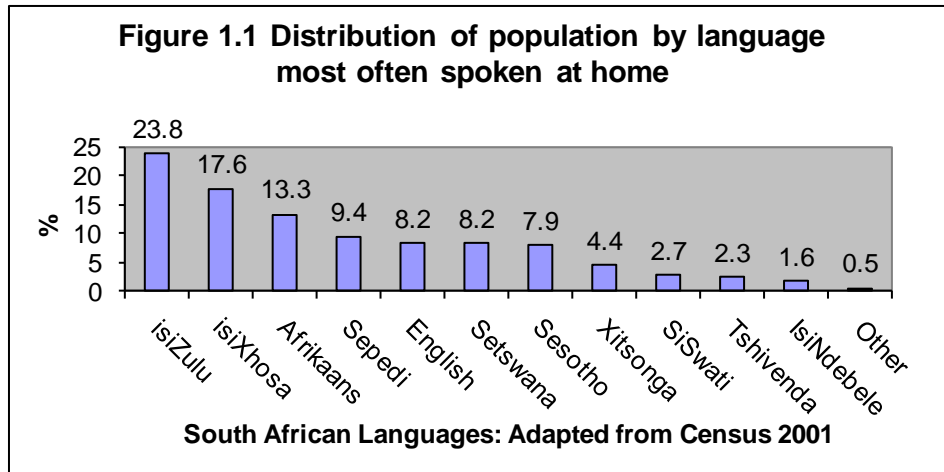
The policy aims at healing the wounds that were created by apartheid. This policy aspires to steer South Africa towards the promotion of inter-racial unity, the promotion of respect for and tolerance towards linguistic and cultural diversity, and the entrenchment of democracy. (p. 54)

I say 'at first glance', because many critics question the political will of the South African government and the dominant political and economic elite to deliver on the promise of the country's post-apartheid language policy initiatives (e.g., Balfour, 1999, 2003, 2007; Kamwangamalu, 2004a; Kamwendo, 2006; Kashoki, 2003; Louw, 2004; Singh, 2009; Wright, 2004). Instead, according to these (and other) scholars of language in South Africa, the post-apartheid era has only brought about the further marginalisation of indigenous African languages, the gradual erosion (in some domains) of the status of

Afrikaans, and the increasing dominance of English as a de facto national language and necessary form of ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991) for educational, social, economic and political advancement. Two striking observations underline this trend. The first is by Phaswana (2003): ‘President Nelson Mandela’s last and final address to Parliament on February 5, 1999 included not a single expression from an indigenous African language; his address was entirely in English’ (p. 128). The second is by Kamwangamalu (2003), who cites a research participant: ‘In this country, if you have no money and cannot speak English you are not a human being’ (p. 68).

On the surface, debates about language in South Africa seem increasingly to be about ‘the issue of English dominance and the survival of other languages’ (Balfour, 1999, p. 103). Just below the surface, however, a more fundamental question is implied whenever debates about the relative status of the different official languages in post-apartheid South Africa erupt, namely, the question of ‘what it means to be a South African in a new democracy as opposed to belonging to an ethnic group inside South Africa’ (De Klerk, 2002, p. 43). In fact, the post-apartheid South African language policy is no less an attempt to articulate and demarcate national identity in linguistic terms, than it is a purely pragmatic attempt to manage linguistic diversity. It is this underlying, almost foundational question about what it means to be *South African* in relation to language and language diversity, which primarily concerns me in this thesis. But before I continue to outline the political contours of language debates in contemporary South Africa, a few brief descriptive statements about the language demography and the most important language policy developments in the country are in order (see also Mesthrie, 2002a).

According to the last South African census, conducted in 2001, South Africa had a population of roughly 45 million, of which 23.8% spoke Zulu as ‘home language’, making it the largest language in the country, in terms of its number of first language speakers, at the time (see Figure 1.1) (South Africa, 2004). Afrikaans was the third (13.3%) and English only the *fifth* largest language (8.2%) in terms of first language speakers; and, quite significantly, according to a national language survey conducted by the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) in 2000, only 40% of South Africans claimed proficiency in English at the time (Pan South African Language Board, 2000).



Thus, whilst English and Afrikaans have been the *dominant* languages over the last century or so, in the sense that they had power and prestige and were essential for social, political and economic mobility, neither were (and by no means are) the *predominant* languages – numerically speaking – in South Africa (Alexander, 2001). The indigenous languages have been ‘minoritised’, as it were. The South African census further reveals a linguistic spread that reflects a history of racial segregation and ethnic engineering: 98.4% of white South Africans speak either Afrikaans or English as home languages; only 1.2% of black South Africans spoke one of these languages as home languages at the time. Likewise, Coloured and Indian South Africans predominantly spoke either English or Afrikaans as first languages (South Africa, 2004). Whilst the 2001 census did not survey the extent of multilingualism or patterns of language shift (Christopher, 2009), it is clear that black speakers in South Africa are more likely to be multilingual than other population categories (especially those who speak English as a first language), and that language shift increasingly favours English rather than the other languages (Pan South African Language Board, 2000).

South Africa functioned as a bilingual state, with Afrikaans and English as the official languages, throughout the greater part of the twentieth century (1910-1993).⁶ The nine indigenous African languages listed in the census (Figure 1.1) did not enjoy official status in the Union or later (after 1961) in the Republic, but were granted this status in the so-called ‘independent’ ethnic homelands of the apartheid state (Webb, 2002). Furthermore, they were used as media of instruction (alongside English and, to a lesser extent,

Afrikaans) in black schools in South Africa, but they were nevertheless grossly underdeveloped. In fact, indigenous languages were deployed in the service of an apartheid education philosophy premised on the idea of black intellectual inferiority and the requirements of predominantly manual labour (Alexander, 1989; De Klerk, 2002). The post-apartheid South African Constitution, finalised in 1996, radically altered this colonial and apartheid language order (at least symbolically) by granting official language status to no less than 11 South African languages. These included the former official languages, English and Afrikaans, as well as the nine indigenous African languages listed in the census. According to paragraph 6 of the Founding Provisions of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996):

- 1 The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu.
- 2 Recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.
- 3(a) The national government and provisional governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages.
- 3(b) Municipalities must take into account the language usage and preference of their residents.
- 4 The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor their use of official languages. Without detracting from provisions of subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equally.
- 5 A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must—
 - (a) promote and create conditions for the development and use of—

- (i) all official languages;
 - (ii) the Khoi, Nama, and San languages;
 - (iii) sign language;
- (b) promote and ensure respect for—
- (i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu, and Urdu;
 - (ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa. (pp. 4-5)

Language rights were also enshrined in the South African Bill of Rights, as articulated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution. Section 29(2) states: ‘Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable.’ Sections 30 states: ‘Everyone has the right to use the language and participate in the cultural right of their choice.’ And finally, Section 31(1) states:

Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and (b) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society.

These educational language rights stipulated in Section 29 of the Bill of Rights were later developed in more detail in the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997), the Language in Higher Education Policy (Department of Education, 2002) and the Ministerial Report on the Use of Indigenous Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education Institutions (Department of Education, 2004). The Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) was established by a government act in 1995 and tasked with overseeing language policy, planning and development in the country (Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, 1995). In turn, they convened a Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG), who developed a draft Language Plan in 1996 (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, 1996). In 2000, the final draft for a South

Africa Languages Bill was submitted to cabinet (Department of Arts and Culture, 2000). Thereafter the revised National Language Plan Framework was completed in 2002 (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002), with its accompanying implementation framework following in 2003 (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003). The Languages Bill was supposed to have been enacted as far back as 2002, but for some reason government never took this final step towards adopting language laws for the country. Consequently, PANSALB has very little legal leverage when dealing with language rights violation. This leads Alexander (2004) to the following conclusion: 'Because of this timidity, major social, economic, political and cultural advances that would lift the South African political community above current levels of stagnation and mediocrity are being blocked' (p. 118).

Despite this, South Africa's post-apartheid language policy provisions have been referred to as progressive, ambitious, revolutionary and democratic, amongst other things (citations in Kamwendo, 2006). According to Faingold (2004, p. 12), South Africa is 'one of the rare nations in the world that recognise as fundamental the linguistic rights of individuals and groups.' Commenting on the language settlement reached between the negotiating parties in the early 1990s, Phaswana (2003) comes to the following conclusion: 'The ANC's position on the language question was that of multilingualism, favoring the elevation of South Africa's nine major African languages to the position of English and Afrikaans' (p. 121). But Alexander (here in a chapter co-written with Heugh, 2001) offers a somewhat different perspective:

The official policy of the ANC was that all languages would be regarded as equal, but that none should be accorded official status. The unofficial conviction, however, was that English, for pragmatic reasons, would function as the official language of government. This view of English had its origins in the early history of the ANC when English had been regarded as a language of liberation and a language through which opposition to the Afrikaans-speaking government would be mediated. (p. 28)

Alexander and Heugh's (2001) more critical take on the ANC's commitment to multilingualism and language development certainly goes some way towards explaining the seemingly inexorable shift in the direction of English dominance over the areas and functions it formerly shared with Afrikaans, as well as the corresponding lack of tangible development and empowerment of indigenous languages and their speakers. As the dominant language in education, political communication, parliamentary debate, television and business, English is indeed fast becoming the *de facto* national language in post-apartheid South Africa. Singh (2009), in a recent sociolinguistic diagnosis of the South African situation, makes the following claim: 'Despite the fact that post-apartheid South Africa is now a constitutionally declared multi-lingual country, the concept is more realistically a cliché than a reality' (p. 135). And Balfour (1999), in turn, comments as follows:

It is becoming clear that under present constitutional arrangements, the growing strength of English must necessarily mean the continued decline of other languages. Realistically, English as a national and world language phenomenon cannot be restricted. If it is going to be a *lingua franca* rather than a killer language, the local languages need to be pragmatically secured in order to be allowed to grow in relation to English, and not be excluded from the ambit of South Africa's political and educational life. (pp. 111-112)

Of course, English is a complex issue in the South African context. To begin with, it is not simply a foreign language, but one of 11 national and official languages (Alexander, 1999; Balfour, 1999; Kamwangamalu, 2002; Ridge, 2000). It has been spoken as a first language by a substantial number of white South Africans since the early nineteenth century, has become firmly established as the first language of the South African Indian population (Mesthrie, 2002b), a substantial part of the coloured population (McCormick, 2002), and an increasing number of black South Africans as well (De Klerk, 2000a; Kamwangamalu, 2003). In fact, so-called Black South African English is a topic of considerable academic interest (De Klerk, 1999; Makalela, 2004). But despite its entrenchment as a local South African language, English is also considered by some to facilitate (or is at least associated with) an essentially neoliberal approach to social and

economic development, and thus with the reproduction of colonial and apartheid patterns of inequality in the post-apartheid context. In this regard, Alexander (2004) mentions ‘the increasingly close link between the promotion of the English language – to the exclusion of local languages – and advocacy of a neo-liberal economic strategy’ (p. 120). Tellingly, neither of South Africa’s two major post-apartheid macro-economic development plans – the Reconstruction and Development Plan (Ministry of the Office of the President, 1994) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (Ministry of Finance, 1996) – placed

any importance on the question of language deployment as a resource for national economic development, since it is assumed that everything will happen by means of English. [...] this anglocentric attitude and the *de facto* language policies it spawns are a recipe for the perpetuation of the deep social inequality that continues to characterise the society nine years after ‘liberation’. (Alexander, 2004, p. 120).

For Alexander (2004), as was mentioned before, social transformation in South Africa is inconceivable without linguistic democratisation: ‘From the point of view of a radical popular democratic project, a multilingual public service and an economy based on all the languages of the country is the only possible frame of reference’ (p. 121). Alexander’s analysis of the language situation in South Africa is therefore resolutely left-wing; it comes with a political economic critique of neo-liberal capitalism *as well as of ethno-national identity politics*. Although he fully acknowledges the rootedness and importance of English in South Africa, Alexander nevertheless insists on not *depoliticising* this language in discussions of the language situation. English (as the language of global capitalism and the increasingly multiracial local political and economic elite) is a crucial mechanism for the reproduction of race and class privilege in South Africa, and for linking local with global elites in the transnational spaces of neo-liberal capital accumulation. For various reasons, English plays this role *almost imperceptibly* – despite its rather obvious association with global capital and US political interests (Holborow, 2007; Narkunas, 2005). One of these reasons is that its contribution to strategies of exclusion and racialisation in South Africa is obscured by a pervasive (and effective) discourse, which portrays English as

inclusive, trans-ethnic and non-racial. In this discourse, English is often contrasted with Afrikaans (as politically oppressive) and African languages (as ethnically marked), so that English seems an almost obvious choice as language of post-apartheid South African nation-building. (I will further explore elements of this discourse in an analysis of a corpus of textual data in Chapter 6.) According to Balfour (1999, p. 105):

English eludes critical scrutiny because it is so indelibly inscribed within new constellations of power in South Africa, whereas as the perceived language of oppression, Afrikaans has become a targeted language and suffers the revenge of those on whom it was imposed during the years of apartheid (1948-1994).

Based on a political economic rather than ‘culturalist’ analysis of the language situation in South Africa (and on an understanding of the link between the neglect of language development and the reproduction of class and race inequalities in this country), Alexander and Heugh (2001) conclude that government’s failure to make haste in the domain of language empowerment and democratisation should be attributed to a ‘*middle-class strategy of convenience and evasion*’ (p. 23, emphasis added). But whilst the majority of South African scholars of language in society concur with the ideal of multilingualism (and that indigenous languages should be developed), many also depart from the critical left-wing approach outlined above, and instead accentuate the *pragmatic* value of English in contemporary South Africa. Arguments like these frequently trade on notions of *realism*: the dominant position of English cannot be denied and it should therefore be exploited to the benefit of all, rather than investing too much ‘idealistic’ energy into language activism on behalf of less powerful and globally less immediately useful languages. Ridge (2001), for example, lambastes what he considers ‘hollow rhetoric’ in the post-apartheid constitutional and policy documents about multilingualism and language parity. According to him, English is an inescapable and (above all) *valuable* resource that all South African citizens should have increased access to. In another context (Ridge, 2004) he takes this argument further:

The best defence against elite closure in South Africa’s circumstances goes along with the most appropriate response to the justifiable prominence of English:

thorough, nuanced attention must be given to how to make access to English – and to an appropriate range of literacies in English – available to as wide a group as possible. This in no way implies underselling the other South African languages. They must be acknowledged, valued and promoted. But it does make clear that they cannot be marketed under false pretences, as if we were not in a multilingual society with English in a prominent position. (p. 207)

A similar orientation is to be found in an academic review of a book by Webb (2002), in which he develops a critique of English hegemony and argues forcefully on behalf of the development of indigenous languages as national and specifically *economic* resources:

In my opinion, Webb has missed a valuable opportunity to see the value of English for all the people of South Africa. His perception that English cannot ‘promote vertical integration, and cannot develop into a symbol of political unity’ (Webb, p. 150) seems to blinker him against *realistic alternatives*, including the possibility of bilingual education in English plus a Bantu language, and an all-out effort to enhance ownership of and competence in English for all citizens. (De Klerk, 2004, p. 84, emphasis added)

The value of multilingualism is hereby acknowledged, but it comes with an accompanying insistence on a *realistic* depoliticisation of English. Language rights are in effect reconceptualised as the right to have access *to English* as the language of power, wealth and international connectivity. In turn, the indigenous languages are repositioned and valued in contexts in which their symbolical function as carriers of culture, heritage and identity are accentuated.

In similar vein, Kriel (2003b) argues that a modernising state requires a unifying national language, and that English language dominance should be seen as a realistic and pragmatic, rather than ideological, feature of the new South African reality: ‘a modern bureaucratically organised nation-state with a market-industrial economy necessitates a certain degree of linguistic homogeneity – at least in the public realm, in the domain of work’ (p. 172). In other words, precisely in those areas where Alexander (2004) argues

that exclusive reliance on English has its most damaging effects. Kriel (2003b, 2006) continues to analyse Afrikaans language activism, in particular, as a form of ethnic or cultural nationalism, aimed at securing Afrikaner political and economic interests; and as a 'defensive reaction to globalisation' (2003b, p. 174). It is easy to discern forms of cultural nationalism in the context of the politics of Afrikaans (Giliomee, 2004; Louw, 2004a, 2004b; Nash, 2000), and Kriel develops a fairly convincing critique of aspects thereof. But her unstated assumptions (namely that English is apolitical, that nation-state homogeneity is non-ideological and inevitable, and that globalisation presents countries with an economic *fait accompli*) unfortunately foreclose any real confrontation with the politics of language in South Africa and beyond, and with the complex (and often ideologically constitutive) relationships between language, nationalism and globalisation. By presenting the homogenisation of national identity as an inevitable component of progress and modernisation, any activism on behalf of smaller languages (or against the 'levelling' features of nation-building and globalisation more generally) will inevitably seem ideologically illegitimate, politically regressive, and economically irrational. Consequently, her account of the politicisation of Afrikaans contributes less to the illumination of the political nature of language in contemporary South Africa. Instead it serves to further obscure the political efficacy and ideological productivity of English, and (once again) to render indigenous African languages all but invisible in discussions of language, politics and subjectivity in South Africa.

In conclusion, the political role of language in South Africa cannot be exhausted by discussing the nature and legitimacy of claims made on behalf or against languages; it is not reducible to being *for* or *against* English, Afrikaans, or an indigenous African languages. Nor is the political relevance of language exhausted by listing real or imagined slights to any particular language: for example, Giliomee's (2004) and Louw's (2004a, 2004b) claims about the 'undermining' of Afrikaans through new forces of anglicisation; or Kamwendo's (2006) diagnosis of the neglect of indigenous language rights in post-apartheid South Africa. Of course, these are important concerns and struggles, but they also suggest a deeper (almost ontological) level of ideological articulation between language, politics and the meaning of South African nationality. Left begging for analytic attention (beyond the discussion of specific instances of language politics and struggles

over language rights) is the more foundational issue of how South Africa is re-imagined and reconstituted *as a political society*, both symbolically and materially, in relation to language; and how language is entangled with the various social, economic and political contradictions of the developing state. In this regard, I concur with Balfour's (1999) conceptualisation of language in South Africa – and I will elaborate on this at length in the following two chapters – as reflecting *competing ideas of the nature of the South African nation*:

The threat of African languages may not reside with English [...] It is possible that English is merely a red herring which deflects attention from another debate which is more significant but also more elusive. This debate may for the moment be described as one of competing ideas of nationalism. Perhaps it is precisely because English has been made *the medium for an aspirant nation*, that its failure to deliver voice to the voiceless represents a failure not of language, but rather of the entire edifice of the state, which continues to mouth adherence to what I wish to term the orthodoxy of language hegemony. (p. 107, emphasis added)

Language, politics, and the social sciences in South Africa

In this section, the third relevant context mentioned at the start of this chapter is introduced: the social sciences in South Africa. Since a detailed account of language in *social psychology* is presented in Chapter 5, I focus here on the social sciences in South Africa more broadly. The aim of this brief overview is to sketch the manner in which language is articulated (or is *not* articulated) in relation to politics and society in post-apartheid South Africa. Given the content of the discussion thus far in this chapter, it is not surprising that language (in the South African social science literature) is most frequently mentioned in the context of writing on culture, ethnicity and identity. It is similarly not at all surprising that language is generally absent from serious (and progressive) political and economic analyses of post-apartheid South African society (e.g., Bond, 2000; Marais, 1998; Terreblanche, 2002). In fact, in the South African social sciences, politics is generally *negatively* associated with language: namely, in references to the 'politicisation' of language in identity politics and (especially) in continued practices of

racial exclusion. In other words, language *becomes* political when it is employed for mainly conservative and divisive purposes. But when the social scientific interrogation of language in society is thusly restricted to how language becomes political, *the political nature of language* itself is left unaccounted for.

In a recent publication, Alexander (2003) challenges the social sciences to take language far more seriously:

I believe that the evolution of the social sciences has reached a stage where it would be culpable on the part of the specialists in the field of language policy and planning as well as of the political and cultural leadership of this country to refuse to launch at the very least a wide-ranging debate about the implications of a policy of promoting multilingualism as opposed to one of English mainly or even English only. That is the challenge. It is a challenge of monumental significance, since the decision that is taken will involve the kind of development and social interaction in which the next generation and their progeny will have to find their happiness and their fulfilment. A poignant parallel is staring us in the face today in regard to the decisions we are making about the prevention of and the fight against the spread of the AIDS pandemic. (p. 150)

As my comments above would have made clear, this challenge has not been met by South African social scientists. Whereas the broad relevance of the AIDS pandemic to various dimensions of South African society (ranging from masculinity to economic development) has been argued robustly and convincingly by scholars and activists, the same cannot be said about language. In fact, the life-and-death discourse surrounding AIDS in South Africa is frequently employed as a rhetorical means with which to critique the ‘merely’ cultural obsession with language; *there are more important things to worry about than language*, is a recurring theme in public responses to (especially Afrikaans) language politics (Painter, 2007). Identity politics may certainly seem like a middle-class luxury in a society plagued by poverty and other developmental needs, but as I have argued above, language is not only relevant to the symbolic economy of cultural investments and

identity rewards. Language, like AIDS, is also relevant to seemingly ‘unrelated’ topics like poverty, labour, economic empowerment and social development.

Nevertheless, language remains marginal in most areas of the social sciences in South Africa other than culture, ethnicity and identity. Bentley and Habib (2008), for example, discuss the multilingual post-apartheid language policy alongside recent legislation about ‘cultural’ rights, including customary marriages, traditional leadership and communal land ownership. They refer to these as ‘special rights for cultural communities’ (p. 19). In other words, the language policy (and language rights) is effectively treated as part of a constitutional compromise in South Africa – between liberal democratic and ‘traditional’ political values respectively – what Comaroff and Comaroff (2004) refer to as a struggle between the liberal constitution and ‘things African’. Predictably, language *is* addressed in a publication about shifting patterns of ethnicity and identity in Africa (Bekker, Dodds & Khosa, 2001), but not mentioned at all in two recent books about socioeconomic development and poverty (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2006; Padayachee, 2006). Thus, language is effectively relegated to the realm of the symbolic; it belongs to the cultural and communal remnants of pre-national and sub-national identifications and practices, which challenge liberal democratic notions of universal citizenship in a postcolonial state.

This representational pattern becomes vividly clear when one surveys a number of key social science texts published in recent years; texts which aim to provide comprehensive overviews of the state of South African society: the Human Science Research Council’s (HSRC) series of (mostly annual) country overviews, *State of the Nation* (Daniel, Habib & Southall, 2003; Daniel, Southall & Lutchman, 2005; Buhlungu, Daniel, Southall & Lutchman, 2006; Buhlungu, Daniel, Southall & Lutchman, 2007). This series has become something of a publication event in the South African social sciences over the last number of years,⁷ and I will approach it here as a case study of sorts. These volumes reflect on the development of post-apartheid South Africa on various dimensions, with each addressing a range of topics under four broad headings: Politics, Society, Economy and South Africa in Africa/the World. The most recent edition, *State of the Nation 2007*, covered topics like: the state of the ANC; local government and municipal elections; unemployment; HIV/AIDS; Black Economic Empowerment; prisons; rugby; women;

and schools. The three prior editions have similarly covered a wide range of relevant South African phenomena and social challenges.⁸ As a series of snapshots of the social, political and economic situation in South Africa, *State of the Nation* (produced by leading South African scholars) is as wide-ranging in scope as it is thorough in its coverage. It is therefore certainly noteworthy that *language* is consistently absent from its agenda. A full chapter has, up to now, not been devoted to language and issues related to it. Even more surprising, is that language is also not a major topic of consideration in chapters on seemingly related topics, such as race, ethnicity and identity. Moreover, when language *does* get mentioned in these contexts, it is generally in passing, without any serious consideration given to the history of language and language politics in South Africa, or to the major policy developments and emerging patterns of contestation around language in this country.

One area in which language is mentioned in these volumes is education. Given the obvious practical importance of language as a medium of instruction and learning, and also the ideological role it has historically played in South African educational philosophies and practices (De Klerk, 2002; see also Chapters 3 and 6 for discussions), the pragmatic and political visibility of language in this context is to be expected. In this regard, Chisholm (2005) mentions the ‘persistent and unresolved language issues that continue to hamper learning’ (p. 222). One of these is the continued absence of mother tongue instruction for the majority of South African learners. Another is the way in which language (and notably Afrikaans) is sometimes used as a pretext to segregate learners according to race, and even to refuse black learners access to ‘Afrikaans’ schools altogether. Jansen (2003), in his discussion of the state of higher education in the country, briefly mentions the government’s resistance to allow exclusively Afrikaans-medium universities, citing the perceived effect that Afrikaans-only policies would have on the access of black students and staff members to such universities as the reason. However, besides this instance of the ‘conservative politicisation’ of language in higher education, language (including the indigenous languages) is all but absent from Jansen’s discussion of challenges facing higher education in South Africa.

In discussions of ethnicity, identity, and the multicultural nature of the South African polity, language is mentioned, but rarely singled out for *particular* attention. For example, Maré (2003) mentions language, but then as one amongst many sites of struggle for claims of cultural recognition based on ‘ethnic’ identities. Interestingly enough, language was generally not singled out as a marker of ethnic identity in relation to the larger ethnic groups in the country, but in discussions of two minority groups instead: the South African Muslim community (Vahed & Jeppie, 2005) and the immigrant Chinese community (Wilhelm, 2006) respectively. In fact, Erasmus (2005), in a chapter which is presented as an overview of race, ethnicity and identity in post-apartheid South Africa, neglects to mention language almost entirely – except for a passing comment about the role language plays in the ‘othering’ of non-South African migrant labourers. The reason for this is probably that language is *associated with* categories of culture and ethnicity as a descriptive feature (not unlike dress, eating habits and physical features), and not taken to be one of their *constitutive dimensions*. Therefore, language becomes an issue of secondary (even derivative) importance, and does not demand specific attention beyond the theorisation and analysis of those categories of which it is merely a descriptive feature.

Language is also mentioned in contexts of political instability. Butler (2007) discusses language in relation to the potential for *ethnic conflict* in South Africa, but then only by employing ‘language group’ as an exchangeable term for ‘ethnic group’. In other words, language is once more subsumed under the seemingly more foundational category of ethnicity. In a related fashion, there are a few instances where language is used as shorthand for cultural and even racial categories: Vahed and Jeppie (2005), for example, use the term African ‘to describe individuals *whose mother tongue is a language indigenous to Africa*, and who are described in Census 2001 as “black African”’ (p. 281, emphasis added). All in all, in the above and other scattered instances in these texts, language is mentioned (but is left untheorised) in fairly predictable contexts: education, the arts, minority and ethnic identities and claims for cultural rights and recognition. Perusing these volumes, one would undoubtedly realise that South Africa is a multilingual country; that language rights are constitutionally enshrined in a Bill of Rights (Govender, 2006); and that language presents a number of pragmatic and political challenges to the transformation in contexts like education. However, one would also be led to believe that

language plays a relatively *minor* role in this country; that it is (especially in the contexts of politics, society and the economy), negligible. To be sure, language is nowhere discussed in the context of Black Economic Empowerment, economic growth and stagnation, the reconstruction of the labour market, poverty and inequality, or even racism.

But is the relative absence of language in these books (and the South African social sciences more generally) really that significant? Ridge (2001), in a reflection on the state of sociolinguistics and other academic approaches to language, politics and society in South Africa, criticises a ‘quite unrealistic aggrandisement of the role of language in isolation from other social forces’ (p. 231) in South Africa. Does my unstated expectation to find detailed analyses of language in the *State of the Nation* series (and in the social sciences in South Africa), not reveal exactly such an aggrandisement of the role of language in this country? Do these volumes not perhaps accurately represent the relevance of language in post-apartheid society? To some extent, these questions have been answered in the previous section; and in Chapter 3, the historical and current role of language in relation to politics, society and subjectivity in South Africa will be discussed in much greater detail. However, bear in mind that Ridge (2001) is not arguing against the *importance* of language in discussions of the South African political, economic and cultural reality. Instead, he is warning against the *isolation* of language as a topic of social, political, and at times *moral* concern in South African language studies and public debate. In this regard, Ridge argues for a non-isolationist view of language, as an attempt to stimulate academic discussion of language beyond the romanticisation and marginalisation of language as a carrier of culture, tradition and identity.

A good example of just such a non-isolationist approach to language also comes from the *State of the Nation* series, and in this regard represents a significant exception to the representational pattern I have described above: a discussion of language in the context of violence against women in South Africa (Vetten, 2007):

While South Africa has 11 official languages, the application forms for the protection order are available in only 2 of these languages – English and Afrikaans. In addition to the difficulties this may pose to women who are not

familiar with either language, the written completion and reading of the application forms challenge women with varying degrees of literacy. Further, the forms are not available in Braille, and sign language interpreters for deaf women are not readily available at courts. (p. 433)

What Vetten's (2007) comment alerts one to (and hers is in fact the longest sustained discussion of the political relevance of language *beyond* issues of ethnicity and identity in the first four volumes of *State of the Nation*), is that language intersects with, sustains and frequently re-enacts various kinds of marginality, inequality and exclusion, and that these intersections are not reducible to explicitly articulated instances of 'identity politics'. Furthermore, it is clear from her comment that language is not simply a descriptive feature of people and society (and South African society specifically). It does not only index existing categories and identities, but is implicated in the constitution, demarcation and reproduction of the symbolic as well as material spaces, boundaries, and trajectories that define social and political life in a given society. I would insist that the full implication of Vetten's statement is that language plays a *constitutive* role in society, and therefore requires that it be addressed as such, and *on its own terms*, in the social sciences.

What we talk about when we talk about language⁹

Throughout this chapter I have argued that the political relevance (and more strongly stated: the political *nature*) of language extends beyond its role as a symbolic marker (or index) of identity. Language is also relevant in the context of political economy, and more specifically, in the manufacturing and reproduction of material forms of inequality (not just of 'symbolic misrecognition') – in the contemporary world, and in South Africa in particular. Moreover, I have argued that the political nature of language should also be explored at a deeper, more 'ontological' level as opposed to the characteristic focus on its outward articulation in various 'empirical' instances of struggles over language in particular social contexts. Language does not just demand our attention as one political topic amongst others, but also as a mechanism whereby socio-political orders and their accompanying subjectivities are brought into being and are reproduced. In other words, language is not simply a descriptive feature of individuals, groups and societies, meaning

that its *political nature* is most significantly revealed when explored in terms of how it is invoked and implicated in the *constitution* of political realities and subjectivities. However, this is precisely the kind of focus on language and politics that is largely absent from the social sciences in South Africa. Social psychology is no exception: the social psychological study of language (with only a few exceptions) is nearly non-existent in South Africa (Louw-Potgieter, 1991; Painter, 2002, Painter, 2006a; see discussion in Chapter 5).

As I have noted in the preceding chapter, each theoretical and empirical exploration that forms a part of this thesis could be read as a freestanding analytical intervention, with each in turn taking up the theme of language, politics and subjectivity in a different discursive context. Therefore, the thesis does not proceed according to a uniformly developed theoretical framework and a standardised methodology. The specific theoretical concepts, reading strategies and methods utilised along the way, will be outlined in each respective chapter. However, the different chapters are also not conceptually unrelated. In fact, on the whole the thesis advances an argument about: (i) the *relevance* of language for social psychology (particularly in contemporary South Africa); (ii) the *nature* of language as a political and socio-psychological category, and (iii) the most important *conceptual coordinates* required for the development of a critical social psychology of language. For this reason, the thesis as a whole does not steer clear of any coherence with regards to theory and method. On the contrary, my overall approach is located within the transdisciplinary field of *language ideological studies* (variously referred to in the research literature as ‘language ideologies’, ‘linguistic ideologies’ or ‘ideologies of language’) (e.g., Kroskity, 2000a, 2000b; 2004; Philips, 1998; Silverstein, 1998; Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994).

The language ideologies framework

The study of language ideologies has developed into a productive approach to language, politics and subjectivity in disciplines such as sociolinguistics, the sociology of language and linguistic anthropology over the last two decades or so (Kroskity, 2004). Although it encompasses a wide and frequently incompatible range of conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches, there are nevertheless a number of ‘family resemblances’ that characterise language ideological studies as a more or less coherent research tradition.

Most crucially, language ideological studies by and large explore the links that exist between socially mediated *conceptions* of language (and phenomena related to language) and the socio-political contexts within which such conceptions emerge and are expressed. In other words, the study of language ideologies represents an attempt to understand how conceptions and practices of language (which can include anything from the demarcation of a language from a dialect, to the negative evaluation of class or ethnic accents) reflect and refract the features, values and contradictions of the broader socio-political contexts within which they are located. In turn, the study of language ideologies also represents an attempt to grasp how various dimensions of the broader social-political context are impacted upon (or shaped in relation to), conceptions and practices of language.

Unsurprisingly, the language ideologies framework covers an extensive empirical terrain, ranging in focus from the historical to the situational; from the macro-social to the micro-social; from the political economic to the cultural political; from the national to the global, and from analyses of policy documents to the analyses of the media. Some fairly arbitrary examples of analyses of language ideologies include: the role of language ideologies in Belgium asylum policies (Maryns, 2005); language ideological components of debates about citizenship and German national identity (Hansen-Thomas, 2007); language ideologies in the editorials of Kenyan newspapers (Matu & Lubbe, 2007); the role of the 'Speak Mandarin' campaign in the creation of Singaporean national identity (Teo, 2005), and the language ideological consequences of language standardisation (Milroy, 2001), language purism (Spitzmüller, 2007), and state-centred decisions to impose particular orthographies and alphabets (Sebba, 2006). In all of these examples the analytic focus is either on how interventions at the level of the macro-social or the political impact upon the language characteristics of a particular society, or on how interventions in the domain of language impact on the characteristics (e.g., identities) and contradictions (e.g., inequality) of the socio-political context in question.

To summarise thus far, language ideologies can be defined as representations which, explicitly or implicitly, 'construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world' (Woolard, 1998, p. 3). Stated differently, a language ideology functions as a

‘mediating link between social structures and forms of talk’ (Woolard, 1994, p. 55). Finally, Errington (2001a), in even more simple terms, defines language ideologies as ‘the situated, partial, and *interested* character of conceptions and uses of language’ (p. 110, emphasis added). Whereas the majority of language ideologies researchers would probably go along with what Errington refers to above as the ‘interested character’ of language ideologies, not all researchers place equal weight on the specifically *political* nature of language ideologies. In this regard, the role of the political in conceptualisations of language ideologies depends very much on how ‘ideology’ is understood, and more specifically on whether ideology is understood ‘descriptively’ or ‘critically’ (Thompson, 1984). In a purely descriptive sense, a language ideology refers simply to ‘shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world’ (Rumsey, 1990, p. 346). In this regard, *ideology* is considered to be any kind of shared body of ideas, or cultural assumptions, which underlie social practices, inform social identities, and orient social actions.

However, by far the majority of language ideological studies employ a more critical conception of ideology. In other words, ideology does not merely refer to *any* shared body of ideas or assumptions. Instead, ideology is specifically conceptualised as a shared set of ideas (and their associated practices, embodiments and institutional arrangements) which stand in a *legitimatising relationship* with instances of power, social inequality and oppression (Thompson, 1984). In this critical sense of the term, language ideologies are not just understood to be descriptive of social processes in the domain of language (and of linguistic processes in the domain of the social), but are approached as ‘symbolic battlegrounds’ (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2002, p. 122) on which various social antagonisms are revealed and contested:

Language ideologies are positioned in, and subject to, their social, political and historical contexts. Nor are language ideologies fixed, stable, or immutable. They are multiple, and influenced by changes at local, national, state and global levels. Moreover [...] language ideologies are often contested, and become symbolic battlegrounds on which broader debates over race, state and nation are played out.

However, to say that language ideologies are contested and changeable over time is not to assert that they are necessarily always negotiable. (p. 122)

The study of language ideologies, therefore, very frequently takes a conception of *the irreducibly political nature of language* as its point of departure (Blommaert, 1999). In other words, it explores language ideologies as sites where the often profound influence of politics on language is revealed, and thus as sites where the productive and reproductive role of language in relation to the political is revealed. As Joseph (2006a) argues so cogently, politics permeates language at various levels of its being and functioning, ranging from the politics of different ways of speaking a language, to the very question of what ‘the language’ is. It is precisely this recognition of language as politically produced *and* politically productive (or as both constructed and constructive), which makes the language ideologies approach so relevant to my overarching objectives in this thesis.

Language regimes, biopolitics and governmentality

The language ideologies framework is particularly apposite for my purposes in this thesis, because it allows for the exploration of the relationships between language, politics and subjectivity at various levels of articulation. In this regard, I will utilise it to explore the historical construction and political productivity of language in South African (Chapter 3); in the emergence of nationalism and the nation-state as the dominant political frameworks of modernity (Chapter 4); in the metatheoretical assumptions and methodological practices of the the social sciences (and social psychology in particular) (Chapter 5), as well as in the ordinary conversations about language by a group of learners in a South African school (Chapter 6). In each of these instances the notion of ‘language ideology’ captures, firstly, that language does not exist independently, but is in fact constructed *in relation to* the unfolding of historical, political, scientific and conversational processes; and secondly, that language plays a *politically productive* role in the constitution and reproduction of political and epistemological orders and their associated subjectivities – especially race, ethnicity and class.

However, the concept of language ideologies also introduces an analytic limitation. Even though contemporary theories of ideology (and approaches to ideology critique) insist

that ideology is not restricted to ideas, representations or discourses (and the analysis thereof), but is also materialised in bodies, practices, and spatial and institutional arrangements (e.g., Eagleton, 1991), the concept of ‘ideology’ as such offers little analytical purchase on how language is historically and distinctively materialised and enacted in politically productive ways. Even a critical approach to language ideologies, such as the approach produced by Kroskity (2004), finally restricts language ideologies to ‘beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social world’ (p. 498). Without thereby departing from the language ideologies framework, I introduce a number of further concepts, which will be utilised alongside language ideology in this thesis to bring the materiality and politically productive relationship between language, politics and subjectivity more clearly into focus.

In this regard, one can follow Foucault’s (2006) lead by shifting the analytic focus from one focused solely on *representations* of language to the practical deployment of language in historically specific material arrangements, operations and apparatuses of power: ‘instead of starting from the analysis of this kind of representational core, which inevitably refers to a history of mentalities, of thought, we could start from an apparatus (dispositive) of power’ (p. 13). Although I do not follow a rigorous Foucaultian analytic in this thesis, I nevertheless draw on a number of concepts he developed in his later work on power and subjectivity, and insert them into the broader framework of language ideologies. Of course, inserting Foucaultian concepts into an analysis of *ideology* runs counter to his own rejection of the term (Gordon, 2002). However, Foucault’s rejection of ideology was a rejection of a very specific Marxist analysis of ideology, which conceptualised ideology as false sets of ideas or beliefs which obscured reality. By contrast, Foucault was concerned with how knowledge becomes politically productive of normativity and subjectivity, not on the grounds of its being *false*, but exactly because it produces such powerful and productive *truths* in the context of increasingly sophisticated forms of subjectification and surveillance. In recent years, however, the analysis of ideology has moved away from a simplistic binary of truth versus falsity, and Foucaultian notions of discourse, power and subjectivity have been incorporated in studies of ideologies and ideological practice (Purvis & Hunt, 1993).

The first concept I employ alongside that of language ideology is, however, not Foucaultian. It is the concept of *language regimes* (or regimes of language), which originated within the language ideologies framework itself (Kroskity, 2000a, 2000b). Language ideologies and language regimes are sometimes used interchangeably, whilst at other times language regimes are used as a complementary term to refer to the specific *institutional materialisation* – especially in contexts of governance and the exercise of power – of language ideologies. These instances of the regimented and regimenting materialisation of language ideologies are very often (but not exclusively) conceptualised at the level of the state: they become apparent in educational policies and practices, choices about orthographies and alphabets, the standardisation, harmonisation and planning of languages, and so forth. All these process lead to the regimentation of a language order in relation to the structures, objectives and outcomes of the state, whilst the structuring and reproduction of a normative (and normalising) language has a regimenting effect on the production of subjects, populations, and so forth.

This dimension of the materialisation of language ideologies (with reference to regimes of language) can be theorised even more closely by invoking Foucault's notions of biopolitics (or the biopolitical) and governmentality (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1998, 2000b, 2000c, 2002). With his theorisation of the *biopolitical* Foucault expanded his account of disciplinary power to include not only the production, regulation and surveillance of *individual subjects*, but of whole populations (the body politic). In other words, whereas 'discipline' refers to the targeting and production (through institutions of subjectification such as the school) of the individual subject as a somatically singularised effect of power, 'biopolitics' refers to the complementary focus of modern government on the collectivity, or the 'multitude', conceived as a *subject population*. The biopolitical, in other words, refers to the processes whereby the population is produced *as* population (by making it an object of knowledge and intervention), processes which, in turn, are aimed at optimising its productivity and life chances. According to May (2006), biopolitics is 'a politics of living that concerns itself with how to promote and intervene in human life' (p. 90). Hook (2007), in turn, refers to it as 'the calculated life-management of human populations' (p. 227).

Whereas it is obvious that language has served (and serves) as an instrument of *disciplinary* power and normalisation (through the teaching of the standard language and literature in school, for example), language historically reveals itself as politically even more productive, not at the level of the production of individual subject bodies, but at the level of the production and reproduction of the body politic. In the chapters that follow, I will at various points discuss language as *biopolitically productive*; that is, as productive at the level of imagining, producing and regulating human populations (ethnic groups, races and nations, for example). In fact, one of the central arguments of Part II of this thesis, is that language has played a fundamental, but generally underappreciated role in the production and reproduction of political categories and subjectivities. The nature of the modern political order (and of modern political subjectivities), stems from the biopolitical production of a particular *kind* of population, namely the *national* population. In this, language played a *productive*, and not just a (ideologically) legitimatising role; and it is this dimension of the relationship between language and the political (including the creation of modern political subjectivities such as ethnicity, race and nation) that is captured particularly well with the notion of the biopolitical.

Foucault developed his account of the biopolitical with (or contextualised it within) his later work on governmentality (2000b, 2002; see also Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Hook, 2007). Governmentality is decidedly not a theory or philosophy of the state. For Foucault, *government* does not begin and end with the state, nor is it exhausted by focusing on explicit institutions, policies and legislation. According to Hook (2007, p. 225), ‘government is characterized by a diverse and immanent network of practices of government which criss-crosses state and society’ (p. 225). Government is multiple, because it encompasses the different but complementary orders that Foucault refers to as the macro- and the micro-political; the different strategies and practices of power; as well as the different agencies that articulate, shape and relay power in a given social and political territory. *Governmentality*, in turn, refers to both the actual, decentred practices of government and the rationalities of rule that underlie and inform it in its multiplicity of forms and strategies (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 2000b, 2002). Thus, it is closely linked to biopolitics. It refers to the historically and contextually shifting *rationalities* of government or political rule – the ways in which individuals become subjectivised, populations

defined and reproduced as populations, and the myriad agents, strategies and contexts involved in the application and relaying of power.

Modern governmentalities, according to Foucault, operationalised power in both disciplinary and biopolitical modalities of rule. In other words, the modern rationality of rule targets both individuals *and* populations, with the aim of normalising them and optimising their productive capacities. A number of scholars within the language ideologies framework have employed the notion of governmentality very productively (e.g., Beukes, 2007; Pennycook, 2002a, 2002b, 2006), mainly because it frees the study of the biopolitical productivity of language from an exclusive focus on the operations and structures of the state (e.g., formal language policies and language planning measures). This is how I, too, will employ the concept. Rather than looking at the specific language policies and language planning initiatives of particular states, such as South Africa, I am interested in how language becomes part of the governmentalities, or rationalities of rule, which emerge in the context of nation-states, colonies and post-colonies.

Conclusion

In the light of the arguments developed in this chapter, it should be clear that I concur with the gist of Heller's (1999) advocacy, in the citation below, for the undeniable relevance of the study of language in relation to current political issues:

This is especially urgent for places and times where language debates are closely connected to the exercise of power and to the construction of social difference. Perhaps we are currently going through a historical period in which language debates are particularly crucial, as they relate, on the one hand, to the centrality of language in the new globalized service and information economies, and on the other, to the weakening of centralized nation-states. As the organization of resources and their value changes, language is one (maybe particularly important) way in which struggles over power occur. Or perhaps language debates are always part of social change. (p. 260)

As I have argued in this chapter, and will continue to argue in the chapters to follow, language and language debates in South Africa are *and have always been* closely connected to the exercise of power and the manufacturing of social difference – especially of the construction of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ within the political rationalities of colonial and apartheid forms of rule – in this country.¹⁰ With regards to social change, which Heller (1999) singles out as a constant companion and perhaps even a causal component of language debates, South Africa has had to coordinate democratisation and its project of socio-economic transformation with the demand of an emerging global economic order; apartheid, not insignificantly, came to an end simultaneously with the demise of communism and the rise of neoliberal capitalism (Bond, 2000; Terreblanche, 2002). These shifts in political and economic reality, and in the changing relationship between local and global processes, have radically altered the organisation and distribution of resources, and the role that language plays (or perhaps *should* play) in the ability of individuals and groups (in South Africa as well as elsewhere) to procure access to such resources (e.g., Heller, 2003; Narkunas, 2005). Whereas public and academic debate about language in South Africa articulate these issues without fail, language is generally neglected in social scientific studies of the broader political and economic realities facing post-apartheid South Africa.

This thesis wishes to contribute to placing language firmly on the social science agenda in South Africa, and in particular on the agenda of *critical social psychology* in this country. Towards this end, this chapter has presented: (i) a motivation for the study of language; (ii) an argument for studying language as not simply another instance of political struggle but relevant to the constitution of the political as such, and (iii) a metatheoretical framework within which the above can be achieved, and in terms of which the different components of this thesis are conceptually bound together. In the two chapters to follow, both the political nature of language and the linguistic dimensions of the political will be discussed in much more detail – firstly in relation to South African history; and secondly in relation to the broader emergence of nationalism, nation-states and modern political subjectivities.

NOTES

¹A 'polity' is a politically organised society. The point made here is that the fullest (or paradigmatic) expression of this is still the nation-state, even though imagining a *world* or *global* polity has become a pressing theoretical concern in recent years (e.g., Balibar, 2004).

²This process, as I shall discuss at length in Chapter 4, is exactly what transforms a state into a *nation-state*.

³This distinction between material and symbolic resources is untenable in the light of how political struggles are formulated and enacted in real-life contexts, but it does allow me to make a crucial theoretical point about the tendency to vacate language from discussions about 'material' inequalities. The role of language in the shaping of political order, as I shall discuss in Chapter 4, exactly makes it clear that there can be no hard-and-fast distinction between the 'symbolic' and the 'material'.

⁴In Chapter 6, I demonstrate how such distinctions between global and local languages are also employed in ordinary, everyday debates about language in South Africa, with interesting ideological effects of racialisation and marginalisation.

⁵According to Blackledge (2006), all across Europe 'a liberalization of the general requirements of citizenship has been accompanied by a tightening of the language requirements' (p. 67). He continues: 'Where language testing for citizenship is introduced, a new gatekeeping mechanism comes into play, potentially preventing a group of willing residents from participating in the democratic process, and from accessing their rights' (p. 68).

⁶1910, of course, was the year South Africa became a Union; 1993, in turn, was the year the interim constitution for the post-apartheid state was finalised, in which the African languages were declared official for the first time.

⁷HSRC stands for Human Sciences Research Council. It is a state funded human and social sciences research and funding institution.

⁸Since the writing of this section another edition has appeared, but since it does not depart from the pattern discussed here, I will not include it here.

⁹The title of this section is adapted from a Raymond Carver with the title, 'What we talk about when we talk about love'.

¹⁰Authors often write 'race' and even 'ethnicity' with quotation marks, in order to accentuate their awareness of constructed and above all contested nature of these concepts. Since substantial parts of this thesis are about the construction (and variability) of these concepts, I will not constantly make use of quotation marks.

PART II

LANGUAGE, POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL

3

Invisible Republics: Historicising Language in South Africa

The development and management of linguistic knowledge was imbricated in the maintenance of European colonial power.

(Rachael Gilmour, 2006, p. 2)

For the first time, an Afrikaans speaker can speak in a language that is not the language of domination and a Tsonga speaker can speak in a language that is not the language of the dominated.

(Thabo Mbeki, 1999, p. 26)

Shortly after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, Rajend Mesthrie (1996, p. viii) remarked: 'Language in control and resistance is not an unfamiliar theme in South African history. In one way or another every variety spoken within the territory has been pitted against one or other language and come up as loser or winner.' This assertion is made vividly clear when Mesthrie, in support of his statement, lists a number of successive struggles over language in the region – a series of examples that unquestionably takes us beyond mere issues of language and invokes the myriad migrations, colonialisms, ethnic nationalism and racisms, the patchwork of oppressions and resistances, which have characterised the South African experience for the last three and a half centuries:

Khoi and San languages against Dutch/Afrikaans; Huguenot French against Dutch/Afrikaans; Malay against Afrikaans; Afrikaans against Dutch; Afrikaans against English, and so on. Events like the Soweto uprising of 1976 are a byword for the centrality of language in struggle. (p. vii)

Mesthrie (1996) is certainly not exaggerating if he insists on the *centrality* of language in South African history. Language, undeniably, was politically instrumental during the colonial and apartheid periods. This means, in short, that the language situation of the region was not simply impacted upon by colonialism and apartheid, causing such things as language shift, inequality and extinction, but that language functioned as a component or factor of colonial and apartheid rule. During the apartheid era, for instance, 'Afrikaans and English were used as gate-keepers for political power and dominance, as instruments for preserving certain privileges for whites, and ultimately as tools for unfair and unequal distribution of the country's economic resources' (Phaswana, 2003, pp. 117-118). This analysis of the political expediency of language, of its productivity in the manufacturing and maintenance of not just difference but racialised inequality, is echoed by Alexander (2004):

As in the rest of the body politic, apartheid language policy and planning for black people was no less than a carefully designed obstacle race at the same time as it was a wonderfully crafted affirmative action programme for white, especially Afrikaans-speaking people. (p. 117)

Kamwangamalu (2001) likewise comments on the historical and ideological relation between language, ethno-racism and apartheid in South Africa: 'As a result of the legacy of apartheid', he writes, 'the South African society has been divided rigidly along ethnic lines, with language and ethnicity being the main pillars of the apartheid divide-and-rule ideology' (p. 75). Elsewhere he writes: 'The population of South Africa is not only multiracial but it is also multilingual' (Kamwangamalu, 2004b, pp. 198-199); and that the country's linguistic diversity had been exploited by previous governments (and governmental rationalities) 'to justify and legitimise their divide-and-rule policies such as the creation of ethnic homelands for the Blacks' (p. 198). What comments like these

make clear is that language played an active, perhaps even constitutive role in the logic and logistics of racialised rule and oppression in South Africa. In other words, language and ethnicity, language and race, and therefore the ‘multiracial’ and ‘multilingual’ dimensions of South African society, are historically interlinked. They have been shaped and continue to exist in mutually constitutive relationships, and not just as independent dimensions of a politicised South African diversity. The history of constructions and ideologies of ethnicity and race in South Africa is required to understand its language history; and, equally importantly, its language history is essential for an appreciation of how the South African population has historically been imagined and still finds itself reproduced in ethnic and racial terms. Language, in a nutshell, did not simply function alongside ethnicity as a pillar of apartheid ideology, as Kamwangamalu (2001) seems to suggest, but in fact played an essential role in giving ethnicity and race its *specific* local meanings and deploying these in successive rationalities of rule.

What all three of these authors underscore, however, is the decidedly active role language has played in South African politics, particularly in the execution of colonial and later apartheid social engineering. It is this active, or more strongly stated, *constitutive* dimension of ideologies and regimes of language in South Africa – the way language underpinned and contributed to the reproduction of political paradigms and their principles of vision and division (especially ethnic and racial) – which forms the focus of this chapter. My concern here, more specifically, is with how language achieved its social and political significance in South Africa, and how it contributed and added impetus to the development of historically shifting forms of subjectivity and power. Taking such a historical approach to language in South Africa is vital for the development of a social psychology that will be responsive to the specific intersections between language, politics and subjectivity in this context.

Experimental psychology, and social psychology included, has historically tended to eschew the historical dimension of psychological processes and phenomena. History may be acknowledged as a relevant context within which psychological processes and phenomena occur, but it is very seldom that the psychological is theorised as intrinsically historical. This ahistorical approach to social psychology has been thoroughly debunked

by critical and social constructionist scholars (Danziger, 1996; Graumann & Gergen, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Gergen (1973) has gone as far as referring to social psychology *as* history, whilst Rose (1996a) insists that the human being ‘is not the eternal basis of human history and human culture but a cultural and historical artefact’ (p. 103). The historicising of psychological research has of course, more recently, also been influenced by the Foucaultian notions of ‘genealogy’ and ‘effective histories’ (e.g., Carabine, 2001; Hook, 2005a; 2007). This chapter does not formally employ a genealogical method, but also does not restrict its historical overview to mere sketching of context for a social psychological study of language. It seeks to historicise language, politics and subjectivity and considers this *in itself* a social psychological intervention.

To map the various historical and ideological points of intersection between language, politics and subjectivity in South Africa, especially in relation to a history of race and racism, is not simply a matter of narrating the deleterious effects of colonial contact on indigenous language ecologies – to lament, for example, the denigration, domination and at times wholesale destruction of indigenous languages. There is no doubt that the cultural politics of colonialism had these consequences, and it continues to bewitch postcolonial politics and societies. But the relationship between indigenous languages and colonial government was also more complex than this. Knowledge of, and control over indigenous languages, in fact, functioned ‘as an arm of colonial governance’ (Pennycook, 2002a, p. 15), as an important component of what could be referred to, in Foucaultian terminology, as colonial governmentality (Foucault, 1979; Scott, 2005). One of the central tasks of colonial governmentality was to define, target and manage subjects and whole subject populations. In this regard language stood in a *productive* relationship with the very domain to be dominated, managed and ruled over, namely the indigenous – especially as the indigenous became imagined as a differentiated and stratified domain of subject populations that had to be internalised into the functioning of emerging systems of political, cultural and economic rule.

The story of language in South Africa told in this chapter is therefore partly an account of the imposition of biopolitical rationalities, of an ‘ethno-logic’, onto a multiplicity of language forms and practices.¹ This ‘ethno-logic’ eventually crystallised in (and come to

rely on) an increasingly fixed grid of colonial and racial subjectivities, and was therefore simultaneously destructive *and* productive of identity and difference in indigenous language ecologies. Rather than approaching the linguistic environment as a flat landscape upon which ready-made languages or ethnolinguistic groups are locked in struggle, the aim in this chapter is to understand how particular struggles over language, and particular regimentations of language, gave rise to different constellations of language, power and subjectivity in South Africa; to different ways, that is, of imagining and governing the South African population as cultural and political communities in relation to language. In short, languages have functioned (and continue to function) as emblems, principles and means of cultural and national belonging, racialised differences and patterns of social proximity and distance for more than three centuries, whenever ‘South Africa’ has been imagined and contested as a cultural and political category. The social psychologist concerned with language, politics and subjectivity has to probe these relations at a deeper level than merely seeking an understanding of language in the ‘context’ of South African history. The aim should in fact be the opposite, namely to understand the ideological making and contestation of ‘South Africa’ in relation to different ideologies and regimes of language. Rather than just a history of language in South Africa, what may in fact be required is a language history of South Africa; of how this country – as a territory, a population and various rationalities and technologies of rule – came to be and exist *in relation to language*.

Against these background comments I can now outline more directly the aims and objectives of this chapter. On the one hand it simply outlines, for South Africa, the historical dimensions of what sociolinguists often term the ‘language situation’ of a country or a region, and in that sense deepens the discussion of language and politics in South Africa begun in Chapter 2. According to Alexander and Heugh (2001):

The language situation includes features such as the number of mutually intelligible and mutually unintelligible languages in the political entity, the number of varieties of the different acknowledged ‘languages’, the degree of standardisation, whether or not the different languages and varieties have been reduced to writing, the degree of literacy in each of the relevant varieties, the

prevalence of a reading culture in the different languages or varieties of languages, the existence or not of a language infrastructure comprising language planning and development agencies, publishing and printing enterprises, translation and interpreting facilities, lexicographic projects and many other essential language services. (p. 15)

The first and fairly superficial aim of the chapter is thus to provide a historical account of the seemingly ‘objective’ features of language in South Africa: those aspects that, in what is seemingly merely indexical, characterise South Africa in terms of ‘its languages’. But it should be clear almost immediately that the breadth of dimensions touched upon by Alexander and Heugh (2001), as well as my comments earlier in this chapter, defies a purely descriptive approach. Processes of standardisation, the reduction of speech to writing, and language planning and development not only establish that the state is a major agent in the domain of language, but also raise more substantive questions about the nature and political expediency of the relationship between language and the state, or between language and the broader category of *government*, ‘a series of anonymous mechanisms of power operating on a broader social level’ (Hook, 2007, p. 224; see also Foucault, 2002). This chapter is therefore also concerned with the biopolitical question of how a country produces and reproduces *itself*, as a territorialised population, in relation to language. Stated somewhat differently, if on the one hand I am providing some kind of descriptive overview of language in South Africa, I am on the other hand asking what exactly is entailed by the ‘*in* South Africa’ in the phrase ‘language in South Africa’. There can be no self-evident relationship between a country as a political entity and a given number of languages, over which that country then procures ownership, granting some with official or national status and others not. Rather than simply a container for language and linguistic processes, countries are constituted and contested *as countries* in relation to language. Precisely how such constructions and patterns of contestation have been sedimented historically and currently still inform, shape and constrain subjectivities, identities and social practices, especially in relation to language, is highly relevant to social psychology. Commenting on these aspects of the politics of language in the region is therefore the second, more significant objective of this chapter.

The chapter outlines, in rather broad strokes, a language history of South Africa, starting with the earliest European settlement at the Cape of Good Hope and ending with the current language characteristics and contradictions of the post-apartheid state. Interestingly, language has received scant attention in South African historiography, where it is generally either subsumed under generic discussions of ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’ or neglected altogether in favour of an analytics that foregrounds class and capitalist modes of production (Lipton, 2007; see also Heuman, 2003). This is even the case, as Giliomee (2003) demonstrates, in the study of local ethnic nationalisms, such as Afrikaner nationalism, English colonial nationalism, Zulu nationalism and various articulations of African nationalism. There is no existing, authoritative history of the Southern African region that is approached from the vantage point of language and language struggles, or that even just *privileges* language in accounts of such things as migration, cultural contact and dispossession, the development of (especially religious) print cultures and formal education, and the social changes brought about by capitalism and nationalism. My account is therefore a tentative, merely historically suggestive account of how ‘South Africa’ emerges as an ideological complex in relation to ideologies, regimes and practices of language in the region. The aim is not to be historically exhaustive: a methodical account of the language history of South Africa would take me far beyond the scope of the present study. Instead, the historical dimension of language in the region is elaborated on here for the social psychological insights – and the insights into the social psychology of language – it yields. I will pay less attention to formal language policies than to the broader discursive and material structures and processes, the representational grids, political regimentations and everyday practices, through which ‘South Africa’ has been and continues to be constituted, reproduced and contested – as a geographically fixed, politically sovereign region and, more importantly still, as ‘a people’ – in relation to language.

‘South Africa’: Language, politics, and governmentality

From the introduction it should be clear that to adequately capture the constitutive role that language has played and arguably continues to play in the region, it is insufficient to simply direct our attention to language and politics *in* South Africa, bypassing in the

process how ‘South Africa’ and ‘the South African’ are also constituted *in relation* to language. Yet, it is precisely as a historically specific but nevertheless ideologically transparent context for various language phenomena and processes that references to countries generally function in writings on language history, language politics and sociolinguistic processes. De Klerk (2004), for example, refers to ‘the extremely complex linguistic make-up of South Africa’ (p. 85), whilst Webb (2003) declares that ‘South Africa has a history of extreme ethnolinguistic conflict’ (p. 553). In both these instances (and these are typical rather than isolated examples) ‘South Africa’ appears as an unproblematic given: a stable, self-evident category that frames or contains a range of country-specific linguistic phenomena and ethnolinguistic processes. Whilst the country is particularised in reference to its sociolinguistic characteristics – a particular history of diversity, conflict, domination and rule – its particularity nevertheless relies on a generalised geopolitical optic that treats ‘countries’ as obvious points of reference for discussions of language.² This widely shared and commonsensical optic is also very evident in the following introductory paragraph to an overview of language planning in South Africa, published in a comparative volume that also discusses, in similarly self-evident ways, Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique:

As its name suggests, the Republic of South Africa is located at the southernmost tip of the African continent. The country covers a total area of 1,219,080 km² (470,689 sq. miles) – slightly smaller than Alaska, Peru, and Niger; slightly larger than Colombia or the Province of Ontario, Canada. It shares borders with six African countries: Namibia in the north-west; Botswana in the north; Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland in the north-east; and Lesotho in the east. To the south, South Africa is surrounded by two oceans, the Indian Ocean in the south-east, and the Atlantic Ocean in the south-west. (Kamwangamalu, 2004b, p. 197)

Factually, of course, there is nothing wrong with this depiction – in fact, I quote it here in full partly because it is indeed a neat depiction of the country invoked in this chapter and thesis. However, it is also precisely because ‘South Africa’ is so effortlessly treated as an object amenable to a factual description of borders, land mass and (although not present in the above quote) ethnic or cultural groups and their mutual relationships, that it is so

easily reduced to a mere *container* of languages, ethnolinguistic groups and sociolinguistic processes, or to a transparent background rather than an ideologically active component in accounts of language, politics and subjectivity. It is as if ‘South Africa’ does not itself owe, in any way or measure, its reality and contemporary characteristics to language and language struggles. As if the language struggles the Mesthrie (1996) quote at the outset of this chapter refers to (waged between and around languages and language groups across more than three centuries) invoke ‘South Africa’ only as their location, their battlefield, and not also as their ideological aim, mediator and outcome.

To appreciate the historical contingency of Kamwangamalu’s (2004b) assured, seemingly self-sufficient and commonplace depiction of South Africa, one only has to read it alongside that of P.A. Molteno, written in 1894, merely a century earlier: ‘When we speak of South Africa, we speak of the country bounded by the sea on all sides except the north, where the boundaries may roughly be said to be the Cunene towards the west and the Zambesi towards the east’ (as cited in Dubow, 2006, p. 123).³ What is significant here is not simply that Molteno’s South Africa had different and (still) less fixed borders, but that South Africa had in fact not even existed yet as a political unit at the time of his writing. ‘South Africa’ was still ‘a mere territorial expression’ (Giliomee, 2003, p. 279); or in the words of Dubow (2006, p. 122): ‘Prior to its becoming a political entity in 1910, “South Africa” was little more than a figurative expression.’ Even though the use of the term ‘South Africa’ can, according to Dubow, be traced back as far as the 1820s and started occurring with increasing frequency in political discourse from the 1870s onwards, ‘as late as the 1890s only the constituent elements of the subcontinent – African territories and societies, British colonies, and Boer republics – had any definite constitutional meaning’ (Dubow, 2006, p. 123). Giliomee (2003) provides a related but more detailed depiction of the ‘South Africa’ of the 1870s:

By the mid-1870s the power balance in the deeper interior of South Africa was precarious, with people thinly scattered over a vast territory and divided into different polities. There were the two white republics and the two white colonies of the Cape and Natal, several semi-autonomous African societies with substantial power, including the Zulu in Natal, the Xhosa beyond the Kei, the Sotho in the

east of the Caledon River, and the Tswana, Pedi and Venda in the Transvaal, and two recent British acquisitions, Basotoland and the diamond fields of Griqualand West, annexed in 1868 and 1871 respectively. (p. 282).

‘South Africa’, then, is not and never has been an ideologically stable and historically uncontested category. Treating it as such in social scientific accounts is to risk taking for granted, and in the processes obscuring, exactly that which requires analytic interrogation. Inasmuch as it presently has a stable, almost obvious referent, South Africa was and remains an ideological and political accomplishment. To be sure, the meanings attached to it are revealed as historically shifting, even if one restricts oneself to the seemingly ‘objective’ criteria of territory and borders. The territorial area the term ‘South Africa’ refers to was in fact only settled in its current form in the early 1990s, when the so-called independent homelands for black ‘ethnic’ groups of the apartheid era were reintegrated to the central administrative unit of the national state.⁴ But by then, of course, the ideological force of the idea of ‘South Africa’, and its centrality to political struggles for enfranchisement, equality and citizenship rights, was such that the homelands were easily recognised as illegitimate states and their populations therefore considered to be ‘returned’ to their rightful nationality and citizenship: that of South Africans.

Indeed, the contingent but also compelling nature of South African nationality becomes even more conspicuous when one considers it in relation, not to territory, but to population. Whilst modern states obviously still define themselves territorially and uphold their border regimes, their main reference point for identity and legitimacy, and their primary target of government, is their population (Calhoun, 1995; see Chapter 4 for elaboration on this point). The history of ‘South Africa’ as a political idea therefore not only refers to the gradual settlement of stable and guarded borders but, more importantly, contestations over different ways of conceiving of legitimate *South Africans*: who could and could not be called or call themselves South African?; how were South Africans and non-South Africans, or different categories of South Africans, to be distinguished? – these became central questions in the historical construction and contestation (generally in relation to constructions of culture, ethnicity and race) of the idea of a South African nationality and citizenship. The point driven at here, and that has

already been raised in the introduction, is that language was inserted into strategies of rule which could not simply be said to have ‘belonged to’ or ‘characterised’ South Africa, but in terms of and in response to which ‘South Africa’ came to be established as a compelling idea and ‘an apparatus of dominant power effects’ (Scott, 2005, p. 24) in the first place; and in terms of which the articulation of colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid subjectivities took effect.

It is at this point that the history of language in South Africa not only becomes relevant in social psychology, but that the social psychological nature of language, its productive relationship to the politics of population and subjectivity, is revealed in its fullest historical sense. In this regard one should bear in mind that colonial encounters have always and everywhere relied heavily on language as both a dimension of the definition of colonial otherness and, importantly, as an instrument of colonial rule. The study, mastery and management of indigenous languages came to play an important epistemological as well as political role in most colonial societies (Cohn, 1996; Errington, 2001b; Fabian, 1986; Gilmour, 2006; Hulme, 1986; Pennycook, 1998). In terms of defining and ‘knowing’ the colonial other, the study of language ‘meant being able to assess and evaluate its speakers, inserting them into a global grid in which relative degrees of civilization could be measured and compared’ (Gilmour, 2006, p. 1). But indigenous populations also had to be *engaged* with and ruled over, were they to be successfully incorporated into imperial constellations as colonial subjects. As Fabian (1986) observes, a precondition for ‘establishing regimes of colonial power was, must have been, communication with the colonized’ (p. 3). One could therefore say, following Cohn (1996), that the need for a language of command in turn required a command of language, or a linking of systematically produced linguistic knowledge with the political rationalities of colonial power. While the command of the verbal means of communication was never the sole foundation for colonial rule, it was certainly vital to its maintenance of military, religious and economic regimes (Fabian, 1986).

It is in this context of colonial knowledge and power that colonial linguistics and its resultant texts – grammars, word lists, dictionaries, reading books, and philological treatises – became all-important. Although not always produced by a central state

apparatus, they formed part of the broader dimensions of colonial governmentality, by turning indigenous languages into objects of knowledge and so paving the way for their speakers to become (often ethnically or ‘tribally’ differentiated) subjects of colonial power (Errington, 2008). This process of becoming a subject of colonial power *by means of, in relation to or through* the production of linguistic knowledge and different practices of literacy meant that

the intellectual work of writing speech was never entirely distinct from the ‘ideological’ work of devising images of people in zones of colonial contact. It means also that language differences figured in the creation of human hierarchies, such that colonial subjects could be recognized as human, yet deficiently so. (Errington, 2008, p. 5) ⁵

In other words, language (and knowledge of language more specifically) proved itself as indispensable to the ‘historically constituted complexes of knowledge/power that give shape to colonial projects of political sovereignty’ (Scott, 2005, p. 25), which involved the legislating of difference and inequality across various colonial settings, practices and institutions. Knowledge of language, as it was developed over two centuries by explorers, missionaries, ethnologists, philologists and others, positioned colonial subjects into Western cultural and political frameworks and served as an essential component of the knowledge bases required and developed for the purposes of imperial rule (Price, 2008).⁶ The ensembles of practices that were based on the knowledge of language were ‘unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships’ (Hulme, 1986, p. 2): it accompanied, facilitated, developed, maintained and consolidated colonial power and European hegemony in the colonial world and in Southern Africa specifically (Gilmour, 2006). Therefore, the ideological, intellectual, and perhaps above all *practical* importance of the knowledge and command of language for ‘prosecuting and legitimizing colonial projects’ (Errington, 2008, p. 3) is never to be underestimated. Gilmour (2006) is even more explicit in her description of the interwoven nature of linguistic knowledge and colonial rule:

[T]he development of colonial linguistics was fundamental to strategies by which Westerners interpreted the world, categorized its peoples, and affirmed the superiority of their own position within it. Those questions which struck at the heart of European colonialism – the maintenance of colonial stability, the articulation and negotiation of colonial identities, the taxonomic classification and effective control of colonial subjects, the capabilities of non-western peoples for spiritual, cultural, moral, and economic amelioration – impacted on, and were negotiated through, the multiplicity of linguistic representations which, in various ways, rendered colonial subjects ‘intelligible’. (p. 2)

This did not translate to the level of colonial language policies in any straightforward manner. In fact, colonial language policies were complex and, comparatively speaking, frequently contradictory. On the one hand, they were generally less concerned with practical concerns regarding language, language rights and language development than with broader questions of governmentality; that is, they reflected and enacted ‘different views of how best to run a colony’ (Pennycook, 1998, p. 20). On the other hand, however differently they were conceived, colonial language policies all contributed ‘to bolster the economic and political position of Britain’ (p. 68) and other colonial powers. Pennycook (1998) continues:

To some, provision of limited English was an essential part of the messianic spread of British language and culture. To some, provision of vernacular education was a colonial obligation; to others it was a crucial tool in the development of a workforce able to participate in colonial capitalism; to others it was an important means to maintain the status quo. (p. 20)

Language in South Africa, on this account, needs to be interrogated for its biopolitical productivity within successive forms of governmentality (see the discussion of these terms in Chapter 2). Stated differently, language has to be approached in relation to the enabling role it has played in the securing of territories and populations to a racial and ethno-national logic of rule in the political drama to which ‘South Africa’ became both the ideological solution and the primary stake. The question of language governmentality,

of course, cannot be restricted to formal language planning and language policy developments at the level of the state (see Beukes, 2007; Pennycook, 2002b, 2006). Colonial and apartheid regimes of language – including language policies, language ideologies and language practices – extended across the interpersonal, social and political terrain; were relayed through various and often conflicting institutions, agents, and practices; and invested the terrain they covered with historically shifting but ideologically naturalised articulations of various categories of subjectivity. Historically such regimes have relied for their subjectivising effects not only on the imposition of language by agents of the state, but also on how language was incorporated into colonial ‘technologies of self’ (Foucault, 2000c); on how colonial subjects had invested linguistically in self-making technologies such as Christianity, ethnicity and nationalism, and sought profit from what these offered in terms of salvation, ethnicisation and modernisation.

The biopolitically productive outcome of language in relation to government in South Africa was historically both *disciplinary* – the production of individuality within institutions like the school – and *biopolitical* – the governmental targeting of populations in order to constitute its subjects as ‘people’, ‘nation’ and ‘race’. It is this political and governmental ‘instrumentality’ of language, and knowledge of language, in the broader constitution of political subjectivities, and its role in colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid forms of governmentality – instead of merely narrating the marginalisation of ‘indigenous languages’ – that is crucial to the concerns of a critical social psychology of language in South Africa.

A language history of South Africa

In this section I discuss the historical emergence of language as a biopolitical principle, and the shifting forms of governmentality in terms of which regimes of language were developed and became functional, in the Southern Africa region. My aim, throughout, is to illuminate the forms of oppression and resistance, the emerging political subjectivities, and the conflicting trajectories of political solidarity and mobilisation, with which language has historically been enmeshed. But I am also, in line with the discussion in the previous section, interested in the role language played in the gradual solidification of the

larger ideological framework in terms of which all these differences of subjectivity and political aspirations were articulated and lent legitimacy: the construct 'South Africa' itself.

I start this section with a brief discussion of the role language played in the early Dutch settlement at the Cape. Although language did not function as a biopolitical principle in the modern sense of the term (as a fully-fledged element in statecraft and the policing of a nationally or colonially defined population), the early period of white settlement and territorial expansion nevertheless set in motion processes of language shift and assimilation that had a lasting impact on the ethnolinguistic landscape of modern South Africa, and on the emergence of constructions of ethnicity and race in the region. Thereafter I move on to discuss the role of language – increasingly also of culture, ethnicity and race – under British colonial administration during the nineteenth century. Linguistically speaking, this century was crucial for the making of modern South Africa. Language developed into one of the central dimensions through which various populations of the region were to be imagined as people, thus creating a local understanding of diversity that was increasingly filtered through the ethno-national lenses of European anthropology, philology and cultural nationalisms, and increasingly serviced local rationalities of division and rule. Next I turn to the twentieth century, which is discussed as the era of an emergent Afrikaner nationalism, the establishment of Afrikaans as a public language and an instrument for political oppression, and the corresponding mobilisation of African languages in the service of strategies of ethno-racial rule.

1652-1795: Settlement and early colonisation of the Cape of Good Hope

A history of language that traces the emergence of and contestation over different meanings of the South African and of the shifting configurations of language, power and political being in the region, has to start with the earliest instances of colonial encounter between Europeans and indigenous African populations.⁷ The colonial history of present-day South Africa could easily be traced as far back as the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias became the first European to round the southernmost tip of Africa in 1488, thus opening a new sea route to the Indian Ocean (Mostert, 1992; Schoeman, 1999). Whilst this certainly was a crucial event (not in the least

for the almost two centuries of sporadic linguistic contact between passing Europeans and indigenous inhabitants it also inaugurated), it is really the establishment of a Dutch East Indies Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC) refreshment post at Table Bay in 1652, where ‘ships would be able to meet, exchange news during the course of the long voyage, have their sick cared for and obtain refreshments’ (Schoeman, 2007, p. 11), that inaugurated colonial settlement and the eventual political and cultural subjugation of indigenous populations in the region. It is here that this story starts.

Throughout the early decades of the seventeenth century Portuguese, English, Scandinavian and Dutch vessels regularly frequented Table Bay as a convenient stopover en route to the east. The VOC, a Dutch commercial body that was established in 1602 and presided over a trading empire that eventually stretched ‘from the Red Sea to Japan’ (Schoeman, 2007, p. 11), had little direct economic interest in Southern Africa and was not interested in large-scale white settlement in the region, or in subjugating indigenous populations to a central colonial authority. Southern Africa struck the VOC as commercially unviable and the refreshment post at the Cape was thus intended to serve purely pragmatic ends. By the end of 1652 the new settlement at the Cape, under command of Jan van Riebeeck, ‘consisted of 110 men and 15 women and children, all of them white and predominantly from the Netherlands, the north-western portion of the German-speaking area and Scandinavia’ (p. 11). Chronic food shortages and difficulties in securing reliable trade relations with the indigenous populations, who almost instantly resisted this encroachment of often hostile foreigners onto their land, led Van Riebeeck to release a number of Company servants to become farmers on the edges of the settlement in Table Bay in 1657 (Giliomee, 2003).⁸ From this moment on permanent white settlement would become an irreversible feature of the political and economic development of the region.

A year later, in 1658, Van Riebeeck also started importing slaves to the Cape, adding further complexity to the demographics and social and political dynamics of the new settlement (Schoeman, 2007; Shell, 1994; Watson, 1991; Worden, 1985). A decade later, in 1688, a group of French immigrants, the Huguenots, settled in the region of the current Franschoek valley. They were the first of several waves of European immigrants

to the Cape over the next one and a half centuries, slowly escalating the number of permanent inhabitants of European origin in the region (Giliomee, 2003), and constituting a group who increasingly became aware of itself as indigenous to the region, but *white* and therefore separate.⁹ From here on, after the arrival of the slaves and the first European immigrants, the character of the Cape society, including the aspirations and eventually the technologies of colonial rule, would begin to change dramatically. A slow but relentless expansion of the colonial frontier led to increasing conflict with the indigenous Khoikhoi, but also, increasingly, between white colonists and their government. The Cape government, under the authority of the Lords XVII in Batavia, subjected the so-called 'free burghers' to harsh trading conditions and granted them only limited democratic participation in the political affairs of the fledgling colony (Giliomee, 2003). Much of the regional expansion of colonial power over the first century or so of settlement in fact occurred in reaction to the resistance and mobility of colonists, and not because the VOC was inherently interested in territorial expansion. In order to capture and regulate the movement of colonists to the interior, and to recover and harness political, legal and economic authority over its subjects, colonial power followed suit, incrementally extending its jurisdiction over the Southern African territory. Stellenbosch, Swellendam, Graaff Reinet: these were so many signposts on an expanding grid of colonial power towards what eventually became the subjugation of the territory and its populations under a unified South African state.¹⁰ And, *language* would play a crucial role in this story from the very beginning.

There are at least three stories to tell about the linguistic dimensions of these early stages of colonial presence in Southern Africa. The first involves the development of the white settler population itself: a process that eventually, as will become clear in this narrative, saw whiteness becoming an ethno-*linguistic* category, especially in relation to the appropriation of the Afrikaans language to the ideological objectives of Afrikaner nationalism. But that happened later. The early settlement at the Cape, as indicated, consisted of VOC servants, who spoke Dutch, the official language of the Netherlands and the VOC. Civilian immigration from the Netherlands to the emerging colony at the Cape was never actively supported by the Dutch state, and the population growth of the white settlement was initially but a trickle. The settlement consisted, at first, of retired

soldiers and company servants who had served at the Cape or in the east, and who were allowed, according to Company laws, to settle at the Cape. By the 1750s, a century after Van Riebeeck's arrival, there were still only about 5000 European settlers in the region (Giliomee, 2003) and the colony did not stretch further than the borders of what is today the province of the Western Cape. The major instance of intergroup contact was between the colonists and the Khoikhoi (and, to a lesser extent, between colonists and the Bushmen or San).¹¹ The deeper interior and the people who populated it were still largely unknown to the residents of the Cape.

The linguistic and cultural characteristics of the white community, however, only became a cause of reflection, and later active intervention, in response to the feared linguistic implications of the growing slave population and the arrival of European settlers from non-Dutch speaking regions of Europe. The slave population at the Cape soon outnumbered the colonists (Schoeman, 2007). Although these slaves were imported from Africa and the East and spoke a wide variety of languages and dialects, a form of Portuguese, or Malay-Portuguese, frequently served as a lingua franca. In fact, this was immediately taken to be potentially problematic: the VOC warned Van Riebeeck about the potential that Portuguese, the language of its main commercial empire, would develop as a lingua franca at the Cape, and so pose a threat to Dutch commercial interests (Schoeman, 2007). And indeed, the historical record shows that as late as the early nineteenth century even some whites could speak bits of Portuguese and Malay, despite it never being widely spread or posing a serious threat to the Dutch character of public and official engagement in the colony. In the Memorandum written for his successor in 1662, only ten years after settlement commenced, Van Riebeeck could state quite emphatically: 'The slaves here learn nothing but Dutch and so too the Hottentoots, so that no other language is spoken here' (as cited in Schoeman, 2007, p. 167). Even so, the VOC insisted on the official use of Dutch from 1658 onwards, and eventually halted the further importation of slaves (Shell, 1994; Worden, 1985).

From as early as the tenure of Simon van der Stell as governor in the late seventeenth century the Cape government became intent on ensuring the settlement's Dutch character (Giliomee, 2003; Schoeman, 2007). This spoke more to anxieties around

securing VOC interests in a competitive environment than to a genuine desire for cultural nation-building – an ideology of political mobilisation that only emerged much later in Europe – but it nevertheless laid the foundations for later nationalisms (and ethnic and racial identities) in South Africa. The demographic implications of a multilingual slave population, as referred to above, was but one of the reasons for this increasing focus on the linguistic characteristics of the settlement. Of even greater significance was the multiethnic background of the white population itself. As I have mentioned, there was very little sustained immigration from Dutch-speaking regions. The majority of Dutch-speaking colonists ended up at the Cape after their contract with the VOC (mostly served in the east) had ended. Thus, immigration from France and from the German-speaking states provided the real impetus behind white population growth at the Cape. Various strategies of cultural assimilation were employed in response, to ensure the maintenance and official supremacy of the Dutch language – or, as it gradually became known as, Cape Dutch. These included limitations on the use of French and German in schools (of which, it should be added, there were very few) and churches; interspersing French and German settlers with Dutch-speaking burghers in order to curb the potential development of ethnic and linguistic enclaves, and, of course, declaring Dutch the official language of government and public life at the Cape (Giliomee, 2003).

By the mid-eighteenth century French was essentially a dying language in the region. When the abbey De la Caille visited the Huguenots in 1752, he found virtually no more French speakers younger than 40 years of age (Giliomee, 2003). Its speakers assimilated to Cape Dutch in the short span of a generation. This process of language shift and attrition was even more dramatic in the case of German. At the end of the eighteenth century more than half of the white population at the Cape was of German descent (De Kadt, 2002). But these immigrants were almost exclusively male and hence quickly became assimilated to the Dutch community through intermarriage with Dutch-speaking women. Moreover, these German immigrants arrived in southern Africa well before the emergence of German nationalism and the establishment of the centralised German state and therefore quite readily accepted the higher status of Dutch. Still, even in the case of German, there was coercion: the Lutheran Church, for example, founded in the Cape in

1780, was compelled by government decree to adopt Dutch as its sole official language (Giliomee, 2003).

Cultural assimilation, however, was not the only reason for the hegemony of Cape Dutch amongst European settlers, and for the role this language – and later, Afrikaans – would eventually come to play as the defining characteristic (the ‘ethnic essence’) of the early white population of southern Africa. Due to draconic trade limitations and the underselling of their goods, amongst other things, the early colonists at the Cape developed a sense of common cause against the VOC administration (Giliomee, 2003). Outlaw and dissident figures like Estienne Barbier and Adam Tas were later mythologised in Afrikaner nationalism, but in these early decades of settlement the term ‘Afrikaner’ had not yet been given any specific ethnic and cultural content, and had no ideological force.¹² These iconic instances of settler self-definition through opposition did, however, signal the first stirrings of an emerging political and cultural self-consciousness, of a group of people who increasingly began to see themselves not as loyal subjects of a European power, but as indigenous to the region. Of course, this indigeneity involved a concurrent and vociferous exclusion of the African ‘Other’, and articulated its identity and difference in constantly evolving ‘racial’ terms (Elphic & Giliomee, 1989; Thompson, 1985). The white Afrikaners who emerged as the politically dominant (and dominating) class during the twentieth century (their surnames still reminiscent of their scattered Dutch, German, French and Scandinavian origins) should be traced back to these early Dutch and culturally and linguistically assimilated European immigrants.¹³ The Afrikaans language not only partially emerged from their engagement with – and transformation of – Dutch as a lingua franca (Ponelis, 1993), but in time would become the principle element, the ‘sublime object’ one could say, in terms of which the existence, history and destiny of an Afrikaner ethnic group, a Volk, was defined (e.g., Pienaar, 1943).¹⁴

One of the most interesting things about the way ‘South Africa’ came to be imagined in ethnic and racial terms, is that the production and especially the cultural *productivity* of the Afrikaans language (which later became the ideological *raison d'état* of Afrikaner claims to cultural independence, racial purity and political dominance) extended well beyond the

emerging white Afrikaners.¹⁵ The French, German and other European immigrants to the Cape were not the only ones who were compelled to develop proficiency in Dutch, the language of power and colonial administration.

I have already mentioned that the early settlers encountered the local Khoikhoi populations upon arrival at the Cape. Some of the Khoikhoi, after almost two centuries of sporadic contact between local inhabitants of the region and passing ships, had in fact acquired some proficiency in European languages like English, Portuguese and Dutch even before permanent white settlement at the Cape became a reality in 1652. It was not uncommon for Khoikhoi individuals to be employed as interpreters by European traders, even on occasion accompanying European vessels to the East in this capacity (Elphick, 1977; Schoeman, 2007). Van Riebeeck as well as his settlement relied on Khoikhoi interpreters and cultural go-betweens in order to establish trade relations between the settlement and the local inhabitants. Of course, there was little, if any attempt on the part of the new settlers to learn indigenous languages: the Khoikhoi quickly adopted Dutch cultural practices and the Dutch language, but patterns of influence, especially with regards to language, were largely unidirectional. One of the reasons for this was the deeply prejudiced nature of European images of the Khoikhoi and the less frequently encountered San. Mostert (1992) describes how early Europeans perceived the Khoikhoi as 'base, foul and profane' (p. 34):

Nakedness and lack of permanent dwelling structures were always to strike Europeans as proof positive of an inherent lack of morals and unmitigated backwardness respectively. But the Khoikhoi affected them in all sorts of other ways as well. Khoikhoi languages retained from their Bushman ancestry a clicking sound whose total unfamiliarity was regarded by early Europeans as *the strangest and most incomprehensible form of all human communication*. (p. 35, emphasis added)

Representations of the Khoikhoi languages in fact became a regular feature of all sorts of writing about the Cape from the early sixteenth century onwards. John Davys commented, as early as 1598, that 'their words are for the most part inarticulate, and, in speaking, they clocke with the Tongue like a brood Hen, which clocking and the words

are both pronounced together, verie strangely' (as cited in Gilmour, 2006, p. 16). John Milward offered a very similar 'observation' in 1614: 'These people are most miserable, destitute of religion in any kind, as farre as we can perceive, and of all civility; their speech is a chattering rather than language...' (p. 15). And in 1634 the traveller Thomas Herbert described Khoikhoi languages as 'rather apishly than articulately sounded' (p. 16). This dehumanisation of the Khoikhoi and San populations was standard fare at the time, and their supposed lack of religion and human language were the key ingredients in their denigration. To be human meant to have religion and a fully developed language; according to early European perceptions the Khoikhoi and the San had neither. Therefore, the practice of basing claims of racial difference and inferiority on *language* has its roots in the very earliest depictions by Europeans of the African other. It was only in the late nineteenth century that European scholars started attending to Khoikhoi and San folklore and language (Dubow, 2006; Gilmour, 2006), inserting these people into the realm of humanity, albeit at a lower, evolutionary less developed level.

Despite such images of seemingly intransigent alterity and immediate tensions over land and resources (which, starting as early as 1659, led to a series of skirmishes, uprisings and brutal wars), a certain 'colonial intimacy' gradually characterised the relationship between the European colonists and the Khoikhoi.¹⁶ This would prove to have a profound impact on the language history of South Africa. Under colonial conditions, of course, spheres of intimacy between colonisers and the colonised signal neither equality nor the absence of vicious forms and practices of dispossession and oppression. 'Intimacy', in this context, refers to processes of internalisation of the colonised into colonial society, or assimilation into its social and cultural codes, without the eradication of essentialising – especially *racialising* – differences. Furthermore, due to epidemics, dispossession of land and merciless wars, amongst other things, the social and economic structures of Khoikhoi life completely collapsed in the decades immediately following white settlement at the Cape (Elphick, 1977). Some who formed a part of these populations subsequently fled the colony, whilst others joined the ranks of groups like the Xhosa. The majority of the Khoikhoi, however, assimilated into white society as a labouring class only nominally freer than slaves (Giliomee, 2003), took on many of its cultural and religious practices

and values, adopted European names, and, very significantly, begun speaking Cape Dutch as a first language.¹⁷

By 1662, merely a decade after white settlement commenced, Khoikhoi bilingualism was already widely spread in the vicinity of the settlement. Due to the collapse of Khoikhoi society, the need for cheap labour on farms, and the perceived prestige that Dutch offered, a complete language shift in favour of Cape Dutch was almost inevitable. According to Elphick (1977), cultural and linguistic shift

was likewise aided by the prestige which European culture enjoyed among Khoikhoi at a time when their own society was disintegrating; indeed it is likely that Khoikhoi desired European names, which identified them with the colony's masters and distanced them from the slaves (who bore either a native name or a toponym like Titus of Macassar). (p. 210).

The indigenous languages of the Khoikhoi and the San, often collectively referred to as the 'Khoesan languages' (Traill, 2002), thus never posed any threat to the early hegemony of Dutch as a language of government, public life and trade. In fact, they became very rapidly extinct.¹⁸ In this way the Khoikhoi contributed significantly to the development of Afrikaans: 'Afrikaans developed in South Africa out of a Dutch stem as a result of interaction between European colonists, who arrived there in 1652, slaves imported from Africa and Asia, and indigenous Khoisan people' (Giliomee, 2004, p. 25; see also Ponelis, 1993; Roberge, 2002). A similar contribution to the development of Afrikaans, and more importantly, to the development of a multiracial Afrikaans speech community, was made by the slaves (Giliomee, 2003, 2004). Contrary to fears about the influence of Portuguese mentioned earlier, variants of Dutch became the lingua franca in the slave lodge at the Cape from very early on: mothers spoke the language to their children and it was used as medium of instruction in the limited formal schooling that was available to slave children (Schoeman, 2007). These creolised and above all multi-racial origins of Afrikaans were partly the reason why this language would assume the role of a marker and producer of privileged forms of *whiteness* only at a much later stage. It was the descendants of slaves, in fact, who became the first to use Afrikaans for higher functions, namely as a vehicle

for the writing of Islamic religious texts in the early nineteenth century (Davids, 1991).¹⁹ Throughout the eighteenth century Afrikaans was to remain a lowly patois, a language of pragmatic interaction and everyday life for white and black alike. The Bible, for example, was only translated into Afrikaans in 1933, decades after it became available in languages like Xhosa and Zulu. The prestigious form for whites during the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century was Dutch – the language of trade, government, the church and the Bible.

To summarise, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dutch became increasingly entrenched as the administrative language of the Cape of Good Hope, spoken by Dutch officials, and increasingly (as a matter of everyday survival) by indigenous populations, the imported slave population and other European immigrants like the French Huguenots. It was, importantly, also the language of the Dutch Reformed Church, an institution that would remain central to the reproduction of a Dutch and later Afrikaans cultural and political community. According to Phaswana (2003, p. 118), ‘by the end of 1795, most of the Khoikhoi and the enslaved people were part of an Afrikaans-Holland (sic) language community.’

1795-1910: Anglicisation and the Expansion of British Empire

Even though language occasionally became a target of colonial power and a marker of social identity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and even though measures were set in place to preserve the ‘Dutch’ character of the colony) language during Company rule never truly developed into a crucial ingredient of the colonial rule and management of its subjects. Its *biopolitical* importance – its role in the making and governing of subject populations – remained fairly limited. This would change radically with the advent of British rule in southern Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was during this century, in the context of British rule over both a non-English speaking component of the white population and an increasing number of indigenous African populations, that the ethnolinguistic foundations were established upon which all later meanings of South African nationality, including the notion ‘South Africa’, came to be constructed. In short, language (and ethnicity) began to play an increasingly important role in colonial governmentality during the nineteenth century, incorporating a range of

actors, sites, strategies and targets into its rationalities of rule. Once again, what is at issue, is not simply a story of linguistic oppression, dispossession and shift, but of the means by which language became inserted into the forms and modes of colonial subjection. It is also a story of the emergence of a coherent and above all manageable space of colonial subjectivities, taking the form of increasingly naturalised – albeit still shifting – racial and ethnic categories.

British rule at the Cape (from 1795 to 1803 initially and then, permanently, from 1806 onwards) certainly played a crucial role in the development of modern South Africa – urbanisation, industrialisation, the forging of political institutions and identities, the surge of indigenous nationalisms and the emerging structures of racialising rule, all carried the imprint of British imperialism and colonialism. It is important to bear in mind that in 1795, when the British first arrived, the Cape colony was ‘economically more undeveloped, politically more inexperienced, and culturally more backward than any of the greater colonies of settlement. After one and a half centuries the Colony contained one town worthy of the name, and five or six little villages’ (De Kiewiet, as cited in Dubow, 2006, p. 18). There was very little public schooling, no public high schools, only a few decent roads, and no local newspapers to speak of. Relations between the British and the descendents of the VOC era, the Cape-Dutch or the Boers (later: Afrikaners), were tense from the outset. The spectacular rise of Britain as a world power ‘had bred a conviction among the British that their way of doing things was superior’ (Giliomee, 2003, p. 194), and in time an ‘English nationalism became the dominant ideology in urban life across much of South Africa, expressed in the English language and reinforced by its symbols of dress, emblems, architecture, food and polite conversations’ (p. 194; see also Dubow, 1997, 2006).

Indeed, processes of anglicisation, aimed in particular at the colony’s non-English speaking white population (the Boers/Afrikaners) but also affecting an emerging African elite who were educated in mission schools, became a characteristic feature of the Cape colony (Sturgis, 1982). Formal policies of anglicisation can be dated back to as early as 1811, when the newly appointed John Cradock expressed the desire to assimilate the institutions of the Cape to those of England (Dubow, 2006):

Pressures for anglicisation, coupled with anti-Dutch sentiment, were given further force by senior administrators like Henry Ellis, who helped to prepare the way for the 1820 settlers and whose recommendations found expression in an 1822 proclamation that sought to replace Dutch by English as the official administrative and legal language of the Cape. (p. 21)

As Dubow (2006) observes above, British attitudes to the Cape Dutch were generally negative, and they subjected their new subjects to something akin to a civilising offensive. The express aim was to consolidate British power in the region and transform the Cape Dutch into loyal British subjects by assimilating them into an emerging cultural and political domain that, in its public expressions, were to be English. This was successful to some extent, at least in the immediate vicinity of Cape Town. By the 1830s, according to Giliomee (2003), the Dutch-speaking elite at the Cape were already fairly anglicised. One of their representatives, Henry Cloete, said in 1831: ‘The Cape Dutch were essentially English. Their habits, their intermarriage, their general improvements, all exhibit and prove this fact’ (as cited in Giliomee, 2003, p. 198). Official anglicisation involved measures such as employing Scottish ministers to take up positions in the Dutch Reformed Church and the recruitment of British schoolmasters to teach in government schools. It was not implemented systematically at first, but even so, English certainly dominated as a language of administration and political discourse by the 1830s. Dutch, however, remained the dominant vernacular in the countryside – dropping it from the government school syllabus in 1828, for example, led to a drop in Afrikaner schools attendance rather than a shift to English (Giliomee, 2003). In the Dutch Reformed Church, too, the language would remain dominant: ‘In the mid-1830s fully half of the Cape’s twenty-two Reformed ministers were Scots, though in time most integrated themselves into local communities and came to be assimilated as Afrikaners’ (Dubow, 2006, p. 21).

Whereas the Cape was soon ruled by Anglo-Dutch elites and many so-called ‘Cape Afrikaners’ ascended to powerful positions in politics and industry, things were different on the eastern frontier. By the 1770s (just over a century after settlement) the colonists

had reached the Zuurveld (in the current Eastern Cape, between the Fish and Kei rivers). These colonists formed, by and large, a culturally integrated population, with a developing ethnolinguistic identity centred on the Cape Dutch dialect (Giliomee, 2003). The eastern frontier was a violent, volatile region that ‘marked the zone of contact between the colony and the independent, relatively powerful Xhosa chiefdoms’ (Gilmour, 2006, p. 67). In the early years of the nineteenth century this frontier was still ‘open’, and the ‘relations between Xhosa, Khoikhoi, San, and Boers were complex and protean, based upon struggles over land and resources in a context where no one authority was recognised as legitimate by all parties’ (p. 67). After taking control of the Cape in 1806, the British sought to stabilise colonial civil society, especially on the frontier. An important ingredient of this process was to establish and police clearly demarcated colonial borders – spatial borders, at first, but increasingly also *cultural* ones, which in time inscribed onto the process of spatial partitioning an essentially *ethnolinguistic* logic. The frontier thus became a laboratory of sorts for the establishment of legitimated colonial differences, borders and strategies of rule, and in the process one of the major contexts in which the linguistic, ethnic and racial reality of modern-day South Africa came to be constructed and contested.

In the context of establishing rule in the frontier region, the relationship between the colonial government and the Xhosa chiefdoms was initially a simple one of exclusion and expulsion: the ‘policy’ was to drive the Xhosa back east as far as possible, and in this way to stabilise the frontier (Giliomee, 1989; Gilmour, 2006). The Xhosa were regarded as *outside empire*: an exterior element in relation to which the interior had to be stabilised. They were not to be ruled over, but were instead to be removed from the domain of government and subjects. For example, in 1811-1812, during the Fourth Frontier War, Colonel John Graham’s military campaign drove the Xhosa over the Fish River, a border which had been decided upon in the late eighteenth century by a treaty with Chief Ngqika – a treaty that was, however, by no means agreed upon by all the Xhosa chiefdoms (Giliomee, 2003; Gilmour, 2006; Mostert, 1992). This act of expulsion set the scene for the major preoccupation of British rule in the region for the next few decades: ‘to fully transform this socially heterogeneous, politically volatile zone of contact into a clearly defined, stable boundary between the developing colonial order and the dangerous

disorder which supposedly reigned beyond' (Gilmour, 2006, p. 68). The practice of exclusion (defining the Xhosa as exterior to the colony and enacting that through an attempted ethnic cleansing of the region) continued, when after the Fifth Frontier War (1818-1819), the Cape Governor, Lord Somerset, demanded that the Xhosa also be evicted from the area between the Fish and the Keiskamma Rivers (Gilmour, 2006).

The desire to create a buffer between Xhosa society and the colony also partly motivated the decision to fund the immigration to the region of some 4000 British settlers – a settlement that would profoundly shape the cultural and linguistic make-up of an emerging South African nationality and especially of *white* South Africa (Elphick & Giliomee, 1989). The arrival of the British Settlers in 1820 also brought missionary activity to the frontier region. William Shaw established the first mission station in the Xhosa regions between the Keiskamma and the Buffalo Rivers, called Wesleyville, in 1823. The missionaries initially held the Xhosa in high regard. They expressed strong disagreement with the 'native policies' of the Cape, considering it partially to blame for the cycles of violence that had characterised the frontier. The British Settlers, too, initially treated the frontier as a zone of contact, even of trade, and not simply as a partition between antagonistic factions. But this would soon change, and by the time of the Sixth Frontier War (1834-1835), Settler attitudes to the Xhosa were hardening inexorably. The missionaries soon followed suit, increasingly expressing disappointment and disillusionment with the Xhosa people (Price, 2008): portraying them as savages with only one redeeming quality – *their language*, which by then had started attracting considerable amounts of philological attention (Gilmour, 2006, p. 73). This missionary change of heart, however, only amplified the impact that missionary activity eventually had on a changing colonial governmentality. The ethnographic and especially *linguistic* knowledge gathered and systematised by missionaries during the early years of Christian proselytising, increasingly assumed importance in governing the frontier. As Alexander and Heugh (2001) observe:

During the period of British rule, it was the Christian missionaries who were mainly concerned with the *taming* of the languages of the African people to serve the ends of empire [...] their main concern was to reduce the Nguni and Sotho

languages to writing in order to accelerate the conversion of the ‘heathen’. (p. 18, emphasis added)

But conversion is only part of a much larger story of biopolitical investment in the indigenous population. Missionary labour required knowledge of the local inhabitants – of their culture, social practices, but above all of their languages. Missionaries initially relied on interpreters, often employed from the indigenous population itself – such as the Xhosa Chief Dyani Tshatshu, who interpreted for William Shaw (Gilmour, 2006). But language was more important to mission activity than simply being a means of communication between different groups of people. The missionaries needed to make religious literature, most importantly the Bible, available to native populations in languages they could understand. In accordance to Protestant and especially Methodist doctrine, this had to be the vernacular language of the indigenous population served by the Gospel. Missionaries therefore mastered the languages of their ‘flock’, and more importantly, reduced it to writing. This initiated a crucial – perhaps *the* crucial – moment in the epistemological foundations of modern South Africa: in the reduction of speech to writing and the creation of standard versions of indigenous languages, missionaries across the southern African region also laid the foundation for the ethnic and racial dimensions along which the South African reality came to be imagined and ruled (Alexander, 1989; Harries, 1988, 1995; Makoni, 1994, 2003).

Missionaries indeed became deeply embroiled in political and academic debates about the nature of the indigenous populations they served and about the most appropriate and effective ways to rule over them. In the case of the eastern frontier, for example, arguments about language, and the purposes of language study, became deeply interwoven with contradictory discourses about the Xhosa and the governmental rationalities appropriate to them: they steered an ideologically loaded path between notions of ‘incorporation and exclusion, familiarity and difference’ (Gilmour, 2006, p. 73). Issues such as the relationship between tribes and nations, dialects and languages, and languages and territorial demarcations, increasingly defined missionary writing on the topic of language during the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Eventually, the post-Enlightenment focus on the nature and *necessary* ordering of ethnolinguistic

categories (in line with concerns of homogeneity, unity and reason) served not only the specific demands of mission (conversion, in other words) but, more generally, of colonial control and government. This became the case especially after the Seventh Frontier War of 1847, after which Xhosa power was weakened substantially: the region between the Fish and Keiskamma Rivers was absorbed into the colony, and the area between the Keiskamma and the Kei was annexed as British Kaffraria. According to Gilmour (2006): ‘Concomitantly, colonial policy had swung away from exclusion, further towards forcible domination, surveillance, and *partial incorporation* as means to manage the perceived threats posed by the Xhosa’ (p. 96, emphasis added). The longer term consequence of this confluence of colonial governmentality and missionary linguistics (not only on the eastern frontier but across Southern Africa – see Harries (1988) and Gilmour (2006) in this regard), was that African populations were increasingly inscribed onto the grid of colonial power according to an ethno-linguistic principle, which identified ethnic groups or ‘tribes’ primarily with the existence of a shared, standardised language.

This shift in colonial governmentality, from strategies of exclusion to strategies of *ethnically mediated inclusion*, is often referred to as ‘indirect rule’ (Mamdani, 1996, 2004; Pels, 1997; Spivakovsky, 2006).²⁰ From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, colonial governmentality, and especially *British* colonial governmentality, increasingly relied on internalising the native population into the sphere of colonial rule, by taking recourse to either existing or invented native (‘ethnic’) authorities and institutions. Mamdani (1996) therefore shifts his analytic attention to questions of how ‘the subject population was incorporated into – and not excluded from – the arena of colonial power’ (p. 15). He also, tellingly, refers to this pattern of rule by proxy as a form of ‘decentralised despotism’. By focusing on strategies of mediated inclusion rather than outright exclusion, in which ethnicity was operationalised and transformed as a technology of colonial rule, Mamdani foregrounds the so-called ‘native question’ as the fundamental issue of colonial rule, and identifies South African apartheid as a continuation of more general technologies of colonial rule:

Usually understood as institutionalized racial domination, apartheid was actually an attempt to soften racial antagonism by mediating and thereby refracting the

impact of racial domination *through a range of Native Authorities*. Not surprisingly, the discourse of apartheid – in both General Smuts, who anticipated it, and the Broederbond, which engineered it – idealized the practice of indirect rule in British colonies to the north. As a form of rule, apartheid – like the indirect rule colonial state – fractured the ranks of the ruled along a double divide: ethnic on the one hand, rural-urban on the other. (p. 27, emphasis added)

The important point here, is that on the eastern frontier and elsewhere in southern Africa, missionaries (through their reduction of speech to writing by means of the standardisation of grammar and orthography) laid the *linguistic* foundations for the patterns of ethnic or ‘tribal’ recognition that became so central to colonial rationalities of rule during the latter half of the nineteenth century. These were, in turn, carried over to the apartheid era as immutable, almost self-evident social and political boundaries. However, these foundations were based on a process of almost systematic *linguistic misrecognition*. The standardised, written forms of extant ‘African languages’ reflected, quite literally, missionary rather than linguistic or even subjectively invested social borders (Alexander, 1989; Alexander & Heugh, 2001). Different missionary societies, often in direct competition with one another, constructed seemingly discrete languages to coincide with their own territorial borders – ‘languages’ that did not resemble existing patterns of communicative practice within speech continua. This top-down manufacturing of patterns of linguistic similarity and difference within the southern African region in time became invested (by colonial government and their ‘ethnic’ auxiliaries alike) with all the assumptions of lineage and identity that had by then become associated with language in the European ethnonational imagination.²¹ Makoni (1994), in fact, refers to African languages as ‘European scripts’; and Harries (1988, 1995), in turn, argues that missionary language construction in south-east Africa and elsewhere provided the roots for the invention, not only of discrete languages, but of *ethnicity* as a politically meaningful construct in South Africa. Indeed, many of the ethnic categories that seem so unquestionable today had not existed in southern Africa before the late nineteenth century. The speech continua in southern Africa, to state it quite simply, could have been reduced in ways to produce altogether different language, and hence ethnolinguistic, landscapes. African languages were political rather than linguistic constructs: they served

the often contradictory interests of missionaries, the colonial government, and also of emerging 'tribal' elites.

The linguistic landscape of modern South Africa was thus profoundly mediated through the scriptural, civilisational impulse of missionary culture, and its incorporation into broader governmentalities of colonial rule (Errington, 2001b; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005). Language was at the heart of an important shift during the nineteenth century from a territorial logic of simple exclusion to one focused on the increasingly epistemologically rooted management of populations *as* populations: in other words, it became a thoroughly biopolitical principle in terms of which modern South Africa became imagined as a country. Whereas language initially gave missionaries access to the individual soul, it increasingly came to embody *the soul of the nation itself*. That this occurred after 1850, when the eastern frontier was closed and the Xhosa were subjugated to colonial rule, is not surprising. It was only in the late eighteenth century that European philology developed its matrix of language, culture and nationality, and that language assumed an essentially ontological role with respects to ideas of nationality, culture and also race in Europe and in its colonial territories (Ashcroft, 2001; Bauman & Briggs, 2003). Whereas this enterprise informed colonial projects (adding to it a crucial element of epistemological violence) colonial encounters also in turn provided the comparative materials on which accounts of racial difference and accounts of European superiority were based (Goldberg, 1993). There developed, in other words, reciprocity between European self-understanding and understanding of others in terms of language, culture and race in the colonial world.

1910-1990: Language, racism and apartheid

The Union of South Africa was founded in 1910 (the outcome of a negotiated settlement between the two white communities, the English and the Afrikaners) following on the military defeat of the Boers in the South African War of 1899-1902 and the subsequent incorporation of the two Boer republics, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Republic of the Orange Free State, under British colonial rule (Thompson, 1961). In the words of Giliomee (2003),

For most whites the Union was a tangible symbol of South Africa's progress toward modernity and development. *'South Africa' was no longer a mere territorial expression*, but the name of a modern state underpinned by an increasingly sophisticated economy, a rapidly improving communications system and a steadily urbanizing population. It could take its place with pride, along with Australia and Canada, as a self-governing, autonomous British dominion. (p. 357, emphasis added)

The Union, in line with its official attempts to reconcile the two white groups, and to promote a form of white South African 'nation-building', adopted both English and Dutch as its official languages (Giliomee, 2003). This was an important compromise, especially after Lord Milner's intensified policies of anglicisation in the immediate aftermath of the war. Although this did not lead to a complete eradication of tensions between the Afrikaners and the white English speaking population, it did create some kind of political stability and, importantly, a means for increasing Afrikaner political, cultural and economic mobility (Reagan, 2002).²² Black South Africans, of course, were excluded from the post-war political compromise and were increasingly marginalised (through incrementally discriminatory legislation) from the political, economic and cultural institutions of the new state. The status of African languages, outside the mission schools that had developed in the nineteenth century (schools that would remain the only formal education available for black children until the creation of apartheid 'Bantu education'), was simply not on the table. But many white Afrikaans speakers, and an increasing number of their emerging cultural and political leaders, considered *themselves* the marginalised part of the new South African nation. The war against the British had all but been forgotten, and although the name 'Afrikaner' still had no fixed or even coherent usage in the first decade or so of the twentieth century, it increasingly became a term of nationalistic self-definition – a symbol and medium of cultural, political and economic aspiration. Instead of an inclusive *white* South African nationalism, centred on the cultural and economic supremacy of English language and culture, the early years of the Union saw instead the increasing development and strengthening of *Afrikaner* nationalism (Dubow, 1997; Posel, 1991).

Although Afrikaner nationalism, like all nationalisms, incorporated a diversity of historical and cultural elements in its 'imagining' a coherent cultural-political community – mythologising the Great Trek, for example – language was at its very core.²³ Giliomee (2003) gives a very good description of the role played by language in the early development of Afrikaner nationalism:

At the heart of the Afrikaner nationalist struggle was the attempt to imagine a new national community with its language enjoying parity of esteem with English in the public sphere. Only then would the sense of being marginalized be overcome. This meant that Afrikaans had to be heard in Parliament, the civil service, schools, colleges and universities, and in the world of business and finance; it had to be the medium of newspapers, novels and poems, giving expression to what was truly South African. Instead of English-speakers portraying Afrikaners in reports, novels or histories as everything they were not: unrefined, semi-literate, dogmatic, and unprogressive, the Afrikaners had to define and represent themselves as the true South Africans. This cultural revolution had to pave the way for the establishment of political, economic, and cultural institutions and ultimately the Union of South Africa had to make way for a Republic of South Africa that was free and independent. (p. 361)

As is clear from this extract, it was Afrikaans, not Dutch, that galvanised the emerging Afrikaner nationalism. This ideological preference for the common patois over the elite language was not a *fait accompli* at the beginning of the twentieth century; it took the considerable efforts of writers, poets, scholars and other cultural entrepreneurs to promote the idea that Afrikaans could be the legitimate (and indeed *only*) vehicle for Afrikaner self-expression and nationalism. It took even more effort to then set about systematically developing the higher functions of the language (Giliomee, 2004; Ponelis, 1993; Roberge, 2002). Significantly, this cultural labour entailed the repression of the creolised, and specifically multi-racial, nature of the origins of Afrikaans. For Afrikaans to become the principle element of white Afrikaner identity, one of the mechanisms through which an ideological form of whiteness was produced and could be expressed, it had, in fact, to be *made* white: its constitutive relationship to cultural and racial purity

became part of the very mythology of the language.²⁴ This meant, quite simply, that white, middleclass and predominantly urban speech variants were elevated to the standard version of the language, against which the dialect features of rural and especially coloured Afrikaans speech became marked as not just non-standard, but inferior. It also meant that nationalist histories of the language systematically neglected and even ignored the contribution of the Khoikhoi, slaves and the Muslim community in the development of Afrikaans (Roberge, 1990; Van Rensburg, 1999).

In 1925 Afrikaans replaced Dutch as an official language of the Union; in 1933 the Bible was translated into the language, and by the 1970s it had become a fully developed public language. The systematic development of Afrikaans as a fully-fledged medium of higher functions of use, a language of public life, science and, to a lesser extent, commerce, has certainly been one of Afrikaner nationalism's most significant accomplishments. In this it was a direct heir of the ethnic nationalisms which emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century and defined the political community as a group organically linked by an ancestral language (Hobsbawm, 1990; see also Chapter 4). What made this accomplishment of a fully developed, modern language especially significant was that Afrikaans functioned not only as a symbol or emblem of social identity, but indeed became the principle medium through which Afrikaner solidarity and its social, political and economic mobility could become materially (as opposed to just symbolically) realised. Thus, in somewhat functionalist terms, one can say that Afrikaans provided a way to bridge class divisions within the white Afrikaner community in ways that Dutch (an elite form only few could still speak and write at the beginning of the twentieth century) simply could not (Worden, 1994). It also became a form of symbolic capital for white speakers that (once the linguistic market had been restructured) could be transformed into the profits of education, power and wealth (Bourdieu, 1991). The great mid-twentieth century Afrikaans poet and intellectual, N.P. van Wyk Louw, referred to Afrikaans as 'the socialism of the poor Afrikaners' (as cited in Giliomee, 2004, p. 40) – an apt description indeed. In the context of Afrikaner poverty (one of the moral panics of early twentieth century South African political life) Afrikaans was not just a symbol of identity, but a powerful key that unlocked restricted areas of education and the economy for a marginalised class of people. Worden (1994) likewise mentions the mobilising

function of Afrikaans in the context of divided Afrikaner class interests: 'In a conscious attempt to develop an Afrikaner ethnic identity in the face of industrialization and class division, [...] northern clerics and teachers mobilized support for the Afrikaans language and published newspapers and popular magazines such as *Die Huisgenoot...*' (p. 89).

If it was simply a matter of language playing a central role in the development and internal functioning of Afrikaner nationalism, the history of the emergence of Afrikaans would not be so important to my narrative. But Afrikaner nationalism did not stop at choosing and then shaping Afrikaans into a privileged, emotionally and aesthetically invested symbolic reference point for its own sense of cultural uniqueness. It went further and elevated language *as such* to become, alongside race, one of the central dimensions in terms of which South Africa could be imagined as a domain of different nations and proto-nations, and thus a means by which it could impose order and rule in terms of an ethno-racial logic. In other words, with Afrikaner nationalism the biopolitical and governmental roles of language (already defined under nineteenth century British rule) were further sharpened and deployed. Language was never simply an Afrikaner issue; it was a South African issue, and an element without which the particular ethnic and racial constructions of apartheid South Africa cannot be fully appreciated (Alexander, 1989, 2002). For too long, as I have argued in Chapter 2, historians and political scientists have underestimated the foundational importance of language, not just *in* South Africa, but in terms of which competing versions of 'South Africa' were imagined. Indeed, as Alexander (2004) argues, the apartheid project 'was based, among other things, on a biologicistic conception of the relationship between "race" on the one hand and ethnicity and language on the other' (p. 115).

As was indicated above, the Union of South Africa consolidated existing white power and rule and set the processes of black political disenfranchisement in motion that would culminate in the apartheid policies of 1948 and after (Posel, 1991; Worden, 1994). In this context it is not at all surprising that the African languages were entirely disregarded by the Union government. They had no social status, no legal rights, and no role to play in South African public life. Interestingly enough, the emerging African political elite (the ANC, for example, was founded in 1912) likewise did not put indigenous language rights

high on their political agenda. Unlike Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism did not take the form of a politics of language. In fact, black political mobilisation in the early twentieth century was profoundly dominated by an increasingly urbanised class of individuals who had been educated in mission schools and were, by and large, fairly anglicised in important aspects of their cultural values and political ideals. According to Alexander (1989, p. 28; see also Alexander, 2001), the ‘black middle class, true to its missionary origins, plumped for English and adopted an elitist and patronising attitude to the language of the people. In the struggle between Boer and Briton, they invariably chose the side of Queen Victoria.’ De Klerk (1999) makes a similar point, but perhaps a little less stringently:

Of course, English was desirable to the local people not so much because of the intrinsic linguistic appeal and aesthetic qualities of the language, but because of the military, economic and cultural power of its speakers – they learned English not because they couldn’t resist the attraction of its lilting accents, but because the people thrusting muzzles of guns in their faces, or employing labour at their lucrative gold and diamond mines, refused to oblige by learning their languages. (p. 311)

The English, and British liberalism specifically, were indeed initially seen as political allies, and organisations like the ANC, some decades before their radicalisation, initially sought the inclusion of middleclass black people into the political and economic structures of the new state, as opposed to the revolutionary overthrowing of the state. But if class interests and partial cultural assimilation due to missionary education, amongst other things, kept African languages from the black political agenda in the early years of the Union, apartheid certainly consolidated it. As was mentioned, apartheid – which commenced in 1948 with the unexpected and marginal victory of the National Party (Giliomee, 2003) – turned language into an increasingly important component in its project of ethno-racial rule. Apartheid language planning aimed at more than simply asserting and fortifying Afrikaans as a symbol of white Afrikaner identity and as the principle means of their educational and economic mobility. Language became central to the project of apartheid – to its ethno-logic – and from the outset aimed at more than merely privileging the two

official languages over the indigenous others. According to Alexander and Heugh (2001, p. 19): ‘Apartheid language policy, like apartheid policy generally, was calculated to bring about and entrench divisions among black people and their total subjugation to the white supremacist blueprints of the Broederbond and other thinktanks of the new political class.’ Many Africans understood this very well, and hence experienced the apartheid state’s promotion of indigenous languages as media of instruction in schools as ‘an attempt to retribalise black South Africans (Reagan, 2002, p. 422). Essentially, they were correct.

Of course, the apartheid social engineers drew upon the existing colonial discourses and practices of indirect rule to link indigenous languages to different ‘tribes’ or ethnicities and to argue for the necessity, not only to divide white and black, but to ‘allow’ different black populations to develop separately as (or into) fully-fledged ethnolinguistic nations (Harries, 1995; Kamwangamalu, 2001). In the words of H.F. Verwoerd himself (as cited in Alexander, 1989) himself: ‘Africans who speak different languages must live in separate quarters...’ (p. 21). These ‘separate quarters’ not only referred to the spatial partitioning of people within the urban areas of South Africa, but the development of the so-called ‘independent homelands’ (Worden, 1994). In theory, these were to be sovereign states to which black people were assigned as citizens on the basis of their ‘ethnicity’. In this far-reaching imagining of South Africa as a ‘multinational’ state, along with the attempted territorial restructuring of the region in order to fulfil the principle of ‘one nation, one state’, apartheid was clearly not just a racial project, but an *ethnolinguistic* project too. Thus, race and language are, at least in South Africa, entangled at a foundational and constitutive level. The one cannot be approached without taking the other into account.

In this regard the apartheid state nominally supported the development of the indigenous African languages: they were to be developed as languages of higher functions in the independent homelands and used as mediums of instruction in black South African schools (Kamwangamalu, 2001; Mclean, 1999). The level of this support should not be overstated. These developments, including the establishment of Bantu Language Boards, were perennially under-funded, had no political legitimacy amongst progressive black organisations and, most importantly, were first and foremost designed to be politically

expedient for the apartheid state (Alexander, 1989; Webb, 2002). Heugh (2002) provides a good analysis of this:

Language policy under apartheid was driven by a two-pronged logic: to counteract the hegemony of English foisted upon the country after Milner and to pursue the principle of separate development. This included extensive modernisation of Afrikaans, in addition to limited and separate language development in each of nine African languages/varieties of languages. In this way, the social, educational and political segregation of the users of the different languages was encouraged. Social stratification was furthered through the application of this policy since the development of Afrikaans was to ensure unrestricted functional use of the language, whereas the development of African languages was only intended to occur for restricted purposes. They were never intended for use in the upper levels of education, the economy or political activity. (p. 450)

But nevertheless, even though grossly neglected, African languages were not simply *invisible* under apartheid. They were incorporated into the rationality of apartheid rule: they became essential ingredients in the governmental regimes whereby black people were made visible in South Africa and could be codified, demarcated, divided and addressed as learners, labourers, ethnic and cultural subjects, and so on. The mobilisation of political resistance to the racial taxonomies and hierarchies of twentieth century South Africa thus demanded that ethnicity and all it entailed had to be transcended. As Desmond Tutu said in the early 1980s: ‘we Blacks (most of us) execrate ethnicity with all our being’ (as cited in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003, p. 445). In the process, English indeed came to be regarded by many in the liberation struggle as an ‘unmarked code for intercultural and interethnic communication’ (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 87) – the almost obvious vehicle for black solidarity, transcendence of apartheid ethnic divisions, and post-apartheid nation-building (Alexander, 1989, 2002; Hirson, 1981; Mclean, 1999; Ridge, 2000). It also, increasingly, became the symbol of economic interests, as De Klerk (1999) articulates:

English became all the more desirable, seen by many as the magic key to socio-economic advancement and power. In contrast, indigenous languages were regarded by many of their own speakers as worthless because of their functional limitations with regard to access to participation and mobility in wider society. (p. 312)

The biopolitical and governmental role played by language planning, language policies and language practices during the apartheid era is nowhere more evident than in the domain of education (De Klerk, 2002; Marivate, 1993; Mda, 2004; Reagan, 1986a, 1986b, 1987a, 1987b, 2002). Afrikaans schools, and a fully fledged education system that enshrined the principle of mother tongue education for white children, were developed from the 1930s onwards, and consolidated after 1948 (Giliomee, 2003). But apartheid also brought with it a separate, segregated education system for black learners: the much loathed system of Bantu Education. The Bantu Education Act was formulated in 1948 and passed in 1953 (De Klerk, 1999; Worden, 1994). It brought African schools under the centralised control of the Department of Native Affairs and dissolved the independently functioning mission education system (Phaswana, 2003; Worden, 1994). The philosophy of Bantu Education was to foster indigenous, 'Bantu' culture – understood and articulated, of course, from the perspective of the apartheid state. More damagingly still, it 'deliberately prepared students for little more than manual labour' (Worden, 1994, p. 96). Bantu Education, through its promotion of mother tongue education alongside Afrikaans and English, also imposed a particular linguistic regime on black learners. This is how it was formulated in the Bantu Education Act:

We believe that [...] the teaching and education of the native must be grounded in the life and world view of the whites, most especially those of the Boer nation as the senior white trustee of the native [...] The mother tongue must be the basis of native education and teaching but [...] the two official languages must be taught as subjects because they are official languages, and [...] the keys to the cultural loans that are necessary to his own cultural progress. (as cited in Phaswana, 2003, p. 119)

The language goals of the Act were to promote, in the long run, the influence of Afrikaans and reduce that of English in black education; to impose Afrikaans and English equally as languages of instruction, and to progressively extend mother tongue education for black learners in ethnically segregated schools (Phaswana, 2003). Much of this was presented by the apartheid government as, firstly, scientifically warranted educational principles and, secondly, rooted in respect for the irreducible uniqueness of different ethnic identities and destinies; it was even legitimated on the authority of UNESCO findings concerning the superiority of mother tongue education. According to Alexander (1999, p. 4), the 'National Party was using the very sensible UNESCO declarations on the importance of using vernacular languages as media of instruction in schools in order to justify and beautify its racist curriculum, which the world came to know as Bantu Education.'

Unsurprisingly, black political leaders, parents and learners forcefully resisted the language regimes of Bantu Education – a resistance not only aimed at Afrikaans, but at the indigenous African languages as well (Reagan, 2002). Whilst government demanded that English and Afrikaans would share the status of medium of instruction on a 50/50 basis, this did not always occur in practice. Black students generally opted for English instead. In order to curb what they saw as the weakening position of Afrikaans in black schools the nationalist government developed a new policy in the early 1970s, which sought to increase the amount of Afrikaans instruction, especially in subjects like mathematics. This sparked the Soweto uprisings of 1976, with dramatic implications for the language history of South Africa during the later apartheid years and the post-apartheid era. Soweto 1976 became a byword for the mass resistance against apartheid that accelerated from then on and reached its pinnacle during the 1980s. It also iconically linked Afrikaans to apartheid and racial oppression. 'Down with Afrikaans!'; 'Afrikaans is the oppressor's language!'; and 'Blacks are not dustbins – Afrikaans stinks!' are but a few of the slogans displayed in the course of the uprisings. As Jakes Gerwel observed in 1976: 'Afrikaans had become the defining characteristic [of the state] which the greatest part of the population knows by its image of arrogance and cruelty' (as cited in Giliomee, 2004, p. 42).

Apartheid language policy, especially as it was implemented in black education, almost irredeemably tainted the notions of multilingualism, mother tongue education and indigenous language development in South African society (Alexander & Heugh, 2001). It also narrowed the discursive space within which South Africa could be imagined as a multilingual country, without, in linguistic terms, reproducing and deepening ethnic and racial identities. As I shall proceed to show in the next section, it left a linguistic legacy characterised not only by diversity and inequality, but by language ideological complexes that were still awkwardly reminiscent of the colonial and racial manufacturing of indigenous subjects, cultural differences, and various forms of rule by proxy (Makoni, 2003). In summary, the apartheid era intensified the biopolitical productivity that language had achieved in the region ever since the mid-nineteenth century. Alongside race and ethnicity, language emerged as an essential element in apartheid ideology; in the biopolitical making and management of populations. One can even argue that language under apartheid became *the* central component of the ideological essentialising of difference: ethnicity and race were projected, along nineteenth century philological and nationalistic lines, as primarily *linguistically* rooted in history and thus oriented towards ‘national’ futures. Language functioned as a sort of ‘cultural DNA’ by which ethnicity and race could be explained, justified and mobilised. Language, in short, was the *raison d’être* as well as the major tool of separate and differentiated development in South Africa.

A new symbolic universe: Post-apartheid language orders

What is the *new* South Africa? One could be cynical and dismiss the use of the prefix as merely rhetorical; and, moreover, such cynical voices are not in short supply, especially from left-wing academics and commentators (e.g., Bond, 2000; Marais, 1998; Mbeki, 2009; Terreblanche, 2002). Terre Blanche (2006) provides a useful summary of the left-wing position:

That post-apartheid South Africa is characterised by a continuing close correspondence between race and class is not in dispute: Most poor South Africans are black, and most black South Africans are poor. [...] How is it that the post-apartheid political order, while ostensibly premised on non-racialism, remains

mired in a racially unequal status quo, and what should be (or should have been) done to bring about a more equitable distribution of economic resources? (p. 73)

However, despite the obvious continuities with apartheid South Africa, such as economic, gender and other forms of inequality (e.g., Desai, 2002; Du Toit, Skuse & Cousins, 2007); remaining forms of institutional and commonplace racism (e.g., Emery, 2008; Erasmus, 2005; Stevens, Swart & Franchi, 2006); and (now increasingly global) capitalist modes of production and exploitation (Bond, 2004; Hart, 2002; Terreblanche, 2002; Van der Westhuizen, 2005), the dismantling of apartheid also unquestionably inaugurated a radical reimagining of the *meaning* of South Africa – in short, of national identity and citizenship (Gilroy, 2005; Johnson, 2005). As I have argued throughout this chapter, countries exist as ideological complexes as much as they exist ‘objectively’ as territories, populations and national institutions. It is on the level of their *ideological* existence that the particular relationship between territory, population and institutions finds expression in the idea of a *nation*. In turn, it is also on this level that these relationships are negotiated, contested and (more or less) settled.

The end of apartheid brought about a paradigm shift in how the national ordering of South African society could be conceptualised or imagined in cultural, political and economic terms. Thus, the demise of apartheid inaugurated a *new* South Africa. Most significantly for this discussion, the post-apartheid state is formally post-racist: not in the sense that there is a sudden absence of race thinking, racialised identities or even racial discrimination (e.g., Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Erasmus, 2005; Stevens, 1998; Stevens, Franchi & Swart, 2006; Terre Blanche, 2006), but rather in the sense that the construct of race, as a biopolitical principle of population and governmentality, no longer politically and legally constitutes South Africa as a racially differentiated territory. Similarly, South Africans are no longer constituted as a racially differentiated population (but see Chipkin, 2007; Pretorius, 2006).

This does not mean, of course, that the problem of difference, which is *the* ontological problem of the modern nation-state (see Chapter 4), has simply been dissolved (May, 2001; Touraine, 2000; Williams, 1999). On the contrary, the dismantling of apartheid

foregrounds the issue of difference, as well as the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate differences within a newly reconstituted national space, as central to national self-definition (e.g., Chipkin, 2007; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003; Van der Merwe, 2001, 2003). Self-definition, and especially *national* self-definition, always demands contrasting definitions of ‘Others’. In this regard the nation-state’s ‘Others’ are to be found both externally to the national polity (what, in other words, distinguishes a South African from a non-South African?), but also (and perhaps even more importantly in a radically diverse society) *internally* to it (what are the distinguishing characteristics between different categories of South Africans, and what is it about the category of ‘South African’ that transcends existing sub-national differences?).

The national orientation to external ‘Others’ (a category embodied in contemporary South Africa primarily by immigrants and undocumented migrants from other African countries) is certainly of crucial importance to questions of national identity (e.g., Harris, 2002; Vigneswaran, 2007). However, I will focus here instead on the challenges posed by the existence of *internal* ‘Others’: differences within the national polity – including racial and ethnic identities and distinctions between so-called ‘modern’ vs. ‘traditional’ approaches to politics, community and authority (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003, 2004, 2009; Robins, 2009).²⁵ These differences continue to exist in a profoundly ambiguous relationship with ideals of national identity, societal transformation and development, and modernisation in post-apartheid South Africa. The reason for this is clear: because of the central role that cultural and ethnic differences were given in colonial and apartheid governmentalities, the post-apartheid state has sought to reconstitute the polity in such a way as to transcend the ethno-racial logic of apartheid (Chipkin, 2007). On the one hand, South Africa is therefore a resolutely modern liberal democratic state, steeped in notions of individual rights and the rule of law. On the other hand, however, it has made constitutional and other concessions to the very categories of difference introduced and exploited by colonial and apartheid governmentalities. Firstly, the notion of race remains relevant to demands of reconstruction, transformation and affirmative action. Secondly, the rights of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities (including traditional leadership and the institutions of customary law) are constitutionally enshrined (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003). And thirdly, the notion of ‘diversity’ itself – of the

‘rainbow nation’ – has become an integral part of the ‘corporate image’ of post-apartheid South Africa in a global market.

The extent to which elements of this ‘diversity’ are experienced as a real contradiction (something that functions contrary to the desired biopolitical objectives and rationalities of post-apartheid rule), is made clear in an important document prepared for the ANC’s 50th national conference in 1997 by the ANC politician, intellectual and later Minister of Arts and Culture, Pallo Jordan (1997). Jordan refers in this document to ‘a number of distasteful concessions’ made by his party in the process of negotiations for a democratic transition with the former apartheid rulers. These concessions, according to Jordan, all involve the continued political and legal recognition of sub-national ethnic and cultural identities – including, of course, the reformulated (in the politically correct terminology of diversity and minority rights) ‘cultural’ interests of white South Africans. Despite nominally celebrating diversity, Jordan considers these constitutional and other concessions to ‘minorities’ as: (i) obstructing the development of ‘an inclusive South African nationhood rooted in the universalist, liberatory outlook of modernity’; and (ii) detracting from the progress the ANC has managed to make in the ‘process of homogenisation’ and diminishing the political significance of ‘particular language communities’ in post-apartheid South Africa. According to Jordan:

Ethnicity [...] clearly has nothing to do with ‘blood’, ‘the ancestors’, ‘the soil’ and other attributes which ethnicity invariably invoke. It does however have everything to do with White racist policies to thwart the aspirations of our people for freedom, democracy and equality.

Language and language politics features prominently in Jordan’s (1997) account. Firstly, he equates ‘ethnic communities’ with ‘language communities’, and thus understands one in relation to the other. This equation, by implication, problematises most forms of language politics (of making political claims for or in terms of a language) as examples of either explicit or veiled forms of ethnic mobilisation. Unsurprisingly, Jordan specifically takes aim at the post-apartheid politics of Afrikaans, which he considers a cynical abuse of the constitutional leverage granted to ‘ethnic’ groups in order to challenge the state on

issues of necessary and legitimate national transformation. He therefore depicts the politics of Afrikaans as, firstly, ethno-racist, and secondly, as a strategic political tool with which white (and especially Afrikaner) racial power and supremacy is buttressed under post-apartheid conditions:

With the exception of the most backward and fanatical racists, the Afrikaner petty bourgeois intellectual have forsaken ethno-nationalism, hoping to constitute a multi-racial coalition of conservative forces to oppose the national liberation movement in the hustings. They can be expected to continue engaging in a modified form of ethnic mobilisation around the Afrikaans language for the resonances it can produce among sections of the Coloured population, but most realize that such a policy thrust will prove unattractive to the majority of voters.

Jordan's (1997) negative approach to ethnicity, and his denunciation of the politics of language as 'anti-transformation' and an obstacle to nation-building, is not surprising. First of all, it is an approach very much in line with modern liberal conceptions of the nation-state, based on ideals of population homogeneity and individual as opposed to group-based rights (May, 2001). Secondly, and even more importantly, it is also a reaction to the South African history of ethnic engineering (narrated in this chapter), and to forms of governmentality in which language, ethnicity and race had been inextricably connected. One may disagree with Jordan's form of state-nationalism, but he is correct to insist that the politics of language (at least in South Africa) is never about language alone. Even a minor court case about the language of instruction in a primary school, for example, is invariably oriented towards what is essentially 'the national question': the question, that is, of what kinds of identities, practices, spaces and rights people can legitimately lay claim to – not on the basis of their status as individual citizens, but on the basis of their self-orientation as sub-national groups. Such questions go much deeper than the technical interpretation of the letter of the law, and indeed raise the issue of the meaning of nationality; of 'South Africa'; and 'South African', once again. Consider the following comment by Webb (2002):

The South African people have never been united, do not share a glorious past, and do not have common norms, values or ideals in any significant degree. On the contrary, they have a history of military and political conflict and discrimination, they have a society which is deeply divided, is radicalised, and is characterised by inequality. And language, in various ways, reflects, conveys and strengthens these attitudes and tensions, *continuing to be a constitutive factor in this regard*. (p. 138, emphasis added)

According to Webb (2002), language is not the only dimension of inherited and politically over-determined difference in contemporary South Africa, it also perpetually threatens to strengthen (or perhaps *harden* would be the better term here) these differences, conflicts and discriminations. Language diversity, therefore, has to be justified in relation to the biopolitical ideals of national unity, reconciliation and transformation; and it needs to be managed in such a way as to produce a post-racist, trans-ethnic form of national subjectivity. In this way, Webb links the topic of language planning and policy to the discourse of nation-building, rather than to discourses of ethnic identities, minority rights and cultural self-disposal. Language planning for diversity, according to Webb, should be aimed at bridging the differences and inequalities of the apartheid past and creating a new, inclusive, and broadly enfranchised South African people or nationhood:

The question language planning has to debate is how a national language plan (given the ability to implement such plans effectively) can contribute to bridging the gaps between racial and political groupings in the country, and to contribute to nation-building. How can language (or languages) contribute to national integration, to the construction of a new national identity, to establishing national loyalty? Can they become symbols of national unity, and trigger emotional experiences of national attachment, much as is the case with the national flag and the national anthem? Can the South African languages bind the people of the country together in any way? Or is multilingualism a barrier to national integration? More generally, is it at all possible to construct national unity in the context of complexly multilingual (and divided) societies? (pp. 138-139)

It is in the context of national identity (in how 'South Africa' is to be defined and ruled) that language is problematised and contested as either a resource or a barrier. The question posed about language (or about language *diversity* to be more precise) is whether it will facilitate or encumber national integration and a coherent, shared national identity. What is at stake in language debates, then, is generally not an academically detached and ideologically neutral set of arguments about what language policy is 'best' for a modern, multilingual state. Language debates in South Africa are inevitably ideological; they revolve around competing notions of nationality. Stated differently, ideological debates about language in South Africa still aim at a biopolitical outcome, namely the imagining and production of particular kinds of national and sub-national populations. In this regard Freund (2004) provides a useful account of the tension between *pluralist* and *centralising* designs for nation-building in South Africa, which I quote here in full:

Many outside observers of the South Africa scene have been entranced with the notion of a 'rainbow nation'; this, in fact, is a vision which fits quite nicely into a post-modern, post-national state that allows for the autonomy of diversity and de-emphasises national culture. They have failed to remember that this was a phrase not coined by Nelson Mandela but by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Well-loved in corporate advertising, it is not a slogan that the ruling party recognises or likes. Nor has it much positive resonance amongst the black electorate. Mbeki made his dislike for this slogan quite explicit after 1999. Most whites would under post-1994 circumstances like nothing better than some kind of tolerant co-existence of the old and the new. On the contrary, the ANC is looking towards creating – admittedly gradually – *a cultural hegemony based on symbols and artefacts that represent the 'new South Africa' and break totally with the old.* [...] All around in South Africa one can begin to see arising a new symbolic universe to replace the boundaries, the heroes and villains, the points of conjuncture and rupture, of the old South Africa. (p. 45, emphasis added).

Once again, irrespective of how one judges Freund's (2004) analysis or the politics of nation-building more generally, what should be clear is that 'South Africa' remains an ideologically contested category. It still does not function, however seductive the

seemingly descriptive force of national categories and references are (Billig, 1995), as a mere territorial and legal container for all manner of historical, political and socio-psychological processes. Language is no exception. Wright (2004) argues that ‘the modernisation of African languages in South Africa has a political dimension *concerning which South African language commentators are strangely silent*’ (p. 175, emphasis added). This political dimension reaches beyond the contestation of rights and resources within the state; it is also not entirely ‘congruent with the concerns of those whose brief for African languages is primarily cultural or ecological’ (p. 175). What Wright is referring to is the biopolitical productivity of language in the context of a class struggle *against* the hegemonic and exclusionary aspects of the language ideologies and regimes increasingly propagated by the state:

At the root of the strategy is adherence to class-based politics. The enemy is the embourgeoisement process associated with affirmation to middle-class cosmopolitan values and mediated by English. The intended remedy is the co-optation of the dispossessed, via African-language education, to create a new power-base within the developed sector of the South African polity from which the struggle for a socialist dispensation may be fought. (Wright, 2004, p. 181)

But language (whether in the context of ethnic claims for recognition or in an attempt to mobilise of a broad-based, trans-ethnic class struggle) is not just biopolitically productive when aimed *against* the state. In the words of Balfour (2007), within the South African context, ‘cultural production and reproduction have become, after 1994, linked to a broader project concerning the transformation of society in order to achieve what Giddens (1991) terms the “re-creation of community”’ (p. 36). This is clear even in a legalistic document like the Constitution (South Africa, 1996). National constitutions are (as opposed to being simple descriptive or even prescriptive documents) in fact *performative* in nature: ‘they perform an action, rather than only describe an event or make a statement’ (Pryor, 2008, p. 5). Furthermore, according to Pryor, constitutions are also ‘foundational’ texts: ‘A foundational text [...] has a *constitutive effect* on national discourse, particularly in the narrative it tells itself about its origins’ (p. 5, emphasis added). Stated differently, it contributes to constituting a population and a place *as a country* with and in

relation to *a people*; and it legitimises certain differences in the context of a more foundational statement of cultural, political and legal universality. Regarding language, the post-apartheid South African Constitution steers clear of legitimating a ‘multinational’ state. It is indeed in terms of a unifying rationality (in other words, that of an inclusive South African nation) that the different languages achieve their recognition *as* official languages. Thus, the envisioned, idealised South African that emerges from the discourse of the constitution is a multilingual subject.

How, then, does one understand the contradiction between the Constitutional envisioning of ‘the South African’ in relation to language and the reality of increasing English homogenisation? Is it, as some have argued (e.g., Kriel, 2006; Ridge, 2001, 2004), merely a matter of realism and rationality in the context of global developmental demands? Or is it perhaps a matter of state failure due to limited resources or other non-ideological reasons? Here it helps to recall Jordan’s (2007) statements about ‘concessions to the old order’ in relation to the claims of ‘particular language communities’, as well as Alexander and Heugh’s (2001) analysis of the negotiations that led to the adoption of the multilingual policy. Balfour (1999), in fact, insists that the dream of linguistic democratisation and citizenship empowerment through mother tongue participation in all areas of public life in South Africa ‘competes uncomfortably with a contradictory though unstated notion that English remains *the means of national unity*, a new Latin’ (p. 104, emphasis added). He continues:

It is the recording language of a representative civil service and has become the language of the new era. This is perhaps a small exaggeration, because local languages do feature in legislation and also in the national media, but remain lesser siblings of the metropolitan tongue, adding a local touch to political speeches, road signs and building names which provide visitors with proof that not all Black people speak Zulu or Afrikaans. (p. 104)

But the biopolitical orientation of the Constitution also founders on an *internal* contradiction. It still imagines South Africa through an *ethno*-linguistic lens. The languages elevated to official status alongside English and Afrikaans, as I have argued earlier in this

chapter, were reduced to writing by missionary linguists. In this regard, they became foundations upon which the ideological edifice of ethnicity and race were erected and thus the instruments whereby forms of indirect rule and practices of segregation were accomplished. In the words of Makoni (2003, p. 138): 'In the South African Constitution, languages created in historically dubious circumstances by missionaries and their African linguistic apprentices are accorded the status of uncontested judicial facts and become permanent sociolinguistic features of the way the African landscape is imagined.' Besides its being ideologically problematic, this particular ethnolinguistic optic may also be sociolinguistically short-sighted, in the sense that it may not reflect the actual linguistic practices and patterns of identification found in society. In other words, rather than a policy that seeks to ground linguistic empowerment in how linguistic forms and identities truly manifested in everyday life, the Constitution offers to empower the largely 'fictional' language-and-ethnicity categories of colonial and apartheid governmentality.

The same applies to the South African census data. They may seem merely descriptive (*counting* languages and their speakers), but national censuses are equally constitutive and biopolitically productive technologies. They have played a vital role not only in the history of nationalism and colonialism, but in all forms of modern political rule that require the specification of populations. Anderson (1991, p. 163) refers to the census, along with the map and the museum, as 'institutions of power which, although invented before the mid nineteenth century, changed their form and function as the colonized zones entered the age of mechanical reproduction.' In South Africa, too, censuses have been crucial to the shaping of different delineations of nationality, and of servicing the governmental objectives of ruling political administrations (Christopher, 2009). For example, the first Union census included a language question for the first time, reflecting the

priorities of the Union government which sought to establish the degree to which integration between English and Dutch-speakers was taking place for the emergence of a white South African nation. Thus a question on ability to speak the two official languages, English and Afrikaans, was included, rather than one on home language. (Christopher, 2009, p. 104)

Censuses, like maps and museums, became instruments through which the colonial state ‘imagined its dominion – the nature of human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry’ (Anderson, 1991, p. 164). Referring to censuses specifically, Anderson claims that ‘categories are continuously agglomerated, disaggregated, recombined, intermixed, and reordered’ (p. 164). It is precisely the historically shifting nature of census categories and the way they change (to accommodate to new requirements of rule, as opposed to to offering a more accurate reflection of ‘reality’) that makes them interesting to look at. Censuses always aim ‘carefully to count the objects of feverish imagining’ (p. 169). But more than just counting, censuses insist on a pure categorical logic. Anderson (1991) mentions

their intolerance of multiple, politically ‘transvestite,’ blurred, or changing identifications. Hence the weird subcategory, under each racial group, of ‘Others’ – who, nonetheless, are absolutely not to be confused with *other* ‘Others’. The fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place. No fractions. (p. 166, emphasis in the original)

In the South African case, and specifically in relation to language, the census data define and stabilise rather than offering a simple *list* of the existing languages and of the South African language order. Firstly, the ‘languages’ enumerated by the Census are, as many have argued, constructs of historical, and specifically colonial, invention. Secondly, the Census registers very little of the actual language practices, variations within languages, multilingualism, and so on, that characterise the South African linguistic reality. Thirdly, in both the Constitution and the Census, language emerges as an idealised category, neatly overlapping with population groups. Therefore, these documents are inadvertently aimed at the level of language identities, not language practices. But this suggests a deeper level of connection between language, nationalism, and identity: one which goes beyond the particular language history of South Africa and the linguistic mediation of its ethnic, racial and national subjectivities and identities. It is to this level of the delineation of language as a social psychological construct that I turn in the following chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter narrated a ‘language history of South Africa’, in terms that are directly relevant to the delineation and conceptualisation of the relationship between language, politics and subjectivity in social psychology. The aim was not to provide an exhaustive historical account. Not only would it have been impossible to achieve this in such a limited space, an exhaustive account would probably also have been of more relevance to the discipline of history than to social psychology. Instead, I accentuated and explored the *historicity of language* within a particular social context (South Africa), in terms that are specifically relevant to social psychology.

The historical sketch provided was therefore not only cursory, but also somewhat skewed: I focused mainly on the colonial encounter as it unfolded on the eastern frontier of the Cape colony, neglecting similar encounters elsewhere in the region (such as in the current Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces) and processes of linguistic change and consolidation that took place in response to industrialisation (especially the mining industry) and black urbanisation on the Witwatersrand and elsewhere (e.g., Adendorff, 2002; Makhudu, 2002; Ntshangase, 2002; Slabbert & Finlayson, 2002). The development of urban and workplace pidgins and other forms of mixed-code (or ‘*trans-code*’) language practices in South African townships (such as ‘Flaaitaal’) facilitated the creation and exploitation of a black labouring class, but also established lines of communication and patterns of subjectification which persistently undermined colonial and apartheid ethnic subjectivities. But these are topics for another time, another place.

Above all, what I hope to have made clear in this chapter is that the relevance of language to social psychology is not restricted simply to its being one component of social identity (and one issue of political contestation) *in* South Africa. Instead, language has played a constitutive role in the imagining of South Africa *as a country*, always in relation to (and in terms of) various ethnically, racially and nationally mediated subjectivities. In this regard, language (as an index of social difference) did not simply assume a position *alongside* ethnicity, race and nationality, but played a foundation role, symbolically as well as materially, in the articulation, operationalisation and reproduction

of the ethnic and racial mythologies and practices in terms of which the meaning of South Africa has been constructed and contested throughout its modern history. Therefore, language has also not simply been an incidental component of particular forms of national mobilisation in South Africa (such as Afrikaner and Zulu nationalisms), but integral to the historical emergence of discourses and practices of ‘otherness’ in the South African region.

Moreover, language was not simply another *target* of colonial and apartheid rule, but indeed an *instrument* of colonial and apartheid governmentality. In this regard, I also hope to have demonstrated that the ideological (and biopolitical) productivity of language in relation to ‘the South African’ has not come to an end with apartheid. On the contrary: although the national mythology of post-apartheid South Africa is formally multilingual, language remains symbolically as well as materially implicated in the reproduction, of not only social identities, but patterns of inequality and exclusion, in this country. Language therefore certainly demands attention from critical social psychologists who are concerned with the legacies of oppression, and the opportunities for liberation, within postcolonial South Africa.

In summary, the lesson for a future social psychology of language in South Africa should be clear: neither ‘language’ nor ‘South Africa’ simply exists as discrete, objective categories. Both language and South Africa have been constituted and remain contested in ways that directly shape the ‘language situation of South Africa’, and thus directly impacts on how social psychology orients itself to them. This, in turn, raises more fundamental questions about the relationship between language, nationalism and subjectivity, and it is to the discussion of these that I now turn.

NOTES

¹See Chapter 2 for an introduction to the Foucaultian vocabulary of biopolitics, biopower and governmentality, especially in relation to the study language ideologies and language regimes.

²Chapters 4 and 5 return to the national logic, or ‘nationalised optic’, that characterise much of the social sciences. In the current context it is sufficient to insist that language (and

sociolinguistic processes) does not only occur ‘in’ South Africa, but that ‘South Africa’ is itself in part an ideological construct which includes language (alongside culture, ethnicity and citizenship) as one of its constitutive dimensions.

³My intention here is not to criticise Kamwangamalu (2004b). The point is simply that it is in this form that ‘South Africa’ has come to exist *as* a country, in the sense of its being both a legal-political entity and an ideological *commonplace* (an idea that is reproduced unreflectively and unquestioningly, in a ‘banal’ fashion (Billig, 1995)), in both ordinary and academic discourse. Kamwangamalu’s (2004b) usage here is ordinary and in many ways unremarkable; it is something one generally would not pause to reflect upon. It is, in a sense, how all of us now use ‘South Africa’ in an objective sense. However, it is exactly the ordinariness and seeming fixedness of the national referent that is revealing and deserves our attention in social psychology.

⁴According to Robins (2009): ‘The homelands were overcrowded and impoverished rural reserves that functioned as “ethnic” dumping grounds for “surplus” and “redundant” black South Africans whose labour was not required in “white” South Africa. Hundreds of thousands of black South Africans who were officially classified as Zulu, Xhosa, Tsonga, Venda, Tswana, Sotho, Ndebele, and Pedi, were forcibly removed from these “white areas” (referred to as “black spots”), which included all the major cities and about 80% of viable agricultural land. As “citizens” of these ethnic homelands and nation-states, they were stripped of their South African citizenship. They were relocated to underdeveloped homelands where they were told they could exercise their political, cultural and economic rights’ (p. 107).

⁵Errington (2008), when referring to ‘writing speech’, is of course commenting on the reduction of oral forms of language to literary media; the reduction, in other words, of the multiplicity of speech forms to a standardised written form which is then seen to ‘the language’, and in relation to which diversions in spoken tradition become known as ‘dialects’..

⁶The brief mentioning and then sidelining of language in Price’s (2008) otherwise fascinating account of the role of missionary knowledge production in the colonial encounter with the Xhosas (and the role such knowledge came to play in later colonial strategies of assimilation and indirect rule), is revealing. Price does not account for language (and missionary linguistics) as an important component of the knowledge-making activities he surveys. However, he briefly mentions language in the preface to his book, in a somewhat pragmatic context: ‘The nomenclature of African history is, of course, inevitably inflected with the experience of colonialism. Africanists are still sorting out what are the most appropriate spellings to describe indigenous peoples and cultures. [...] Xhosa spelling presents special difficulties because when the British encountered the Xhosa there was no dictionary or orthography they could use to understand the Xhosa language. *They had to make these aids for themselves*’ (Price, 2008, p. xv, my emphasis). By only addressing it in this context, Price is treating language as little more than a conduit for *the actual* products of colonial knowledge production. Language becomes an obstacle that stands in way of representing the encounter of missionaries and the Xhosa. However, the missionary development of standardised languages was a central dimension of colonial knowledge production. In this regard, it is useful to read Price alongside Gilmour (2006), who likewise stresses the interactive, intimate nature of the colonial encounter, but foregrounds the role of language, and especially the political relevance of missionary linguistics, much more strongly.

⁷Of course, I am not denying that language issues characterised the relationships between different indigenous populations *before* the arrival of white colonists as well, nor that African history begins before white settlement. However, the story I am narrating here is about the emergence of South Africa as a modern political context, and especially the linguistic mediation of its later ethnic and racial mythologies. For this reason it makes sense to begin this narrative with the contact between white colonists and indigenous populations, and the ideological ‘production’ of (and the attribution of meaning to) *the indigenous* within the frameworks of emerging European discourses of otherness.

⁸There have been attempts, for example by Steyn (1980), to present the relationship between the Khoikhoi and the Dutch during the first decades of white settlement as largely amiable. This is incorrect. As Giliomee (2003) makes clear, from as early as 1658 the Khoikhoi started resisting white encroachment in a series of protracted uprisings and full-blown wars.

⁹Social categories in the Cape during the early decades of settlement were less rigid than they would later become. Because social divisions were initially defined in terms of religion (Christianity) rather than ‘race’ (a discourse of *biological* race did not exist at the time) inter-category mobility were still more possible than later in South African history, and even ‘inter-racial’ marriage, which would be made illegal and become the source of moral panics in twentieth century South Africa, occurred relatively frequently. Social categories, however, became increasingly exclusionary and racialised during the next two centuries (Giliomee, 2003; Worden, 1994).

¹⁰These towns were all administrative and juridical centres in the expanding territory over which the Cape government asserted control (Giliomee, 2003).

¹¹Terminology is complicated in this regard. For a long time ‘Bushman’ was considered a racial pejorative in scholarly circles, and the correct term was deemed to be ‘San’. Scholars also occasionally referred to the Khoikhoi and the San collectively as the Khoisan. The latter is now generally considered anthropologically defunct, but ‘Bushman’ remains controversial. I will use ‘Khoikhoi’ and ‘San’, respectively, in this chapter.

¹²Adam Tas (1668-1722) was an early Dutch free burgher in the Stellenbosch area who was imprisoned after conflict with the VOC governor at the time, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, about Company corruption and trade monopolies. Estienne Barbier was an erstwhile sergeant in the VOC, but who was imprisoned for his role in an attempted rebellion against the Cape government in 1739.

¹³Surnames like Van der Merwe, Steyn, Muller, Le Roux, and so forth, speak of a mixed European heritage, rather than of anything resembling ethnic purity.

¹⁴This reference to the ‘sublime object’ is borrowed from Žižek (1989), who refers to the ‘sublime object of ideology’ in his influential Lacanian theory of ideology.

¹⁵By ‘productive’ in this sense I mean that the language not only reflected but in fact *contributed* to the creation of a social space and its associated subjectivities.

¹⁶I borrow the notion of ‘colonial intimacy’ from Suleri (1992).

¹⁷The Khoikhoi and San were only freed in 1828, when Ordinance 50 was accepted by the imperial government. This put them on equal legal footing with the burghers (Giliomee, 2003).

¹⁸The missionary, Van der Kemp, created a Khoesan-language catechism; see Traill (2002).

¹⁹Islam also provided the first incentive to use the Afrikaans vernacular in written form. In Muslim schools the slaves were taught to read and write in the Arabic script. During the 1840s

an observer said: “All the Malays in Cape Town speak Dutch but the better class understand and write Arabic and Malay.” But the Dutch was, actually, Afrikaans (or a creolized Dutch). The first Afrikaans book, printed around 1856, used Arabic script. By the end of the century at least eleven Arabic-Afrikaans works had been produced. When Arnoldus Pannevis, in the early 1870s, considered translating the Bible into Afrikaans, it was already an established medium of religious in the Cape Muslim community’ (Giliomee, 2003, p. 101).

²⁰Mamdani (1996) hereby argues against the South African ‘exceptionalism’ that has, according to him, characterised much scholarly writing in the area of South African studies.

²¹In this regard, consider the following description by Mbembe (2001): ‘Colonialism was a co-invention. It was the result of Western violence as well as the work of a swarm of African auxiliaries seeking profit. Where they lacked a significant white settler population to occupy the land, colonial powers generally got blacks to colonize their own congeners in the name of the metropolitan nation. More decisively “unhealthy” as it might appear, colonialism as a mental and material phenomenon exercised a strong seduction on Africans. As a refracted and endlessly reconstituted fabric of fictions, colonialism generated mutual utopias and hallucinations shared by the colonizers and the colonized’ (p. 113).

²²‘Although the tension between English and Afrikaans were never eliminated, government policies of what might be termed “active official bilingualism”, coupled with English and Afrikaans speakers attending their own-medium schools, mitigated what tensions existed’ (Reagan, 2002, p. 422).

²³‘Afrikaner nationalism is a topic surrounded by much mythology. Like all nationalist movements it has created its own symbolism and its own history stressing the unified experience of the Afrikaner volk: born on the old Cape frontier, trekking away from the British in 1836, surviving attacks by hostile Africans in the interior, defending themselves against the British in the 1870s and again in the South African War, suffering maltreatment in British concentration camps, rebelling against South African support for the British cause in the First World War, partially triumphing in the 1920s under the Hertzog government which made Afrikaans an official language, reacting against the English-dominated Fusion government of Hertzog and Smuts in the 1930s and early 1940s, finally winning the election of 1948 and – the ultimate achievement – breaking from the Commonwealth and establishing a republic in 1961’ (Worden, 1994, p. 87).

²⁴Unfortunately, very little work has been done about the the relationship between the ideological production of Afrikaans and forms of whiteness. However, see Van Wyk and Voice (1990).

²⁵It is in this context that the study of *identity* (especially shifting configurations of racial, gender, sexual and ethnic identities), has come to capture the imagination of much social psychology in post-apartheid South Africa. This has resulted in extremely relevant and valuable work, except that the national framework (the ‘in South Africa’ of ‘identities in South Africa’) is often taken as given, rather than thematised and problematised in the context of interrogations of how a variegated (but still normatively ordered) national space of more or less legitimate identity expressions is accomplished (e.g., Ratele & Duncan, 2003).

PART IV

BEYOND DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

4

Mirror of the Nation: The Political Ontology of Language

Language is the mirror of a nation. When we look into this mirror, a large and fitting image of our selves comes forth.

(Friedrich Schiller, as cited in Dow, 1999, p. 293)

It might seem obvious that there are different spoken languages; but, this assumption itself is an ideological notion, which has been vital for the achievement of order and hegemony in modern nation-states.

(Michael Billig, 1995, p. 10)

In the biblical story about the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1-9), God punishes the Babylonians by giving them different languages: “Let us go down and mix up their language”, God says, “so that they will not understand one another” (11:7).¹ The linguistic unity of ‘the people of the whole world’, who until that time, so we are told, ‘had only one language and used the same words’ (11:1), is hereby effectively disrupted. The resulting confusion, disagreement and disharmony – the sudden imposition of language as a measure of *difference* – causes the people of Babylon, each group according to its newly acquired language, to be scattered over the earth: ‘So the Lord scattered them all over the earth and they stopped building the city’ (11: 8).

The story of the Tower of Babel has, for centuries, functioned as a myth of origin for the exhilarating diversity of mutually incomprehensible languages found across the globe. Even more so, it has come to be looked upon as the inaugural gesture, the master narrative if you will, of modern notions of ethnolinguistic difference – notions which locate in the fact of linguistic diversity certain inviolable principles of social and political order. These are principles such as culture, ethnicity, race, and, in particular, nation (Smith, 1996).² Interestingly enough, this reading of the story of the Tower of Babel would seem to suggest that language is more than a derived marker of already existing human differences. Here, language is a *constitutive* component in the ‘peopling’ of the world. It is in relation to ideologies and regimes of language that the global tapestry of cultures, races and nations have been called into existence, and that their preordained genealogies and appropriate historical forms of expression have been rooted and unveiled. What this consideration of the Tower of Babel suggests, is that language has historically been of central importance in the shaping of modern political life. This insight is captured in a more scholarly idiom by Pelinka (2007, p. 137), when he insists that language ‘is not and cannot be just a neutral indicator – because language does not only indicate, it also mobilises politically. Language is highly political – due to its responsive as well as its activating, demanding role.’

Upon seeing the city and the tower the Babylonians are building, God exclaims: “Now then, these are all one people and they speak one language; this is just the beginning of what they are going to do. Soon they are going to do anything they want!” (Genesis 11: 6). What angers God here, if one could venture an interpretation of this nature, is the ambitious universalism of the Babylonians, the sheer hubris of their humanistic pride: “They said to one another, “Come on! Let’s make bricks and make them hard.” So they had bricks to build with and tar to hold them together. They said, “Now let’s build a city with a tower that reaches the sky, so that we can make a name for ourselves and not be scattered all over the earth” (11: 3-4). *To make a name for themselves*: Derrida (2002), in a deconstructive reading of this biblical text, regards the Babylonians’ quest for an identity (for a proper name) as an attempt ‘to assume themselves, by themselves, a unique and universal genealogy’ (Derrida, as cited in Bartholomew, 1998, p. 309). Inaugurated here, are the very political codes of identity, of belonging, and perhaps the fantasy of racial

lineage itself (Ashcroft, 2001; Goldberg, 1993; Paliakov, 1974). Elsewhere Derrida discerns in this preoccupation with a unique linguistic genealogy a foreboding of later colonial violence: ‘Had their enterprise succeeded, the universal tongue would have been imposed by violence, by force, by violent hegemony over the rest of the world’ (Derrida, 1985, p. 101). But instead God subjects the Babylonians to the ‘the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the necessary and impossible task of translation’ (Derrida, 2002, p. 109) – to the law of language, *in other words*, which rules against identity as self-sameness, transparency and purity (see also Derrida, 1976; Culler, 1994).

But as I have indicated above, Derrida’s (1985, 2002) reading is a deconstructive, even ‘revisionist’ one. It is an attempt at interrupting more customary references to the Tower of Babel as a warrant for ideologies of homogeneous speech communities, ethnolinguistic purity and racial identities.³ In prefacing the present chapter, however, the myth of the Tower of Babel is invoked for different rhetorical reasons. It is used to suggest, metaphorically, the contours of a distinctly modern political imaginary: a world in which discrete languages coincide with equally discrete cultural (‘ethnic’) units, and where ethnolinguistically defined groups realise their cultural and political self-expression territorially. In other words, it is used to foreground the linguistic coordinates of what has become (since the eighteenth century in Europe and eventually on a global scale) the dominant configuration of contemporary social and political life, namely nationalism and the nation-state ideal.

As I shall discuss in subsequent sections of this chapter, it was frequently in relation to language that nations not only came to be understood, but became *actualised* as categories of people who share characteristics, a history, a destiny, and more often than not, lay claim to a territory. Moreover, comparative philology throughout the nineteenth century, made sense of human evolution and diversity by tying notions of the linguistic origins of human differences to increasingly *racial* genealogies and hierarchies, thus inextricably linking language, nation and race into an ideological complex (Errington, 2008; Hutton, 1999; Said, 2003). The concept of race, in other words, was firmly rooted in the emerging nineteenth century science of linguistics even before it became articulated and elaborated in biological terms; linguistics, in this sense, was the first ‘race science’ (Ashcroft, 2001;

Paliakov, 1974). Thus, it certainly comes as no surprise that even Adolf Hitler, a twentieth century inheritor of philological constructions of race and nation, rhetorically revisited Babel: ‘The more the linguistic Babel corroded and disorganized parliament, the closer drew the inevitable hour of the disintegration of this Babylonian Empire, and with that the hour of freedom for my German-Austrian people’ (Hitler, as cited in Hutton, 1999, p. 262). Nation, culture and race: language is seemingly mixed with the mortar when these ideological towers are constructed. And always underlying its construction, echoing God’s anxious cry in Genesis 11, is what Hutton (1999, p. 260) refers to as ‘the horror of assimilation’.⁴

In this chapter, I trace the ethnolinguistic mythologies that were inaugurated and underwritten by the story of the Tower of Babel in their more recognisable, modern idioms of political self-understanding and human differences: ethnicity, race, class and, especially, nation and nationalism.⁵ My point of departure is that language categories do not always (or even typically) pre-exist the articulation and substantiation of group differences and their linguistic correlates. It is, more frequently, through histories of political boundary drawing and contestation, the management of populations, and the creation (mostly by cultural elites⁶) and imposition (by state apparatuses such as public education) of communities of communication⁷ (based on standardised and mostly state-sponsored practices of literacy), that categories of *languages* and their associated categories of people, or subjectivities, are called into being in the first place.⁸ That which counts as a language (and what the abiding relationships are between individuals, groups and languages – in other words, the language order of modernity) are historically contingent and above all *politically* accomplished. As the linguist John E. Joseph (2006a) observes, ‘the question of what is and what isn’t a language is always finally a political question’ (p. 27); and the political, as I shall argue in this chapter, has for very long been *nationally* mediated.

The principal aim of this chapter, then, is to spell out the political nature of language; or, stated differently, is to reflect on the political ontology of language. The crucial question posed in Chapter 2 was the following: *why* is language politically relevant and why does it deserve our scholarly attention? This question was also posed in Chapter 3, but from a

different angle. There the focus was on the sociolinguistic history and current language situation in South Africa; but the question asked there was not simply why language is relevant in South Africa as one among many political topics. Rather, the chapter interrogated the meaning of ‘the South African’ (denoting both a territory and a population) as it has emerged historically, whilst simultaneously being contested and constantly renegotiated, *in relation to language*. In this sense, language and language ideologies were shown to have been biopolitically essential to the shifting forms of governmentality in South Africa, and hence productive of patterns of identification, segregation and inequality.

But whilst questions regarding the nation and nationalism were featured very prominently in both those chapters, I have yet to explore why exactly it is that the national form should be so pivotal to discussions of the social and political dimensions of language. To state the basic problematic somewhat differently: what does the nation – as the dominant form in which political communities have been imagined throughout modernity – afford language, and what does language in turn afford the nation? Most crucially, this is not just an empirical question. It is a somewhat more abstract, essentially ontological question: what kind of object is language, especially as it emerges and exists in relation to the political? Similarly, what is the nature of the political, and how has it emerged, in relation to ideologies and regimes of language?

The origins and political fortunes of nationalism, as I shall argue in the pages to follow, are central to this story. The political dimensions of language are so closely entangled with nationalism and the nation-state, that it is only in relation to these that it can be fully understood as a political and thus social psychological category. In other words, the relationship of language to politics, society and subjectivity assumes the mediating role of the political and cultural institutions of the nation-state, and hence no critical social psychology of language can commence without taking account of (and with that deconstructing) the ‘nationalisation’ of language, the political and the notion of subjectivity in modern times. It has, of course, become something of a social scientific commonplace to repeat, after Anderson (1983), that the nation is an ‘imagined community’. This is undoubtedly so, but the nation has also become, certainly to the

detriment of democratic politics, almost *the only way* in which political community is, and seemingly can be, imagined (Hardt & Negri, 2000). The national imagination of society and of political community has come to monopolise how politics is understood and enacted; indeed, one can claim that modern politics was inaugurated with the advent of nationalism, and that the idea of the nation has come to function as the paradigm of political community. What this means, of course, is that challenges to nationality and nationalism by forces of globalisation may be transforming the contemporary political ontology of language. Language may well be becoming a different kind of cultural, political and economic object.

Thus, besides a historical and philosophical account of the constitutive mutuality of language and nationalism, a critical social psychology of language also needs to remain alert to the possible shifting parameters of the political – occasioned by globalisation and its associated processes. But before I embark on telling this story (traced from early European nationalism through colonialism and onwards to contemporary conditions of neo-liberal globalisation – always in relation to language), it is necessary to comment briefly, as a theoretical point of departure, on the distinction drawn here between politics and *the political*. This is a useful distinction, as it shifts the interrogation of language pursued thus far towards an ontological inquiry into its political nature, thus allowing me to focus not only on what the political owes language as a constitutive force, but on what language in turn owes the political.

Language, politics, the political

Pelinka (2007) quite rightly indicates that ‘language is among the most powerful factors of defining difference and shaping politically mobilising identities. Besides religion, language may be called the most important phenomenon creating an ethnic and national feeling of “We” as opposed to “Them”’ (pp. 135-136). Language, then, is by no means a universal principle, feature or cause of political processes of marginalisation, oppression, resistance or liberation. The politics of language may be formulated, more frequently than not, in terms of some form of cultural, ethnic or national identity, but even ostensibly *ethnic* nationalisms can flourish and survive without a strict reliance on language, as

contemporary Irish nationalism, amongst others, clearly demonstrates (Barbour, 2000b; Coleman, 2004; Jenkins, 1997).⁹

In this regard, one can distinguish between two possible lines of analytic approach. In the first, language is approached *in relation to politics*; in the second, it is approached as a *dimension of the political*. In the former case language is portrayed as one object or thing *about* which (or in terms of which) individuals and groups engage politically. Language is approached, that is, as a relevant (or irrelevant) dimension of an already constituted political domain: as an aspect of group identity or of the stratification of society. In the second approach language is treated not as an object or thing within a given political domain, but as a constitutive component of what defines that domain as ‘political’ to begin with. In other words, it focuses on the role language has played historically (and continues to play presently) in defining, demarcating and substantiating the political order *as a political order* – and political subjects as ethnolinguistic subjects – in the modern sense of the term. Pelinka (2007), for example, refers to how ‘the modern nation-state has been shaped by language and linguistic politics’ (p. 131), revealing an appreciation (which according to him is uncommon in political science, the discipline he addresses) for the essentially *linguistic* dimension of the modern political order. This analytic distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ is described by Valentine (2006):¹⁰

At a formal and empty level the distinction between politics and the political serves to designate a difference between on the one hand normal, ordinary and routine everyday activities which are occupied by the production and distribution of power, in both senses of ‘power over’ and ‘power to’, and including the contested and disputed nature of these activities, and, on the other, that which is supposed to ground, explain, or distinguish and locate these activities as a sphere of thought or action. (p. 506)

In this distinction ‘the political’ stands in a foundational relationship to ‘politics’. Chipkin (2007) adds to this by further demarcating ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ in terms of a very useful distinction between ontic and ontological levels of analysis. Whereas, according to Chipkin, the ontic simply refers to all those features that typify a given empirical domain,

the ontological refers to that which *constitutes* the ontic as an empirical domain in the first place: in other words, that which enables it and gives it its logical and empirical consistency. In this regard, ‘politics’ is simply all the ‘practices and institutions that make general claims about the way that the demos is organized or governed’ (Chipkin, 2007, p. 176), including forms of government and different political ideologies. ‘The political’, in contrast, refers to ‘the way that the demos itself is *produced*’ (p. 176, emphasis added):

Hence an analysis at the level of the ontic might discuss the way a people has been governed or governed itself and changes in this regard. A study at the level of the ontological is concerned with how that people came to exist in the first place and the basis of its unity. In short: a new principle of political ontology does not refer to a novel system of government; it signals a new kind of people. (p. 176; see also Fraser, 2007)¹¹

To address language at the level of the ontological, as opposed to the ontic, is to approach it as more than just another element in the field of values, practices and institutions that make up everyday political life. In this regard it is important to bear in mind that the modern state differs from the pre-modern state exactly by its being constituted and legitimatised in relation to a population, not to a territory (Calhoun, 1995). However, this founding gesture of the modern political order (shifting sovereignty onto a population constituted as a political community, or a ‘people’) also changed the *nature* of the population in question. The population is no longer external or incidental to modern state power, but is instead *integral* to modern state power and in fact functions as the seat of sovereignty itself. In this regard it is possible to identify at least three major forms in which popular sovereignty has been cast.

According to Calhoun (1995), during the historical development of modern political reality ‘three different but interrelated modes of claiming a broader political community, one outside the state apparatus, became influential’ (p. 238). These were *public*, *people* and *nation* respectively. Whereas ‘public’ generally refers to a culturally differentiated citizenry, ‘people’ and ‘nation’ are both based on a postulated unity of the ruled, but in turn differ from one another in that the former propagated a differentiation between the ruler and

the ruled, whereas the latter propagated (and sought to accomplish) the unity of the whole. But whatever differences persist, the modern political – in the ontological rather than the ontic sense – emerges from an intimate relationship between state and population, and it is the role that *language* plays in this relationship, in the constitution of what Chipkin (2007) calls ‘a new kind of people’ (p. 176) (rather than as a dimension of so many instances of language politics around the world), that this chapter is primarily about.

Nations, nation-states, and nationalism

One of the most famous theorists of nationalism, Benedict Anderson, professes the difficulty of this topic very early on in his landmark book, *Imagined Communities*: ‘Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse’ (Anderson, 1983, p. 12). This difficulty is due, at least in part, to the ubiquity of the nation or nationality as a political idea, or to what Anderson refers to as ‘the formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept – in the modern world anyone can, should, will “have” a nationality, as he or she “has” a gender’ (p. 14). Indeed, few categories of social identity have been naturalised as successfully. Similarly, nationality has remained impervious to attempts to deconstruct it. Even gender, it may seem, has been subjected to more thorough and relativising forms of critical probing in the social sciences than nationality (e.g., Butler, 1990, 1993); or, at least, the ‘transgendered’ (not meant in the clinical sense) has been more successfully actualised in terms of the development of new political subjectivities, political mobilisations and political rights, than has the ‘transnational’.¹² Ours is still a world of passports and visa checks, of national citizens and immigrants (Torpey, 2000). We have indeed come to think of the human subject (even in the social sciences, as I shall explore in more depth in the following chapter), as a ‘homo nationalis’ (Balibar, 2004, p. 12).

But however difficult it is to define these concepts, they remain in descriptive, as well as normative terms, the bedrock of the contemporary social and political order. The category of nation, in Calhoun’s (1995) sense of the term, has become *the* dominant way of imagining political community, thus trumping notions of public and people. As

Torfinn (1999) observes: 'The nation, conceived as a community that is both limited and sovereign, has become the predominant way of imagining the cultural and political community of modern societies' (p. 191). This echoes the earlier reference to Hardt and Negri (2000), in which they lament the fact that the nation has become close to the *only* way in which the political community can legitimately be imagined. Even those classes of people who are most vulnerable to the exclusionary and homogenising machinations of nation-states (such as ethnic and racialised minorities) frequently, and often more frequently than *not*, articulate their resistance and political aspirations in essentially nationalist terms (Fenton & May, 2002; May, Modood & Squires, 2004b). Colonial countries were no exception: the colonised by and large mobilised against colonial occupation and oppression in *national* terms, and after independence, post-colonial states eagerly sought to organise themselves as modern nation-states (Chatterjee, 1995; Fanon, 1990).

If the nation has become the predominant form of political community, then what is *nationalism*? Nationalism, quite simply, is the ideology that naturalises the desire for the nation to procure a state and for the state to fashion itself as a *nation-state*: in other words, and in reference to the discussion earlier, for the state to define itself in relation to a particular *kind* of population, rather than simply in relation to a territory. According to Calhoun (1995): 'Nationalism, in particular, remains the pre-eminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to "the people" of the country' (p. 235).¹³ It is in this sense that nationalism is necessarily a form of *identity politics*: it is 'the discourse and political program of national identities' (Calhoun, 1995, p. 232). But nationalism is not only driven by national identities; more importantly, it *produces* national identities. The outcome of a successful nationalism is a coherently narrated national identity and procurement of a state; the aim of the modern state, the bureaucratic field, as Bourdieu (1998) refers to it, is in turn to fashion itself as a national unity: 'Every nation', writes Hardt and Negri (2000), 'must make the multitude into a people' (p. 103). The political community constituted by nationalism is frequently premised on fantasies of biological or cultural continuity, and more often than not, on *linguistic commonality*. The role of language, however, will be explored further in a later section.

Nationalism, then, is an ideological representation of the state as a *nation*-state, with its political ontology rooted in the particular expectations it has regarding the nature of the unity of the population. Before discussing this dimension of the particular kind of population inaugurated by nationalism, it is necessary to provide some notes on the centrality of the nation-state form as the dominant institutional framework of modern politics. Tosco (2004) writes that ‘the nation-state, either in its fully developed structure or still at an embryonic stage, is the overall form of contemporary social organization’ (p. 167). May (2001), in turn, refers to the nation-state as nothing less than ‘the philosophical matrix’ of modern political life, consisting of the following almost universally accepted maxims: (i) the world is somehow naturally divided into nations, each complete with its own identity and destiny; (ii) the nation serves as the ‘sole source of political power, and the interests and values of the nation take priority over all other interests and values – loyalty to the nation is preeminent’ (p. 54); (iii) everyone must belong to a nation, and such belonging is in fact a prerequisite for meaningful human freedom; (iv) in order to fully realise themselves, ‘nations must be as politically independent as possible – political autonomy, or at least some degree of self-determination, are central tenets of nationalism’ (p. 55); (v) world peace and justice depend on the extent to which nations are free and secure enough to pursue their national interests within a context of bilateral international relations. These, in short, are the very recognisable, almost self-evident features of the political order of modernity; or, in stronger terms, ‘the apogee of modernity and progress – representing in clear political terms the triumph of universalism over particularism’ (May, 2001, p. 5). One could also say, echoing Hardt and Negri (2000), that the nation-state and its form of popular sovereignty represent the particular *as* universal: ‘National particularity is a potent universality’ (p. 105).

Balibar (2004) refers to the nation-state as ‘the historical framework and form in which citizenship is instituted’ (p. 52), and considers the project of transcending the national imagination of society, especially in reference to citizenship and rights, as the most pressing political task of the present era. But, as scholars like Calhoun (2004) and Sassen (2003) make abundantly clear, we are nowhere near *beyond* the nation, nationalism and the nation-state – this, despite the various attempts to develop notions of ‘cosmopolitanism’

as a coherent political program over the last couple of decades, and especially in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War (e.g., Archibugi, 2003; Archibugi, Held, & Kohler, 1988; Brennan, 1997; Cheah, 2006; Faist, 2009; Held, 1995; Smith, 2007; Yeğenoğlu, 2005). Re-imagining the political community in non-national or transnational terms would require an intervention not at the level of politics (the ontic), but at the level of the political; what would be inaugurated would be a new political ontology, a reconfigured space within which politics occurs and political subjectivities emerge. In other words, the nation-state, or the state defined in terms of a population imagined as a *nation*, remains the ultimate horizon within which political subjectivity becomes thinkable and embodied. Subsequently, ‘having’ a nationality, in Anderson’s (1983) sense, is rarely achieved outside the parameters of some or other set of culturally defined ‘national characteristics’. Citizenship, in short, is typically defined not only legally, but *culturally* (Fiedler, 2007; Mann, 2000). Belonging to a political community invariably means sharing an identity; or, if such an identity does not yet exist, creating one. According to Chipkin (2007), in the modern political paradigm, ‘citizenship is contingent on a particular culture – a quality of population – which distinguishes one community of citizens from another. In other words, *a nation is a community of citizens with a common imagined culture*’ (p. 56, emphasis in the original).

The familiar theoretical distinction between ‘cultural’ and ‘civic’ nationalisms is not entirely useful in this regard (Spencer & Wollman, 2002; see also Pecora, 2001; Safran, 1999). In terms of cultural nationalism the political community is commonly understood to be rooted in (and to realise its political sovereignty in reference to) narratives of historical and cultural homogeneity and shared destiny. Civic nationalism, in contrast, is used to refer to instances where the idea of political community is not rooted in ‘culture’ but instead in the ideal of territorial coexistence based on shared political institutions. In other words, rather than being traced to a shared cultural past the political community in civic nationalism is imagined in relation to the state and its political institutions. Subsequently, the citizen is primarily a political as opposed to a cultural subject. This distinction is frequently attributed to the differences between French and German nationalisms, with the German version emerging as a ‘particularistic’ (‘cultural’) response to the seeming universalism of French citizenship after the Revolution: ‘In contrast to the

German emphasis on an ethnic definition of ‘das Volk’ (in terms of language, descent, culture, and so on), the French version of homogeneity stresses the importance of territoriality’ (Blommaert & Verschuere, 1999, p. 196). However, whilst useful to distinguish between historical forms of nationalism, or between ‘state-seeking’ and ‘state-sanctioned’ nationalisms as specific forms of political mobilisation, even so-called civic nations invariably impose ethnic or at least *quasi-ethnic* criteria to define and delimit the political community that embodies it. According to Fenton (1999, p. 27): ‘In all nation-states, that is, systems of state governance which are viewed as the political expression of a “nation”, there is a politico-cultural definition of what that nation is. In this sense, in all or most societies, politics are “ethnicised”.’

Of course, this is not typically acknowledged, and the ‘civic’ community with its ‘national’ culture is often presented as an ethnically unmarked space from where the ‘ethnicity’ of others (usually minorities) are problematised, censured or even liquidated (May, 2001; Williams, 1999): referred to by Mann (2000) as ‘the dark side of democracy’ (p. 18). In other words, in the modern state, the ‘demos’ is understood as standing in a particular relationship of tension or opposition to the ‘ethnos’, precisely on the strength of the ideological erasure of the ethnic qualities of the demos, and its self-presentation as trans-ethnic and universal (Goodman & James, 2007a). According to Williams (1999, p. 164), the ‘modern state rests on a particular form of relationship between ethnos and demos, and it is not possible to understand the sociological concept of ethnicity without reference to the relationship between the state and its population.’ He continues to mention three important dimensions of ethnicity in relation to the state and national culture: firstly, ‘ethnicity derives from the need to incorporate people from different cultural backgrounds into the same political state’ (p. 164); secondly, ‘its meaning is conditioned by the peculiar concept of a state which represents the will of these people’ (p. 164); and thirdly, ‘it relates to a biased understanding of culture within which one culture is favored over another’ (p. 164). It is along similar lines, insisting on the disavowed ethnic qualities of the putatively neutral and universal national culture, that the pioneering sociologist of language, Joshua Fishman (1999, p. 452), has observed the following: ‘Antiethnicity has become the last refuge of cosmopolitan authoritarians, whether of the left or of the right, who seek to force their ideological remedy on others.’

To say, then, that national politics are ‘ethnicised’ means that ethnicity does not primarily function as a political ‘cause’ (or as a force which underlies the articulation of political identities and ignites political mobilisation), but rather functions as one of the strategies of legitimation in terms of which ‘the national’ demarcates and substantiates itself *as a political domain*. Balibar (1991a), in a discussion that significantly deepens Anderson’s (1983) notion of the nation as ‘imagined community’, refers to ‘fictive ethnicity’ in this regard.¹⁴ Balibar is not hereby drawing a distinction between more or less authentic forms of ethnicity – ‘real’ ethnicity is not the issue here, as the notion of authenticity is itself one of the effects of the discourse of ethnicity in contexts of national politics. Instead, Balibar (1991a) is interested in ‘the community *instituted* by the nation-state’ (p. 96, emphasis added), and in this regard insists that both civic and cultural nationalisms *equally* rely on a sense of ‘ethnicity’, and that this sense of ethnicity is largely fictional:

No nation possesses an ethnic base *naturally*, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized – that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions. (p. 96, emphasis added)¹⁵

In a later text he adds a further insight, namely that ‘what is at stake [in all nationalisms] is always the construction of a “national identity” that will win out over all others and arrive at a point where national belonging intersects with and integrates all other forms of belonging. But this, by definition, *is precisely what nationalism is*’ (Balibar, 2004, p. 23, emphasis in the original). The important insight to underline here is that the identity that wins out over all others can manage to secure its ‘victory’ only to the extent that it manages to sublimate, incorporate, transcend or liquidate all other existing forms of popular belonging, and therefore inevitably takes on a *quasi*-ethnic rather than a genuinely organic or historically continuous quality. Thus, ethnicity is, as the discussion of Williams (1992) made clear, a *political* category in the modern nation-state, not simply a *cultural* category predating its national politicisation; it is productive rather than merely

descriptive of the boundaries of the political community. Similarly, part and parcel of the same process, the political invariably takes on an ethnicised quality, and it is in terms of this ethnicisation that it legitimises its political claims.¹⁶ Any strict demarcation between culture and politics, or between culturally and politically defined communities, therefore proves to be untenable when it comes to the theorisation of nationalism. This also touches on, and in a sense deconstructs, the perennial debate about the ‘modernity’ or ‘antiquity’ of nations and nationalism – a debate which is sometimes cast as one between ‘modernists’ and ‘primordialists’, even though this is in many instances a rather unhelpful distinction. According to Fenton and May (2002; seen also Conversi, 2007; Guibernau, 2004; Öskirimli & Grosby, 2007; Spencer & Wollman, 2002),

One of the central debates within this literature has been about the extent to which nations are the ideological constructions of modern states, as against states being the modern political form assumed by ancient nations; in short, states before nations or nations before states? (p. 4).

Bauman (1992), for example, is emphatic: ‘Modern nations are products of nationalism, and can be defined *only as such*’ (p. 122, emphasis added). Nationalism itself, the discourse which produces nations as objects of interest and identification, is a product of modernity, of the material and structural shifts (capitalism, industrialisation, democracy, etc.) that have characterised modern societies. Some of the principal theorists of these shifts have been Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990) – so-called ‘modernists’, who have typically theorised the relationship between nation, nationalism and modernity in fairly functionalistic terms. Nationalism, according to these theorists (and there are of course important differences between their approaches as well), is a phenomenon of fairly recent origin and developed as a response to the political and above all *economic* demands of modern, industrialising societies:

[T]his age of nationalism arose out of the specific historical social developments of modernisation and its concomitants – industrialisation, political democracy and universal literacy – in eighteenth- and nineteenth century Europe. Prior to this, the

feudal, dynastic and largely agrarian societies of the day had little notion of national sentiment. (May, 2001, p. 62)

Modern nations were further ‘predicated on the rise of a bureaucratic state organisation, a capitalist economy, and a “high” literate and scientific culture; the latter based, usually, on *a single and distinctive vernacular language*’ (May, 2001, p. 63, emphasis added). Nationhood, or *the nation*, is the peculiar but historically functional result of modernity, not of the tenacity of ethnicity; it represents a historical discontinuity at the level of identity and group solidarity, not a cultural continuity that is subsequently secured as political identity at the level of the state. For Gellner (1983), specifically, nationalism is a rational response to industrialism (the shift from agrarian to industrial society), and nothing less than an attempt to overcome parochial ties in favour of national solidarity and mobility. Part of this process of overcoming the parochial involved the invention of standardised national cultures, in which language played an exceedingly important role. Previous systems of political organisation (feudal systems, empires) did not require, according to Gellner’s modernism, the creation of any form of ‘cultural’ unity amongst the population. Stated differently, the population *as* population did not have the same economic and political currency in pre-modern times. The modern industrialised society, on the other hand, required a different a kind of population, and along with that a different relationship *between* state and population. According to May (2001),

the modern industrialised society – with its literate, mobile and occupationally specialised division of labour – *required* cultural and linguistic continuity and, where possible, cultural and linguistic homogeneity *in order to function effectively*. While work in pre-modern society had been predominantly manual, work in modern industrial society was now predominantly semantic. (p. 65, emphasis added)

Fenton (1999) makes a similar observation when he writes that ‘national cultures are seen to be *pragmatically essential* to modernisation – in the widening of circles of trade, business and employment, and the state management of education, taxation, and military conscription’ (p. 46, emphasis added). The requirements of this modernising society

included standardised mass education and homogeneous, interchangeable subjects in a labour system in which social mobility (merit) would override the importance of inherited social position. Fiedler (2007) comments as follows on this project of manufacturing a standardised and above all economically productive population: “‘The people’ constituted the political and symbolic marking of the collective body of an often recalcitrant and revolutionary multitude to transform it into a disciplines and productive bio-political entity’ (p. 59).

Anderson (1993) takes a broadly similar approach, also investigating the material and structural changes underlying the creation of the (according to him) historically particular imagined community that is the national group. For Anderson, nationhood rests on a congruence of industrial capitalism and print technology, dating back to fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe. These technological changes gave rise to the rapid spread of local or vernacular speech forms at the expense of prior dominant ‘sacred’ languages. The development of standardised, widely spread vernacular (now ‘national’) languages was therefore, according to Anderson’s account, essential to the imagining and material accomplishment of ‘nations’. This was the case not because language embodied ethnonational identities (which coincided with pre-national speech communities), but because the enlargement and standardisation of the speech community through technological transformations such as the print media, made possible – for the first time – a new identification with the ‘imagined community’ of the nation.

The so-called ‘primordialists’ (or ‘perennialists’, thus underlining the fact that the majority of these scholars do not claim that nations are ‘natural’ in any simplistic sense) take issue with the ideas that nations are of only fairly recent historical origin (i.e., ‘modern’); that they are largely invented fictions distributed by cultural elites through technological media and institutions of subjectification such as the school; and that they are to be understood in functionalist terms as merely an ideological response to the political and economic requirement of the modern, industrial state. The nation, from a perennialist perspective, is essentially a cultural rather than a political economic category, and as such, national self-awareness predates modernity and the contemporary nation-state: ‘nations are an ancient, necessary and perhaps *natural* part of social organization, an organic presence

whose origins go back to the mists (or myths?) of time' (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p. 27, emphasis added). According to one of the foremost critics of modernist theories of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith (2001):

We need to understand nationalism as a type of collective conduct, based on the collective will of a moral community and the shared emotions of a putatively ancestral community and this means that we need to grasp the nation as a political form of the sacred community of citizens. (p. 82)

In another, earlier publication, Smith (1986) insists that nations are rooted in ethnic communities, or 'ethnies', which are culturally defined around 'shared ancestry myths, histories, cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity' (p. 32). Modern nationalism therefore does not willy-nilly produce *new* forms of solidarity, nor does it constitute a new kind of people. It draws instead on *existing* forms of cultural and ethnic solidarity; these would include ties created and supported by sharing an ancestral language. Smith (1995) therefore critiques what he sees as the failure of modernists 'to grasp the continuing relevance and power of pre-modern ethnic ties and sentiments in providing a firm base for the nation-to-be' (p. 40). In summary, critics of modernist theories of nationalism typically take issue with what they see as over-exaggerated claims of historical discontinuity between pre-modern and modern forms of territorial belonging and social solidarity. The nation is an ancient rather than modern phenomenon; it is rooted as deeply in ethnicity and religion (e.g., Hastings, 1997) as in industrialisation, democratisation and the mass media.

The approach Castells (1997) has become known for is related to the above. Castells is by no means a primordialist, or even a perennialist, but he too regards nationalism (especially contemporary nationalism) as embodying more than simply a functional creation of elites that is subsequently dispersed in a top-down fashion through the populace. He agrees that national culture is partly 'imagined', that is, that it owes part of its reality to nationalist discourse; but he nevertheless insists that nationalism also *assumes a shared experience*, a position that is in fact not too far removed from that of Smith (1986, 1995, 2001; see also May, 2001). One argument Castells provides in support of his

standpoint is that modernists overemphasise the reliance (at least in the contemporary world) of nationalism on the state: ‘contemporary nationalism may or may not be oriented toward the construction of a sovereign nation-state, and thus nations are, historically and analytically, entities independent from the state’ (p. 30). Another reason, according to Castells, is that nations and nation-states ‘are not historically limited to the modern nation-state as constituted in Europe in the two hundred years following the French Revolution’ (p. 30). In other words, he critiques the modernist assumption that nationalism was a pre-eminently *European* phenomenon which then became globalised. Castells is essentially arguing that modernist theories of nationalism make themselves guilty of a certain Eurocentrism in the study of political community and solidarity. Thirdly, according to him, ‘nationalism is not necessarily an elite phenomenon, and, in fact, nationalism nowadays is more often than not a reaction *against* the global elites’ (p. 30, emphasis added). And finally, ‘because contemporary nationalism is more reactive than proactive, it tends to be *more cultural than political*, and thus more oriented toward the defence of an already institutionalized culture than toward the construction or defence of a state’ (p. 30, emphasis added). According to Castells, the cultural dimension of nationalism in the contemporary world is embodied above all by a shared language (a notion that will be discussed in the next section). This means that contemporary nationalism (according to him) frequently takes the form of *linguistic* nationalism; and that the politics of language is primarily cultural, if not indeed nationalistic, in orientation.

In the context of this discussion, which is heading towards a consideration of the political ontology of language in the context of nationalism, the modernist-primordialist debate is largely tangential. It does not really matter for this discussion whether the nation is primordial, perennial, or modern; or whether it is understood in civic or in ethnic terms. With regards to the latter, I have already argued that any nationalism involves a politics of ‘ethnification’ – for as Balibar (1991a) has argued so convincingly, a strict division between cultural and civic nationalisms cannot be maintained theoretically; insisting on such a distinction obscures what is really relevant about nationalism *as a political category*. Thus, the significant question is not how ancient or how modern the cultural aspects or social solidarities invoked by nationalism are, but how exactly the confluence of state power and national community inaugurates a reconstituted set of parameters,

expectations and identities at the level of the political. In this regard, *both* modernist and primordialist/perennialist approaches to nationalism have arguably over-accentuated the characteristics of the nation as a *cultural* community – the one considering culture as pre-existing whilst the other sees it as a product of nationalism – at the expense of focusing on the significance of the nation as first and foremost a *political* community (Chipkin, 2007). Gellner (1983), for example, is interested in how nationalism requires a ‘high’ culture, which it then proceeds to invent (see also Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2003). According to Degenaar (1991):

Gellner defines nation in terms of congruence of culture and power. This culture, however, does not refer to folk culture but to the culture of modernisation which is assumed to transcend ethnic cultures and produce, through a convergence of life-styles, homogeneity and anonymity. (p. 8)

Understandably, when there is fundamental disagreement about which aspect of culture (‘folk’ or ‘modern’) is most relevant to a theory of the nation, the question about the nature and origins of nations can sink into the quicksand of perpetual debate. It all too easily boils down to questions of definition. If one considers any kind of communal cultural self-awareness as early instances or embryonic forms of ‘nationalism’, one is quite likely to insist on the antiquity of nations and reject the modernist thesis that nations and nationalism are, culturally speaking, modern phenomena and therefore European in origin. However, if one stresses those elements of national culture that are amended, invented, standardised, amplified and distributed as ‘high culture’ in the service of the social and economic development of modern, industrial states, one is likely to reject the idea that culturally self-aware communities predating modernity were ‘nations’ in the modern sense of the term, whatever surface continuities there may be. In both, as indicated above, the nation is finally approached as a cultural phenomenon, with culture conceived of as either real or invented. As Chipkin (2007) quite correctly asks: ‘Why does it follow, however, that a high culture is necessarily a *national* culture?’ (p. 51, emphasis added).

Instead, the ‘biopolitical’ nature of nationalism (not the origins and authenticity of its ‘cultural ingredients’), should occupy the theoretical interest here. Chipkin (2007) makes the point that, no matter how it is dated, nationalism is always defined by the emergence of a new claim to sovereignty, and more specifically, by the emergence of *democracy* – the kind of rule in which sovereignty is seated in the people (however conceived of), as opposed to being located in a transcendental sovereign. This, really, is what robust theories of nationalism have in common, and which relativises their often contradictory ideas about the age of the nation form and the relationship between nation and *culture*: ‘At stake is the advent of democracy as a principle of government and political community. For the first time, the political community refers to ‘the people’, in whom political sovereignty resides’ (p. 52). Nationalism refers to a political, not a primarily cultural development, an insight which is obscured by endless debates about *how* nationalism involves, invokes, amends and produces culture. Modernist theories, arguably, have been somewhat more attuned to the political dimensions of nationalism; frequently at the cost of overly functionalist accounts of national culture, as if its only purpose is servicing a modern, capitalist system of production.

However, the major challenge facing the accomplishment of political modernity (this framework of modern sovereignty and political subjectivity), was not to functionally adjust culture to a modern system of production, but to imagine and establish the *limits* of the political community; to determine who are and who are not legitimately part of ‘the people’:¹⁷

Historically speaking, since the great democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century, there has been a single, pre-eminent way of generating this limit. This can be called *the national principle*. It is a way of simultaneously generating identity and difference that appeals to a *horizontal* relation between persons. [...] The national principle of political community appeals to identity as the basis of the limit. This is not the case with earlier and/or other religiously inspired principles of political community. If we consider briefly the dynastic principle, we see that it has nothing to do with differences or commonalities between individual and collectivities. At

stake, rather, is a vertical relation between subject and the sovereign. (Chipkin, 2007, p. 175, emphases added).

Modern democratic citizenship, according to Chipkin (2007), is ‘produced in the relations between individuals of collectivities and the state. What is at stake in defining the limits of the political community, therefore, is the measure according to which rights are conferred and distributed in the polis. This brings us to the *particular form of the nation*’ (p. 56, emphasis in the original). Irrespective of the origins and authenticity of its cultural referents, nationalism invokes culture and ethnicity in order to produce the new figure of sovereignty, ‘the people’, in the paradigmatic form of the nation. In this sense its relationship to ethnicity, as Balibar (1991a) indicated, is indeed ‘fictive’. The nation becomes a *modern* category not because of the invented nature of its national culture, but because of: (i) the particular relationship it postulates and generates between state, people and sovereignty; (ii) the manner in which this relationship reconstitutes the nature of the political; (iii) and how it establishes it as the the inaugural form, *the* paradigmatic embodiment, of the modern political. What, according to Foucault (2004, p. 223), ‘defines a nation is not its archaism, its ancestral nature, or its relationship with the past; it is its relationship with something else, with the State.’¹⁸ He continues:

The nation is the active, constituent core of the State. The nation is the State, or at least an outline State. It is the State insofar as it is being born, is being shaped and is finding its historical conditions of existence *in a group of individuals*. (p. 223, emphasis added)

The difference between modern and pre-modern states, according to Foucault, is tied up with how citizenship is imagined and sovereignty defined. This, moreover, is linked to the ‘the emergence of something that is no longer an anatomo-politics of the human body, but what I would call a “biopolitics” of the human race’ (Foucault, 2004, p. 243). Calhoun (1995) likewise distinguishes the nature of the modern state from that of empires and other forms of state, by asserting that the modern state claims and manufactures ‘a more intimate relationship to the populations they ruled’ (p. 237). It is this dimension to which I referred to, in the introduction, as the ontological question:

nationalism as the creation of *a particular kind of people*, not a particular kind of culture. Furthermore, the emergence of a particular kind of *concern* with ‘the people’, taking the form of an intimate and calculative involvement – in other words, that to which Foucault refers to as biopolitics. According to Balibar (1991a), utilising Foucault’s terminology:

the contemporary importance of schooling and the family unit does not derive solely from the functional place they take in the reproduction of labour power, but from the fact that they subordinate that reproduction to the constitution of a fictive ethnicity – that is, to the articulation of a linguistic community and a community of race implicit in population policies (what Foucault called by a suggestive but ambiguous term the system of ‘bio-power’). (p. 103)

In summary, then, whether or not one sees its packaging and redistribution as ‘invented or reinvented, the nation is modern in the sense that originates in democracy, and that nationalism offered a political sovereignty now resting in the population with a particular embodiment: the people’ (Chipkin, 2007, p. 52). One could refer to the political order inaugurated by the modern notion of the nation as providing the background for the emergence of modern ‘social psychological’ reality as well – and here I am not primarily referring to the social psychology in its later disciplinary sense, but to the enfolding of social and individual interests within the political rationalities of modern nationally mediated rule. It is in this sense that the nation and nationalism are not simply topics of interest to social psychology, but more fundamentally the cultural-political background from which the figures of modern social psychological reality (and later disciplinary systematisation in the study of attitudes, groups and identities), could emerge (Rose, 1996). I will explore this, in relation to language, in the next section.

With this outline of the emergence of the modern political, and the importance the national principle assumed in defining and harnessing the political community in modern states, I am in a better position to address language in its particular modern relationship to the political as well; that is, to push beyond language as a political topic, to language as a dimension of the political. In the following section I trace more closely the emergence of language as a political phenomenon in relation to the nation, nationalism and the

nation-state. My aim, as was said in the introduction, is to argue for the modernity of language in relation to the nation-state. Here, the analyses of Chipkin (2007) and Balibar (1991a, 2004) are particularly pertinent, in that they allow an approach to language that does not tie it irrevocably to the cultural; and, similarly (when it located in the political), does not reduce language to a mere functional relationship with the demands of capitalism and industrialisation. Instead, language can be approached as a biopolitically productive component in the manufacturing of political reality.

To be heard: Language, nation/-state and subjectivity

In the preceding section it was argued, essentially, that the nation-form is not itself the political community; rather, it is ‘a structure capable of producing determinate “community effects”’ (Balibar, 2004, p. 21). The category of the nation was depicted as modern – and political – through and through: a principle of popular sovereignty firmly rooted in the idea of the demos, or ‘the people’, understood as a community of identity or similitude (Chipkin, 2007). The overriding ‘community effect’ of modern nationalism was that it elevated the idea that the nation coheres around a particular set of characterising features to an almost inviolable code; that the nation *is* (through a process of cultural recollection) or should be *made to be* (through the future-oriented cultural projection often referred to as nation-building) identical to itself. The civilizing drive of modern nations was therefore not only directed outwards, to its colonial subjects for example, but inwards as well, seeking to moderate its internal diversity of languages and cultures (e.g., Malik, 1996; Williams, 1999). The state – a machine for the creation of nationality as homogeneity – indeed took on the character of a *moral principle* in modernity, as Williams (1992) argues in relation to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

The basic theme of Rousseau’s work is that, in a state of nature, society was based upon the moral principles which generated integration; but as society became more complex, the state became necessary in order to conserve the moral imperative. As we have seen, the superimposition of time upon society in such a way that social change proceeds in a unilinear direction with a degree of

inevitability means that *Gemeinschaft* must give way to *Gesellschaft*, thereby implementing and justifying the state in society. (p. 10)

Rousseau went further, according to Williams (1992), by also advocating the ‘elimination of all intermediate groups which in any way militated against the individual assimilating into the rational state. The theme was ruthlessly adopted by the Jacobins in their castigation and elimination of languages and cultures in their search for a single, united France’ (p. 11).¹⁹ The holy grail of an overarching national identity has historically been (and to a large extent remains) the desire of all nationalisms, whether conceived in civic or ethnic terms. Furthermore, its homogenising logic almost always occasions the manufacturing of narratives of origin, identity and destiny in terms of which a group of people can come to identify themselves as ‘a nation’. The notion of the state as a guarantor of morality, justice, equality, liberty, and so forth, came into being partly as a response to the social and cultural dislocation brought about by modernisation. As patterns of human equality (and naturalised inequality) characteristic of traditional, pre-industrial societies collapsed under the sheer force of the modern, a strong, central state became increasingly necessary – at least, this is the idea shared by thinkers such as Hobbes, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Spinoza and Kant. The latter referred to it as ‘nature’s secret plan’ (cited in Williams, 1992, p. 12). Capturing and reducing diversity through both the assimilation and expulsion of difference, became a central task of the modern state. Thus, there has been no nationalism without a politics of culture and language.

But how, or in relation to which characterising features, does the nation-form produce its particular community effects? What, in other words, delineates, embodies, and authenticates the political community as a *nation*? In this regard Hobsbawm (1990) asks:

What of language? Is it not the very essence of what distinguishes one people from another, ‘us’ from ‘them’, real human beings from the barbarians who cannot talk a genuine language but only make incomprehensible noises? Does not every reader of the Bible learn about the Tower of Babel, and how friend was told from foe by the right pronunciation of the word ‘shibboleth’? Did not the Greeks define themselves proto-nationally in this way against the remainder of humanity,

the barbarians? Does not ignorance of another group's language constitute the most obvious barrier to communication, and therefore the most obvious definer of the lines which separate groups: so that the creation of a special argot still serves to mark people as members of a subculture which wishes to separate itself from other subcultures or from the community at large? (p. 51)

On first glance these seem to be reasonable questions. The idea of the nation is premised on the idea of cultural continuity (as I have discussed in the previous section), and very frequently assumes or actively strives for linguistic commonality (Hardt & Negri, 2000). The fact that language is not just a symbol but also a *means* or mechanism of solidarity, identity, citizenship and public life may further contribute to the idea that language must somehow be a natural building block of nations, and a defining feature (especially in its role as a carrier of culture) of national subjectivity. Furthermore, there seems to be a longstanding *historical* link between language and group identity. Consider, for example, the following observation by Haarman (1999):

The awareness of language as a means of ethnic boundary marking appeared as early as the Middle Ages. Drawing on the differentiation of people's mother tongues after the biblical Tower of Babel, Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636), the schoolmaster of medieval Europe, attributes to language a prime role in producing ethnic diversity. He stresses that 'races arose from different languages, not languages from different races. (p. 66)

According to Joseph (2004), the idea that language is linked to identity, and that the boundaries between groups and languages overlap significantly, can be traced back even further, to the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus of Samos (341-270 BC). One should pause for a moment to consider this claim – not its factual status, but its rhetorical effect. It would be very easy to read it – against Joseph's intentions, it should be added – as a rather unproblematic statement, quite reasonably assuming 'Greek' to refer both to a nationality and a language: the philosopher Epicurus is from Greece, the country where one speaks Greek – as one speaks Spanish in Spain, French in France and Danish in Denmark. Yet, it is obvious (even at first glance) that claims like these obscure as much

as they reveal. It is precisely the commonsense accomplishment of national identification with language that needs to be accounted for. What is obscured in such an account is how Spanish became hegemonic in Spain, just as French and Danish became hegemonic in France and Denmark, respectively: language, people (nation) and state overlap not naturally, but through ideological and extensive political labour. These states did not secure linguistically homogenous territories and populations; they had to be made that way. In fact, the majority of them still aren't; they just appear as such because their nationalistic language ideologies have been relatively successful in producing linguistic hegemony (Barbour & Carmichael, 2000; Wright, 2004). In this regard Safran (1999) observes, 'The creation of modern Czech, Slovak, and Norwegian was the result of *deliberate* decisions by intellectual leaders who wished to create a lexicographical underpinning for claims to political independence' (p. 84). The same could be said of Hebrew (Safran, 2005), modern Greek (Trudgil, 2000) and Indonesian (Errington, 1998): intuitively all of these seem like ancient languages, likely carriers, perhaps, of national identities that predate state formations; but in all these cases the modern forms of these languages were also hugely contested and moreover developed within the context of recent nationalist politics.

Whether there is an ancient link between language and group identity is thus, to some extent, irrelevant. The question would still be whether these historical linguistic groupings were 'separate identities which can be regarded as potential nationalities or nations, and not merely groups which happen to have trouble in understanding each other's words' (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 51). The exact relationship between language and nationalism, and more specifically between language and nation-*state*, is thereby still not answered. We have seen that the 'nation-form' imposes a measure of identity or similitude on a population or multitude; it not only locates sovereignty with the people, but defines the people along 'quasi-ethnic' lines. Invocations of nationality either resort to some index of commonality that pre-exist the state, or they involve state-driven attempts to create a commonly shared identity. Language, quite obviously, is one possible commonality, one possible measure of the population. It has been, for various reasons, a very successful one, not only in securing political independence but in the process of nation-building as well. According to Safran (1999) nationalism always builds and elaborates on existing ties

and commitments; its relationship to culture may not be organic in the primordialist sense, but it is never simply a purely functional affair either. The foundations of these commitments, even though they may in time be re-imagined and radically amended in the service of national mobilisation, are, according to him, kinship, religion and language:

Among them, language would seem to be the most important, for kinship lines are often difficult to substantiate; religious links are weakening in an age of growing secularization; and culture without language is a global mass culture that is ephemeral and implies little in the way of tradition or emotional commitment. There remains language; more specifically, *an ethnationally distinct language*. (Safran, 1999, p. 91, emphasis added)

Safran (1999) continues to claim that language in fact becomes *increasingly* important to nationalist politics, by serving the purpose of preserving a sense of cultural uniqueness ‘in a time of cultural globalization, economic interdependence, and the weakening of traditional sovereignties’ (p. 92):

The nationalism fostered by those who make strong efforts to revive an ethnic language may be cultural rather than political: it may not aim at political independence but rather at a restructuring of the state along federal lines or at one or other functional cultural autonomy or even socioeconomic codetermination. (p. 92)

Safran (1999) here concurs with Castells (1997), who likewise affords language an imperative role in the identity politics of late modernity and (according to Castells), in nationalisms that take the form of the defence of identities exactly at a time when the state, due to economic and cultural globalisation, is a weakening institution (an aspect I will expand on in a later section). According to Castells (1997), ‘language, *and particularly a fully developed language*, is a fundamental attribute of self-recognition, and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity’ (p. 52, emphasis added). Castell’s rationale behind this claim is

that language serves as a link between private and public spheres, and between past and present:

If nationalism is, most often, a reaction against a threatened autonomous identity, then in a world submitted to cultural homogenization by the ideology of modernization and the power of global media, language, as the direct expression of culture, becomes the trench of cultural resistance, the last bastion of self-control, the refuge of identifiable meaning. (p. 52)

Both Safran (1999) and Castells (1997) here articulate the strong pull of language in contemporary nationalistic politics. Their analyses are certainly useful for understanding specific language political movements in the contemporary world, but there are a number of reservations as well. Safran trades on a distinction between the cultural and the political which is problematic, as I have argued in the preceding section. The kinds of language politics he describes are aimed at no less than reformulating the domain of nationality; it concerns the composition, or the measure, of the demos. In this sense it is certainly nothing less than (bio-)political, even if it comes wrapped in the contemporary discourse of culture and minority rights. In other words, contemporary language politics is not ‘cultural rather than political’. Instead, it involves a rethinking of the political *in terms of* the cultural. What is more – and this applies to Castells as well – language politics of this nature still only make sense in relation to the nation-state: there is as yet no truly transnational politics of language. May (2001) is correct when he insists: ‘What constitutes the politics of language then? Principally, it is a contest for linguistic control (and by extension, social and cultural control) of the nation-state’ (p. 150).

The most important reservation, however, is in relation to the references these scholars make to ‘a fully developed language’ (Castells, 2007, p. 52) and ‘an ethnationally distinct language’ (Safran, 1999, p. 91), respectively. Neither scholar describes exactly how such languages or forms of language come into existence. They suggest that languages reflect, or at least invoke, the cultural continuities upon which nationalist politics are articulated, but neglect to account for the historical constitution, and more specifically, the national mediation, of these idealised linguistic forms. How does a

language become an ethnationally distinct form, a discrete entity that is distinguishable from other similarly discrete entities, each coinciding neatly with a particular category of social identity? What is a fully developed language? How does it come into being? And, through which institutions is it mediated, developed and sustained? To answer these questions, it is necessary to probe the relationship between language and nation more deeply: to ask, in short, how the matrix of the nation-state establishes a particular ethnolinguistic order and thus question what contribution language makes to the nation-state; to the emergence of the modern political order, and to nationalised forms of political subjectivity. What Safran (1999) and Castells (2007) are referring to are *national* languages; they are products that have been nationally mediated, and cannot therefore be theorised simplistically as causes or principles of national self-definition and mobilisation. Their very existence as ‘developed’ forms and signposts of identity depends, in other words, on their prior entanglement with the institutions and political projects of the nation-state.

Another way of making this point, is to say that the linguistic community that coincides with the political community of nationalism does not simply exist: it, too, had to be imagined. Anderson (1983), as I have mentioned earlier, maintains that language played a crucial role in the historical imagining of the nation. The origin of nations for Anderson resides within the emergence of print-capitalism. Print-capitalism, and through its mass distribution of books and newspapers, ‘enabled growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways’ (p. 40). It is only through mass media and universal literacy (usually in the vernacular rather than ‘religious’ languages of Europe) that corresponding mass publics could be created, and could become the bases for political identities.

But Anderson, not unlike Safran (1999) and Castells (1997), does not go far enough along this theoretical trajectory. His template for large, imagined communities are still ‘national’ languages, which he treats as if they had emerged unselfconsciously, pragmatically, haphazardly, and *independently from the political*, from the sixteenth century onwards. Anderson is correct to insist that languages developed (that is to say, they were reduced to written, standardised media for literary traditions) within larger, often imperial state

structures, and that they did not necessarily translate into embodiments of *political* communities before the era of nationalism. Still, Anderson underplays the extent to which languages and the linguistic order as such are also *political* inventions. Silverstein (2000), in a far-reaching critique of Anderson's (1983) approach to language and nationalism, refers to this as an aprioristic approach, claiming that Anderson mistakes 'the dialectically produced trope of 'we'-ness for the reality. He seems not to see that the dialectical workings of political processes that construct the sharable space of realist reportage in standardized language are the facts to be characterized and explained' (p. 126). Silverstein continues:

The regime of language on which such a dialectic depends is a frequently fragile socio-political order, seething with contestation that emerges from actual plurilingualism, heteroglossia, and like indexes of at least potentially fundamental political economic conflict. Such a regime of language is, however, energized and in a sense maintained by the ritually emblemized trope of 'we'-ness. It seems to have taken in Anderson, who buys the trope as a transparently imagined 'reality'. (pp. 128-129).

In other words, and in much simpler terms, 'Anderson's constructionist approach to nationalism is purchased at the price of an essentialist outlook on languages' (Joseph, 2004, p. 124). National identities are not built on top of existing 'national' languages: identities and languages emerge dialectically, 'in a complex process that ought to be our focus of interest and study' (p. 124). Incidentally, Silverstein does not have the last word in this debate. Joseph (2004) takes him to task for reducing language to politics, or more accurately, to an epiphenomenon of politics. This, in the terms that I am employing in this chapter, paradoxically makes it very difficult to pursue language as a productive and not just derivative dimension of the political. Nationalism, on Silverstein's (2000) account, finds its true expression in political economics, and 'what we see in language is only the reflection of that real nationalism' (Joseph, 2004, p. 124). The implication is that ideologies of language merely *reflect* what is real in politics, and have no productive capacities in relation to the constitution of the political – something that Joseph quite rightly characterises as a 'vulgar-materialist reduction' (p. 124).

Up to this point I have argued that, against the claim that ‘the existence of a national language is the primary foundation upon which nationalist ideology is constructed’ (Joseph, 2004, p. 94), one should insist that ‘national languages are not actually given, but are themselves constructed as part of the ideological work of nationalism-building’ (p. 94). Language is *ontologically* entangled with the particular history of state-nationalism; in other words, it owes its modern ideological (and even academic, as I shall argue in Chapter 5) existence to the cultural and political technologies of the nation-state. Safran (1999) effectively admits to this in the same text from which I have quoted earlier, when he writes that languages become standardised, scientifically developed, national state idioms (what we call ‘language’) ‘as a result of compulsory education and the spread of mass media, which are products of conscious public policy, and it is in that sense that national languages, like modern and “civic” nations, *are artefacts of a politicized community*’ (p. 83, emphasis added). In other words, whilst nation-states may have required linguistic (and broader cultural) homogeneity, this does not mean that linguistic homogeneity (again, like cultural homogeneity) was not itself also one of the consequences of nationally mediated processes of standardisation and often *invention* of state idioms. Hobsbawm (1990) states the case for this very clearly:

National languages are therefore almost always semi-artificial constructs and occasionally, like modern Hebrew, virtually invented. They are the opposites of what nationalist mythology supposes them to be, namely the primordial foundations of national culture and the matrices of the national mind. They are usually attempts to devise a standardized idiom out of a multiplicity of actually spoken idioms, which are therefore downgraded to dialects... (p. 54)

Languages, in other words, require the vertical and horizontal reach of state institutions, especially mass education, for them to become *national* languages in the full sense of this term: that is, on a literal level, to become widely spread and shared as standard, or at least ideal forms, across a nationally bounded territory; and more importantly, to become politically functional as measures of national populations, and hence, to serve as an instrument for the biopolitical production, reproduction and governing of nationally

mediated subjectivities.²⁰ This state-mediated development and sometimes full-blown invention of national languages, national literatures and widespread literacies, is of a relatively recent historical origin. The reason for this, is that states only required standardised linguistic forms and practices *after* the advent of political modernity. According to Wright (2004), the major difference between pre-national and national language orders was that ‘the dialect continua were not clearly truncated by the political allegiances of the speakers’ (p. 21):

A traveller disembarking in Portugal and trekking across the Iberian peninsula to the Mediterranean coast, then eastward to the Alps, down into the Italian peninsula to the island of Sicily would have found as a general rule that the inhabitants of each village could understand the next. (p. 21)

Rather than so many discrete and neatly differentiated languages that existed parallel to one another (and in correspondence with ‘group identities’) the reality was a continuum of communicative forms that did not coincide with either political identities or the borders of states. Furthermore, the elite languages were generally not ‘national’ or vernacular languages, but languages (at first religious or scholarly languages like Latin, later prestigious trans-European forms like French) which transcended the political borders of states. Consider the following historical observation on courtly society in Germany: ‘French spread from the courts to the upper layers of the bourgeoisies. All *bonnêtes gens* (decent people), all people of “consequence” spoke it. To speak French was the status symbol of *all* the upper classes’ (Elias, 2000, p. 11, emphasis added). But this was to change radically during the eighteenth century, as Elias (2000) narrates so captivatingly:

The members of this multifarious society spoke the same language throughout the whole of Europe, first Italian, then French; they read the same books, they had the same taste, the same manners and – with differences of degree – the same style of living. Notwithstanding their many political differences and even the many wars they waged against each other, they orientated themselves fairly unanimously, over greater or lesser periods, towards the centre at Paris. And social

communication between court and court, that is within courtly-aristocratic society, remained for a long time closer than between courtly society and other strata in the same country; *one expression of this was their common language*. Then, from about the middle of the eighteenth century, earlier in one country and somewhat later than in another, but always in conjunction with the rise of the middle classes and the gradual displacement of the social and political centre of gravity from the court to the various national bourgeois societies, the ties between the courtly-aristocratic societies of different nations were slowly loosened even if they are never entirely broken. The French language gave way, not without violent struggles, to the bourgeois, national language even in the upper class. And courtly society itself became increasingly differentiated in the same way as bourgeois, particularly when the old aristocratic society lost its centre once and for all in the French Revolution. The national form of integration displaced that based on social estate. (p. 190, emphasis added)

The important point to stress here, is that the modern politico-linguistic order emerged in the context of the modern nation-state. To be sure, language planning and standardisation, as well as the development of early examples of ‘national’ literatures, predate the nation-state and political modernity by centuries. The Italian academies are a good example, where scholars and poets like Dante (1265-1321), Petrarch (1304-1374) and Boccaccio (1313-1375) practically invented ‘Italian’ by codifying and promoting the use of an obscure Tuscan dialect over Latin (Wright, 2004). However, the standardised language that emerged as a result remained an abstract literary ideal, spoken and understood by only a fraction of ‘Italians’, It was only until the advent of the nation-state and its intermediary institutions like public schooling that it became possible for the broader speech community to be harmonised in relation to what is now regarded as the ‘*the Italian language*’. Subsequently, the national languages were increasingly thought to resemble not only the limits of the national population, but to *define* them as a historical, cultural and even racial community (Bauman & Briggs, 2003). Language, in other words, was nationally mediated, and in turn mediated a range of nationalised subjectivities. Consider in this regard related observations by Tosco (2004):

It does not mean that prior to the development of the modern age of the nation-state language standardization and empowerment did not take place. Of course it did. [...] What before the advent of the nation-state was to a large extent lacking was a special interest on the part of the state in matters of language, and, above all, the possibility of the state to have the effects of its language policy felt by its speakers. [...] An official language is bound up with the state; *but only in a nation-state is the state bound up with the language.* (p. 173, emphasis added)

The reason why the the modern, *national* state is bound up with language in ways that was simply not the case in pre-national (and pre-democratic) states (and this brings the discussion full-circle to the discussion of nationalism as a particular political relationship between state and the demos) is because the latter maintained a different kind of relationship with the population. In the words of Wright (2001):

Feudal and Absolutist monarchs do not need a linguistically cohesive population; decrees and orders can be handed down from on high to subjects through the bureaucracy and where there is linguistic difference a small group of bilingual bureaucrats can ensure communication. *Linguistic diversity is a different matter in any polity when people move from being subjects to being citizens.* (p. 31, emphasis added)

In summary, the difference between pre-modern and modern political orders with regards to language, is that the democratisation of the state, which brought about a more intimate relationship ‘between subjects and state (whereby the people become “the citizens” and the power becomes “the government”) *required* the implementation of a language policy and secured its success’ (Tosco, 2004, p. 174, emphasis added). Why, however, would *linguistic* homogeneity become such an important issue when people are conceived of as democratic citizens rather than mere subjects of a sovereign power? Why is it that the nation-state is so deeply bound up with language, and invests so much in producing and distributing a standardised idiom? I will further explore these questions, and their implications for a critical social psychology of language, in the following section.

Mark my words

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1975, pp. 35-36), 'Any language, rich or poor, always implies the deterritorialization of the mouth, the tongue, and the teeth.' This process, which involves a kind of 'denaturalisation' of the function of the mouth, is a key moment, according to these authors, in the development of subjectivity. Throughout modernity (as I have discussed at length above), the deterritorialising movement of the mouth that Deleuze and Guattari refer to has been captured by an attendant, powerful *re*territorialisation: the establishment of the cultural, political and economic matrix of the modern state and the concomitant manufacturing of citizen-subjects or *nationalised* subjects. In this regard, consider also a statement by Dolar (2006):

Imagine someone reading the news on TV with a heavy regional accent. It would sound absurd, for the state, by definition, does not have an accent. A person with an accent can appear in a talk-show, speaking in her own voice, but not in an official capacity. The official voice is the voice devoid of any accent. (p. 191)

What Dolar refers to as the 'official voice' is a collusion of the nation-state ideal and the standardised form of a language. The domesticated voice is, quite literally, the *nationalised* voice. It is, first of all, a manufactured and regulated voice: the state requires and works towards a 'homogenization of all communication' (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 45). For modernist theorists of nationalism, in particular, this process of linguistic homogenisation was required on account of the labour demands of modern industrial capitalism. According to both Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990), for example, it was primarily the development of national economies and their more complex labour requirements which demanded the linguistic homogenisation of the population at the level of the state. As with culture in general, they perceive the 'language logic of nationalism' as directly in service of political economy. Not surprisingly, then, they regard the linguistic homogenisation of the national polity in generally positive terms. Linguistic standardisation adds to the economic mobility and thus to the life chances of national citizens and even newly arrived immigrants. Hobsbawm (1990), for example, writes the following:

Elsewhere he or she was little better than a dumb animal: a mute bundle of muscles. From the point of view of *poor men looking for work to better themselves in a modern world* there was nothing wrong with peasants being turned into Frenchmen or Poles and Italians in Chicago learning English and wishing to become Americans. (p. 115, emphasis added)

This resonates with Hage's (2003) notion of the modern state as a mechanism for the distribution of hope. Through its creation and distribution, in this instance, of linguistic capital, relying primarily on the distributive capacities of national education, the modern state produced the national subject as a 'hoping' subject, and provided him or her with the appropriate linguistic capital with which to generate symbolic and material profits in a nationally integrated 'linguistic market' (Bourdieu, 1991). In the same way Gellner (1983) (for all his insistence on the inventedness of the cultural edifice of modern nationhood) nevertheless considers nationalism a modernising and mobilising force; and the standardisation of language at the level of the state as generally productive of necessary homogeneity and economic opportunity.

That standardised state languages (however invented and politically invested they may be) can have these positive and liberatory effects cannot be denied. I have already discussed, in the previous chapter, the extent to which the 'invention' of the Afrikaans language contributed to the political and economic mobility of Afrikaners in South Africa, over and above its symbolisation of an ethnic identity. But the official, nationalised voice is also a *regulatory* technology; it is inserted into the disciplinary and biopolitical technologies of state power. In short, it contributes to the ordering and reproduction of the cultural, political and economic terrain of the state. According to Narkunas (2005), 'language has been a central technique for the state to reproduce itself during the emergence and institutionalization of the European nation state and colonialism, often by distinguishing the boundary between humans and other forms of life like animals' (p. 37). In other words, language does not solely contribute to the standardisation of the labour market in the context of capitalist industrialisation. The role of language exceeds such a functionalist account of modernisation. As Wallerstein (1991) has made clear, capitalism

does not necessarily presuppose the homogenisation of culture; and therefore, according to Chipkin (2007), ‘the nation *qua* homogenous high culture cannot be read from the logic of (capitalist) industrialisation’ (p. 52). There are different, politically more foundational reasons for the nation-state’s requirement for processes of cultural and linguistic standardisation: language is ontologically productivity as a principle and measure of the nationally envisioned (and enacted) population; it contributes to the *production of nationally mediated subjectivities*.

In this regard language is not only implicated in the manufacturing of similitude at the level of the national population. Language also facilitates the reproduction of the state by distinguishing between *different kinds of human subject*: between natives and immigrants; between citizens and non-citizens; between different economic classes; between racialised groups; between metropolitan elites and those from rural areas; and between the hegemonic national culture and those who are identified or identify themselves as ‘ethnic’ or ‘minorities’. Thus, whilst language is therefore certainly a symbol and instrument of national unification, standardisation and (especially economic) mobilisation, it equally serves as an instrument of diversification, hierarchisation, and *restriction* of movement. This is, importantly, not primarily a question of some having ‘voice’ and others being left ‘voiceless’ in the representational structures of liberal democracy. Rather, one’s voice, (one’s *audibility*) literally positions one within and in relation to the state. In the words of Felix Guattari (1996), ‘The national language is the instrument of translatability which specifies each person’s way of speaking’ (p. 19).

In other words, the standardisation of language at the level of an envisioned national culture not only supports homogenisation, but also the marking, encoding and reproduction of difference and inequality. In the nationally integrated linguistic market, as in all markets, some are endowed with more linguistic capital than others. Since capitalism requires a homogenised workforce, but also exploits and reproduces *class differences*, linguistic capital is as unevenly spread as other forms of capital, and therefore becomes a source of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1991; see also Myles, 1999; Topper, 2001) as readily as it is a source of ‘social hope’. For this reason Balibar (1991a) insists:

Though formally egalitarian, belonging to the linguistic community – chiefly because of the fact that it is mediated by the institution of the school – *immediately recreates divisions, differential norms which also overlap with class differences to a very great degree.* (p. 103, emphasis added)

Balibar (1991a) continues by observing that different linguistic competencies assign

different 'social destinies' to individuals. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that they should be immediately associated with forms of corporal *habitus* (to use Pierre Bourdieu's terminology) which confer on the act of speaking in its personal, non-universalizable traits the function of a racial or quasi-racial mark... (p. 104, emphasis added)

One should therefore accentuate both the empowering – or *mobilising* – and disempowering – or *violent* – role that language plays in the context of nation-states. It is in this role of mediator of nationalised subjectivities, in which in which social destinies and dimensions or patterns of ethnicisation and racialisation are relayed, that the political ontology of language is forcefully revealed. This modern ontology of language is to be found in its biopolitical entanglement with the state and in the manufacturing of racialised and racialising national populations. Consider Balibar (1991a) again in this regard:

For what is decisive here is not only that the national language should be recognized as the official language, but, much more fundamentally, that it should be able to appear as the very element of the life of a people, the *reality* which each person may appropriate in his or her own way, without thereby destroying its identity. There is no contradiction between the institution of *one* national language and the daily discrepancy between – and clash of – 'class languages' which precisely are not different languages. In fact, the two things are complementary. All linguistic practices feed into a single 'love of the language' which is addressed not to the textbook norm nor to particular usage, but to the 'mother tongue' – that is, to the ideal of a common origin projected back beyond learning processes

and specialist forms of usage and which, by that very fact, becomes the metaphor for the love fellow nationals feel for one another. (p. 98)

The important point here is that language plays a role in the state's definition and policing of 'the epistemological limits of what society can be' (Narkunas, 2005, p. 36). Language is not simply a cultural epiphenomenon of more fundamental economic processes. It functions as a 'measure of population' (Chipkin, 2007, p. 13), setting both the outer limits of society (that is, the question of who legitimately belongs to the national community) and its inner limits or demarcations (for example, the status, movement and mobility that different subjects like classes, the sexes, and racialised groups are afforded). In other words, as a biopolitical technology, language does not just produce homogeneity; it also signals and enacts significant differences – primarily of class and ethnicity.

I conclude this discussion of language, nationalism and the nation-state, and of the crucial role language plays in defining and reproducing nationally mediated and frequently *racialised* subjectivities, with comments by Papadopoulos (2007), who reflects on the cultural politics of voice and accent in the context of the creation of a discourse of the 'new migrant' in Britain: "New migrants" speak dodgy English and undermine national sovereignty and the last remaining bits of the crumbling welfare system. How can they dare to demand regularisation without speaking the language? Language as persecution. Language as a symptom of British neurosis.' He continues:

What I'm interested in is how the materiality of the voice box sustains the trajectories of racialisation on the one hand and criminalisation of mobility on the other. The materiality of the voice box acts as the point of gravity of British doubled-sided racism against the 'non-integrated' on the one hand and the 'illegal' on the other. We are used to responding to this by engaging separately in the politics of race and the politics of migration. But this distinction is no longer sustainable. Voice, racialisation, accents, detention centres, precarious labour, racial oppression, deportations are all made of the same stuff of matter: bodies which do not match.

Overstated: Language, politics and subjectivity under globalisation?

Since the early 1990s a proliferation of state-seeking nationalisms (often referred to as *ethnic* nationalisms) have co-existed with (and have fed off) the erosion of nation-state sovereignty brought about by economic and cultural forces of so-called globalisation, and the emergence of increasingly *transnational* and neoliberal forms of governance and control (Papadopoulos, Stephenson & Tsianos, 2008; Sassen, 2000, 2003, 2006). This co-occurrence of globalisation and seemingly resurgent nationalisms is not as paradoxical as some advocates of the idea of globalisation initially might have assumed. In fact, with Kaldor (2004), one could argue that these ‘new nationalisms’ do not present evidence of the recalcitrance of nationality rooted in transcendental ethnicity, and hence of the existence of a sort of natural limit to globalisation (see also Reiss, 2004). Instead, ‘in so far as it persists, [new nationalisms] will *contribute* to a wild, anarchic form of globalisation, characterised by violence and inequality’ (Kaldor, 2004, p. 162, emphasis added). In this process of contemporary cultural and political reordering, the institutions of the state do not give way willy-nilly to ready-made *globalised* regimes of rights, recognition and subjectification, embodied in the form of cosmopolitan citizenship and articulated in the sphere of a ‘global civil society’ (Alexander, 2006; see also Dower, 2003). The global is not simply the de- and reterritorialisation of the national, but a reorganisation of the relationships between state, power and population. If globalisation, however, radically disrupts the *national* definition of society, and alters the way the political is mediated by the regulatory and subjectivising institutions of the *nation*-state, it becomes pertinent to ask whether this in turn significantly alters the relationship between language and the political, as it has been outlined in this chapter.

Globalisation has received a bewildering quantity of theoretical attention over the last two decades. Moreover, much of this theorisation has yielded contradictory accounts, especially regarding the way in which globalisation is understood in relation to the nation-state, nations and nationalism (e.g., Fiss & Hirsch, 2005; Goodman & James, 2007b; Kearney, 1995; Wright, 2004) – so much so, one can question the ongoing theoretical value of the term. There are, however, at least two points of theoretical convergence. The first involves an appreciation of the extent to which communications and transport

technologies (amongst other things) have impacted upon experiences of time and space in recent decades: the internet and satellite television have enabled real-time interaction at a global level, whilst global transport has accelerated transnational mobilities in contexts like tourism and economic migration. The second point of general theoretical convergence is that globalisation refers not only to the increased interconnectedness of different parts of the globe (due to new technologies of communication and mass transport) but the hegemony (since the late 1970s) of *neoliberal economic regimes*, premised on, inter alia, the privatisation and deregulation of previously nationalised economies, industries and markets (e.g., Blim, 2000; Hart-Landsberg, 2006; Harvey, 2005).

It is this neoliberal, capitalist form of globalisation which most profoundly impacts on the institutional reach and ideological self-sufficiency of states – especially with regards to their ability to affect the nationalisation and homogenisation of populations, and to dominate processes of cultural and political subject formation. In Hobsbawm's (2007) account:

The astonishing cosmopolitisation of great cities in the wealthy countries is a visible consequence. In short, in Europe, the original home of nationalism, the transformations of the world economy are making short work of what the wars of the twentieth century, with their genocides and mass population transfers, appeared to produce, namely a mosaic of ethnically homogeneous nation-states. (p. 87)

Of course, as discussed in this chapter, the ability to impose an ethnic or quasi-ethnic homogeneity onto a diverse population (to transform the multitude into a 'people'), is precisely the distinguishing feature of the *nation*-state as a modern cultural-political form (Fiedler, 2007). However, the seeming proliferation of more or less sovereign states over the last two decades does not necessarily suggest the ongoing relevance of the *nation*-state as the main proprietor of power, control, the economy, and of the production or mediation of forms of subjectivity. According to Blommaert (2006):

One of the widespread ingredients of discourses of globalisation and late modernity is a denial of the state as an important actor in linguistic and cultural processes. Modernity, it is assumed, was characterised by an emphasis on state formats for organising the polity with the 'nation' as its desired outcome. The main actor in these processes was the 'nation-state'. In late modernity however, and due to the processes we call globalisation, *the nation-state seems to become less and less of a factor* in determining people's identity, networks, and practices. (p. 217, emphasis added)

In this regard, Hobsbawm (2007) goes as far as claiming that globalisation *reverses* the biopolitical relationship that had existed between states and populations during the era of the cultural, political and economic supremacy of the nation-state as 'the universal form of government for the world's population' (p. 51). In other words (according to Hobsbawm), instead of homogenising populations in terms of state-sanctioned and institutionalised processes of subject formation, globalisation increasingly makes it *impossible* (and in some ways even *undesirable*) for established nation-states to develop and maintain the relative homogeneity of population that nationalism has traditionally aspired to:

The process which turned peasants into Frenchmen and immigrants into American citizens is reversing, and it crumbles larger nation-state identities into self-regarding group identities, or even into the the a-national private identities of *ubi bene ibi patria*. And this in turn reflects, not least, the diminishing legitimacy of the nation-state for those who inhabit its territory, and the diminishing demands it can make on its citizens. If twenty-first-century states now prefer to fight their wars with professional armies, or even with private contractors of war services, it is not only for technical reasons, but because citizens can no longer be relied upon to be conscripted in their millions to die in battle for their fatherlands. (Hobsbawm, 2007, p. 93)

There is an important difference between the state and the *nation-state*. Accounts of globalisation that fail to make this distinction frequently exaggerate the imminent demise

of the state (Blommaert, 2006). However, the state is hardly a spent force in emerging global assemblages of sovereignty and control: *states* still impose border controls, go to war, and define, extend or erode citizen rights. As Sassen (2003) observes, processes of globalisation are in fact mostly embedded within *national* territories, and ‘the state *participates* in governing the global economy in a context increasingly dominated by deregulation, privatization, and the growing authority of non-state actors’ (p. 241, emphasis added). Hobsbawm (2007) may be correct when he refers to the reduced capacity of many states ‘to carry out its basic functions of maintaining control over what happened in its territory’ and claims that the world ‘has entered the era of inadequate, and in many cases failing or failed, states’ (p. 51). However, it remains a world of more or less powerful *states*. Their success and failure matter exactly because there is no imminent transfer in sight of the nation-state’s institutionalisation of regimes of rights, recognition, human development and political subjectification to a global level.

Many states (especially those in the Global South) have effectively been transformed from nation-states to *client*-states, especially in their reliance on multinational corporations and financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, ‘obligating them to shift resources from production for the domestic economy to export in the global market’ (Narkunas, 2005, p. 32; see also Bond, 2003). This has supported the creation of locally based but globally networked elites, and the exclusion of increasing numbers of people (often whole, biopolitically defined populations) from the material and symbolic rewards of the privatising, ‘anti-social’ state. However, in the Global North neoliberal globalisation has likewise contributed to the erosion of nationally mediated social benefits in erstwhile welfare states, leading to the exacerbation of poverty, inequality and (finance, health and labour) insecurities; in other words, *to the privatisation of social misery* (e.g., Bauman, 2003; Bourdieu, 2003). In a neoliberal, market-fundamentalist world order, states have to position and streamline themselves as economic actors, and as relays in a competitive and essentially punitive transnational environment of investments and privatised social and material revenues (Harvey, 2005; Holborow, 2007; Leyshon & Thrift, 2007). Many states, especially poorer ones, continue to function as *nation*-states only in name; national and often ‘heritage cultures’ are invoked, imagined and exploited as national brands, aimed at mobilising foreign investors and tourists, rather than at

authenticating and mobilising nationally mediated subjectivities. In this regard, Jansen (2008) refers to ‘designer nations’. However, the successful marketing of the ‘national brand’ in the context of global capitalism often coincides with a shrinking public sphere, and a much more precarious, easily interrupted relationship between states and their citizens.

According to Hage (2003), the neoliberal state increasingly cedes (or loses) its ability to function as a distributor of *resources of hope* through the social body. With this he has in mind more than simply the extent of public services provisions in areas like education and health care. Instead, he is referring to the very promise of social and economic mobility and security which made nationalism such a powerfully seductive ideology (at least up until the mid-twentieth century), and which legitimised the biopolitical measures it imposed on populations at the level of culture and identity. Due to its depletion of the material resources of social hope, neoliberal globalisation continuously adds to the number of people and classes who can be referred to as ‘the redundant, the next-to-be-eliminated’ (Berger, 1998/99, p. 3). Instead of being biopolitically productive of the *life chances* of the national population, neoliberal states create wasted lives and disposable populations at an unprecedented level (Bauman, 2003). The important point here is that these processes do not occur in a context where the state has ceased to be a powerful agent. On the contrary: it is *by means* of the institutions and interventions of states that disposable, vulnerable populations are created; it is *within* states that such populations are held captive; or *between* states that their mobility (as tourists or migrant workers, for example) is regulated and policed. Where states still seek to offer ‘hope’, this often takes the form of the mobilisation of *symbolic* resources which are disconnected from material benefits. In other words, in the absence of the mass mobilisation of the life chances of the population (as previously promised and often actualised by nationalism), the mobilisation of national identity resources frequently only serves to pacify increasingly vulnerable and marginalised masses. In this regard, identity politics forms part of the cultural and political logic of neoliberal capitalism (Papadopoulos, 2008; Žižek, 2000).

However, the important question to address is the following: how do these processes and shifts (considered as characteristic of globalisation), impact on (or involve) language? The

study of language and globalisation has received substantial attention from sociolinguistic scholars in recent years (e.g., Block & Cameron, 2002; Blommaert, 2003; De Swaan, 2001; Fairclough, 2006; Friedman, 2003; Phillipson, 2004; Ricento & Wiley, 2002) – even though the broader social science literature on globalisation (as referenced thus far in this section) is relatively devoid of reflection on issues specifically related to language. In this regard, a number of themes can be identified. Some scholars view the development of linguistic homogenisation at a global level (which essentially implies a repeat of the national linguistic logic at the level of the globe) as inevitable, perhaps even desirable. In this regard, the English is generally considered the prime candidate for a ‘world language’ (e.g., Crystal, 2003; De Swaan, 2001). In turn, others recognise the global spread of English, but either decry it as a form of cultural imperialism (demanding activism on behalf of smaller, often endangered languages (e.g., Phillipson, 1992; Rassool, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002)), or maintains a critical distance in order to explore both its positive and negative consequences (e.g., Holborow, 1999; Narkunas, 2005; Pennycook, 1998). Scholars who take the latter approach tend to foreground the ideological and *political* functions of English (and language more generally) within processes of globalisation. However, there are important disagreements within this orientation between scholars who approach language in the context of *cultural politics* (e.g., Alim & Pennycook, 2007; Leap & Boellstroff, 2004; Pennycook, 1998, 2007) and those who, in turn, accentuate the *political economy* of language in the context of neoliberal capitalism (e.g., Friedrich, 1989; Gal, 1989; Holborow, 1999; Manning, 2006).

However, my concern here is less with debates about language (and English in particular) within a globalising context, and instead with the extent to which globalisation embodies a transnational articulation of *the political* which may impact on (or be impacted upon by) extant and emerging ideologies and regimes of language. Does globalisation (and specifically *neoliberal* globalisation) fundamentally alter the political ontology of language as it has been described in this chapter? Has language ceased to play its erstwhile biopolitical role in defining, delimiting and substantiating (usually through the mediatory institutions of the state) national populations and nationally mediated forms of subjectivity?

In this regard, it necessary to insist that the relationship between globalisation and language is by no means one-way traffic. Language impacts upon globalisation as much as globalisation (in turn) impacts upon language. At the most obvious level, language spread, change, minoritisation, and the diversification of linguistic landscapes (notably urban spaces), are intensified by the globalisation of capital, technology, and the concomitant increased mobility of people, goods, and information across porous national borders (Blommaert, 2003; Coupland, 2003b; Friedman, 2003). Conversely, processes of globalisation (especially economic globalisation) are also *facilitated* by new practices, ideologies and regimes of language (Cameron, 2000; Heller, 2002, 2003; S. Wright, 2004). Whereas industrial states and their national economies were supported by unified linguistic markets (even though the biopolitical role of language in nation-states cannot be reduced to this), the demand for specifically nationally mediated workforces and productive populations has changed in character under globalisation. According to Aronin and Singleton (2008), ‘Multilingualism is now such an inherent element of human society that it is *necessary* to the functioning of major components of the social structure (in the broad sense, encompassing, inter alia, technology, finance, politics and culture)’ (p. 2, emphasis added; see also Maurais, 2003).

In other words, globalisation seemingly not only puts the linguistic homogenisation of states under pressure, it also requires different *kinds* of ‘language’ subjects: instead of a linguistically endowed national subject who converts linguistic capital (accumulated in the process of national subjectification) into other ‘profits’ in an integrated national market, the globalising economy (and the services industry in particular) seems to demand subjects who (irrespective of their ‘ethnolinguistic authenticity’), possess of varieties of *linguistic skills* (Budach, Roy & Heller, 2003; Cameron, 2000; Heller, 2002, 2003). According to Heller (2003, p. 473), the ‘globalized new economy is bound up with transformations of language in many different ways’ (p. 473). In her account, language increasingly functions as a measurable individual skill, rather than as a measure of an ethnically and nationally mediated population. Language skills (along with other skills) give individuals pragmatic advantages within a global economy where the exchange of information ‘becomes a primary form of production in globalized networks that link many different linguistic markets’ (Budach, Roy & Heller, 2003, p. 604). In summary,

Heller (2003) argues that there has been a shift ‘from understanding language as being primarily a marker of ethnonational identity, to understanding language as being a marketable commodity on its own, distinct from identity’ (p. 474). In essence, what Heller has in mind is a *privatisation* of what used to be the *social* (and *nationally mediated*) resource of language – a resource which (in the functioning nation-state) offered individuals a measure of humanity, social identity and economic mobility, in exchange for their being interpellated and moulded as *ethnically authenticated national subjects*. In other words, language shifts from being primarily a nationally mediated, material resource for the distribution of social hope (in Hage’s (2003) sense), to a privatised commodity.

Narkunas (2005) takes this argument even further. According to him, states (especially developing states) no longer primarily reproduce themselves (especially as economic units) through the production of *cultural* and *ethnolinguistic* citizen-subjects. Multinational companies (who are, according to Narkunas, the real power brokers of the global era) require cheap and skilled labour, and can source this anywhere in the world. In response, states compete with one another to produce and mobilise the human resources required for the global labour market. However, the labouring subject of neoliberal service-delivery and consumer capitalism is subjected to specific, compartmentalised skills-based training and lifelong learning, not to the cultural ‘*bildung*’ of traditional national education. The global economy ‘has little use for the nation state’s tools of national culture, history, and literature in producing subjects’ (p. 38). Therefore, the production of national citizen-subjects, once so crucial to ‘modernity’s organization of knowledge and order of nation states’ (p. 38), has ceased to be the principle concern of nation-states.

Consequently, the role of language undergoes an ‘ontological’ shift; it becomes a different thing, politically speaking. In this regard, Narkunas (2005) focuses specifically on the role of ‘Market English’ in the global economy. English language acquisition may not be required for national citizenship in the majority of states, but it nevertheless increasingly contributes to ‘biopolitically define “life that is worth living” globally, and especially in the impoverished world’ (p. 41). According to Narkunas, English teaching also no longer employs the acculturation technologies that used to characterise subjectification to languages in national and colonial settings. English teaching does not aim to inculcate the

citizen at a cultural level, but to endow individuals with transferrable, exchangeable and market-related skills and capacities. The subject of Market English is trained to handle the communicative demands of work in a call centre, not the interpretive demands of Shakespeare. According to Narkunas, Market English is a 'language divorced from reference, national history, and state formation' (p. 43).

However, the impact of globalisation on the *political ontology* of language should not be overstated. As scholars like Pennycook (1998) and Karmani (2005a, 2005c) document, it would be inaccurate to claim that global English targets subjects *only* as skills-bearing workers or global consumers. English remains embroiled in the biopolitical interests of particular states (such as the UK and USA), and hence its exportation is still partly directed at the *cultural* definition, interpellation and governing of the 'subjects' of neo-imperial constellations of political (not just economic) power, force and influence.

The same applies to other 'national languages'. These remain biopolitically productive (not *despite* globalisation but *because* of it) in *national* politics and *nationalised* regimes of inclusion and exclusion (e.g., Demont-Heinrich, 2005). It plays this role especially in the production and policing of symbolic-material borders, in terms of which certain categories of bodies are racialised and defined as out of place (Blackledge, 2006b; Blommaert, Creve & Willaert, 2006). This function is intensified rather than abated by globalisation: because national borders have become more porous (to facilitate the flow of capital and commodities), border regimes have become increasingly biopolitically attuned to the regulation of 'foreign bodies' within the body politic. Language in fact aggressively reasserts itself as a moveable, symbolic-material frontier, which assists in the regulation of populations in terms of their belonging, movement and access to public life. This is why ideologies and regimes of language (e.g., language testing for citizenship) have become such important ingredients in the political response to migration in various European countries (e.g., Blackledge, 2006a; Blommaert, Creve & Willaert, 2006), and in the politics of racism more generally (e.g., Linke, 2004). The continued nationally mediated political ontology of language is captured particularly well in this comment on the intersection of language and racial ideologies in the United Kingdom (Karmani 2006, p. 103): 'Good Muslims speak English.'

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the political ontology of language by foregrounding, on the one hand, the important role that nation-states and nationalism have played in the production and reproduction of a politico-linguistic order; and on the other hand, the historical (and continued) biopolitical productivity of language across a social and political terrain that remains *nationally mediated* in important ways. I have focused in particular on the role that language has played in the production of various categories of modern political *subjectivity*, including nationality, ethnicity, race and class.

Regarding the overarching aim of this thesis (namely to explore relevant conceptual and theoretical aspects for the development of a critical social psychology of language), this chapter has yielded two important insights: (i) language is a constitutive component of the social and the political as such, and hence concerns any social (and critical-political) psychology at a fundamental level of its definition as a discipline, and not just as a topic which may (or may not) enter its empirical field of vision; (ii) whilst all social identities may not be articulated in explicit reference to language, language has nevertheless played a historically and theoretically foundational role in the establishing of the subjectivities critical social psychologists are interested in, including nationality, ethnicity, race and class.

The discussion in this chapter was not explicitly *about* social psychology. Instead, I interrogated the nature (and the historical construction) of language in relation to the category of the political, in order to more clearly delineate language as an object of empirical, theoretical and political concern to social psychology. In other words, I sought to *problematise* language in relation to the historical and philosophical role it has played in the constitution of modern political orders and modern forms of political subjectivity. After having discussed language in relation to a particular national context (Chapter 3) and, in the present chapter, in relation to the political, I am now in a better position to confront social psychology more directly.

NOTES

¹ I am citing from the 1966 translation of the American Bible Society, published in South Africa in 1977 by the Bible Society of South Africa as *Good News Bible*.

² Smith (1996) indeed notes that the story of the Tower of Babel has been used ‘to reinforce a diverse collection of worldviews, from apartheid in South Africa to Derridean deconstruction’ (p.169). It is often used to argue that God not only created different languages, but different races; and that segregation between different races is Biblically ordained. In apartheid South Africa, for example, some white theologians ‘argued that God had intervened to disperse the builders of the Tower of Babel, who wished to create a single nation by causing them to speak in mutually incomprehensible languages’ (Giliomee, 2004, p. 462).

³ In South Africa, too, the Tower of Babel was invoked not to proclaim the impossibility of identity but, on the contrary, to provide theological justification for segregation and separate development (Giliomee, 2004).

⁴ Even today language remains one of the few sites where ‘purity’ is legitimately pursued.

⁵ An earlier draft of this chapter was published as Painter (2008).

⁶ I will return to the role of cultural elites in the production of standardised, literary languages later on in this chapter, but I have in mind the role of people like Dante in relation to Italian (Wright, 2004) and C.L. Leipoldt in relation to Afrikaans (Kannemeyer, 1999).

⁷ I am borrowing the term ‘communities of communication’ from Wright (2000, p. 9).

⁸ These are categories of people, of course, like *speech communities*, *ethnic groups*, *races* and *nations*, but they are also categories of language: not just different languages – Russian, French or Swahili – but the social and political differentiations internal to languages, such as the standard language versus the variant or the dialect; or of monolingualism versus bilingualism, multilingualism or even *semilingualism* (Hinnenkamp, 2005). Interestingly, the ungainliness of the latter term, semilingualism, accentuates just how entrenched conceptions that see each language as a bounded whole, and each speaker as wholly appropriated to at least one primary language, has become.

⁹ In a discussion of the importance of language in Welsh nationalism, Jenkins (1997) comments as follows on language in Ireland: ‘In Northern Ireland, by complete contrast, the language is hardly an issue. It serves some symbolic purpose [...] However, *the defense and promotion of the Irish language is peripheral* – at best – to the central demands of nationalism in Northern Ireland. Irish unity, self-government and freedom from Britain are of overwhelming significance and non-negotiable’ (p. 133, emphasis added). There are usually different reasons for why, or why *not*, language gets tied up with nationalism. In Jenkins’ account of the different roles of language in Wales and Northern Ireland, it is a historical issue: ‘Once again, the key to understanding the situation seems to be the history of territorial integration into the state. The Welsh gave up armed struggle against England very early on in the history of its incorporation into Britain. As a consequence, it was subject to a less direct and repressive form of control and government than either Ireland or Scotland. This arguably created the social and economic space within which Welsh language and culture – not being sufficiently dangerous, perhaps – could survive. Whereas in Ireland and Scotland, indigenous culture and the Gaelic languages become identified with Catholicism, and with political rebellion in post-Reformation geo-political struggles, in Wales the

language eventually became identified with Protestant nonconformity. This may have been a threat to the established Church, but it wasn't a threat to the state' (p. 138).

¹⁰ Consider the following comments by Valentine (2006): 'It is worth remarking that in the English language the notion of the political is an awkward grammatical formulation. The transformation of an adjective into a noun suggests that the notion is detached from its proper enunciation, as if to prompt the question "the political what?" in order to complete it. The awkwardness has arisen from the translation of a distinction commonly found in Germanic and Romance languages for which precise equivalents are not available in English. Thus the distinction between *die Politik* and *das Politische* in German, between *la politique* and *le politique* in French, and between *la politica* and *il politico* in Italian are rendered in English as the distinction between politics and the political without any obvious referent for the latter term' (pp. 505-506).

¹¹ Fraser (2007) likewise discusses the political in constitutive terms: 'I mean political in a more specific, constitutive sense, which concerns the state's jurisdiction and the decision rules by which it structures contestation. The political in this sense furnishes the stage on which struggles over distribution and recognition are played out. Establishing criteria of social belonging, and thus determining who counts as a member, the political dimension of justice specifies the reach of those other dimensions: it tells us who is included, and who excluded, from the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition' (p. 172).

¹² Balibar (2004) refers to the transformation of citizenship away from the 'national blockage of citizenship' (p. 33) as 'the major political issue for our societies in the coming decades' (p. 32). See also Calhoun (2004).

¹³ Anderson (1983) claims, 'since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms – the People's Republic of China, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and so forth – and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past [...] nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time' (p. 12).

¹⁴ According to Safran (1999): '[...] [P]olitical scientists who have defined nationalism in civic rather than ethnic terms have increasingly come to admit that affective ties have not been replaced by functional (e.g., economic, professional, and political) relationships as reliable markers of collective consciousness. They have acknowledged the fact of an "ethnic revival," which has developed in reaction to the overweening claims of a centralized state, to the political domination by the ethnic majority, the coldness of industrial relations, and to the boredom of an increasingly homogenized global culture. However, they insist that such a revival has not necessarily led to a revival of ethnic languages, despite a growing concern with "multiculturalism" – a term that is often used to refer to the legitimation of racial and lifestyle diversity rather than cultural-linguistic pluralism' (p. 86).

¹⁵ See also Leerssen (2006) and Máiz (2003) in this regard

¹⁶ This is of course not to deny that ethnicity as such is an important field of independent interest. In this regard, see Bekker, Dodds & Khosa (2001), Comaroff and Comaroff (2009), and Stevens, Duncan and Bowman (2006).

¹⁷ For a different take on the category of 'the people', see Bourdieu (1990).

¹⁸ 'This means several things. First, that the nation is not necessarily specified by its relationship with other groups (such as other nations, hostile or enemy nations, or the nations with which it is

juxtaposed). What does characterize the nation is, in contrast, a vertical relationship between a body of individuals who are capable of constituting a State, and the actual existence of the State itself. It is in terms of this vertical nation/State axis, or this Statist potentiality/Statist realization axis, that the nation is to be characterized and situated. This also means that what constitutes the strength of a nation is not so much its physical vigor, its military aptitudes, or, so to speak, its barbarian intensity, which is what the noble historians of the early eighteenth century were trying to describe. What does constitute the strength of a nation is now something like its capacities, its potentialities, and they are all organized around the figure of the State: the greater a nation's Statist capacity, or the greater its potential, the stronger it will be. Which also means that the defining characteristic of a nation is not really its dominance over other nations. The essential function and the historical role of the nation is not defined by its ability to exercise a relationship of domination over other nations. It is something else: its ability to administer itself, to manage, govern, and guarantee the constitution and the workings of the figure of the State and of State power. Not domination, but State control' (Foucault, 2004, p. 223).

¹⁹ Wright (2004) cites the following statement by a French writer in 1792: 'Breton is the language of federalism and superstition; German is the language of those who hate France and have abandoned it; Italian is the language of those who oppose the revolution; Basque is the language of fanaticism. We must destroy these harmful instruments, which lead the people into error' (p. 32).

²⁰ Of course, it may seem as if languages, German for example, exists beyond the borders of a particular state, but it is not entirely the case. Or at least, it is not entirely independent of 'German-speaking' states: German German and Swiss German, for example, differ markedly, as does American and British English.

PART III

**LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

5

A Mute Bundle of Muscles: Constructions of Language in Social Psychology

By 1914, the historically specific patois of new psychology had become indispensable for thinking about the nation, nationality, and, increasingly, nationalism.

(Glenda Sluga, 2006, p. 79)

[S]ocial psychology is as thoroughly haunted by the nation as the nation is haunted by psychology.

(Steve Reicher and Nick Hopkins, 2001, p. 6)

In this chapter I return to a further consideration of the treatment of language as a field of inquiry in the social sciences, and in social psychology in particular.¹ My primary objective, however, is not to employ social psychology as a theoretical vantage point from which the political nature of language can be understood. In this regard, the chapter does not represent an attempt to use (or further extend) social psychological tools – concepts, theories and methods – to study language, politics and subjectivity in the contemporary world. Instead, it utilises the historically specific ways in which language has been politically constructed (particularly in relation to ideas of nationality) as a point of departure. From this position, the manners in which language is delineated, conceptualised and approached in social psychology are critically appraised –

specifically in relation to the *sociolinguistic orders* this discipline assumes, reinforces and reproduces. In particular, what concerns me in this chapter, is how an ideologically naturalised bond between language and nation (and hence between language and modern social and political subjectivities) has taken root and is persistently reproduced as an epistemological a priori (and therefore as a particular kind of *limit*) in social psychology. Thus, the guiding question posed in this chapter is not what the discipline of social psychology contributes (or may yet contribute) to the empirical study and theorisation of language, politics and subjectivity in the social sciences. Instead, the chapter is concerned with the impact that this epistemological a priori has had on the discipline's ability – or *inability*, as the case may be – to perceive and accurately portray matters related to language, language politics, and extant and emerging linguistic subjectivities.

This is by no means to imply that social psychology has nothing relevant to contribute to the study of language in society; that it says nothing of value *about* language. Quite the contrary: social psychology (or, at least, certain specific branches of social psychology, as I shall outline below) have been very productive in the broad field that studies language, politics and subjectivity. This makes isolating and analysing it as a significant discursive terrain in and through which discourses of language and language ideologies are produced and reproduced a theoretically worthwhile (and for the development of a more politically sophisticated social psychology of language: *crucial*) endeavour. To summarise, the main objective of this chapter is not to present a summary or evaluation of social psychological studies of language. In other words, this is not a literature review or a theoretical framework. Instead, this chapter offers an examination of how approaches to language in social psychology – how language is conceptualised, theorised and studied – reveal the discipline as *always already* constituted in relation to language, and in relation to particular sociolinguistic orders.

In an introduction to the study of language, power and politics, Fairclough (1989) reprimands 'the general insensitivity of sociolinguistics towards its own relationship to the sociolinguistic orders it seeks to describe' (p. 8). This perfectly captures my own concerns (here in relation to the neighbouring discipline of social psychology) in this chapter.² Like sociolinguistics, social psychology rarely questions its own pre-reflexive

relationship with the sociolinguistic orders it targets as domains of empirical study and theoretical generalisation.³ This discipline has been severely critiqued for its neglect (or at least under-theorisation) of ‘the social’: mainly because of its enduring positivist approach to science and, perhaps even more importantly, because of its reliance (over the last couple of decades) on a metatheoretical language that privileges the explanatory power of *individual* cognitive and motivational processes (e.g., Foster, 1991; McGuire, 1967; Moscovici, 1972a; Greenwood, 2004; Parker, 1989a; Ring, 1967; Stam, 2006; Tajfel, 1972). The so-called ‘crisis’ in social psychology (which plagued the discipline from the late 1960s onwards and gave rise to the development of a number of alternative research traditions) has elevated questions concerning the nature of *the social* to a foundational concern (e.g., Elms, 1975; Morgan, 1996; Strickland, Aboud & Gergen, 1976; Tajfel, 1984). It has subsequently become the very nodal point of contestation over social psychology’s disciplinary identity (Foster, 1991; Greenwood, 2004).

However, conceptualisations of the social in social psychology – especially as informed by the currently dominant social cognition paradigm (Nye & Bower, 1996; Weatherall, Watson & Gallois, 2007) – still severely restrict the discipline’s capacity to theorise trans-individual phenomena like language.⁴ Thus, it is not surprising that mainstream, experimental social psychology by and large neglects to address language as a constitutive dimension of the social, or even just as a research topic; in other words, that language is frequently consigned to the margins of the discipline (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Kroger & Wood, 1992). Sachdev (2007), for example, states that the relationship between language and discrimination has been ‘much neglected in the literature on discrimination in social psychology’ (p. 102). The same neglect characterises the literature on stereotyping, prejudice and attitude change (Ng, 2007), aggression (Graumann, 1998), mental health (Spencer & Chen, 2004; Swartz, 2005) and intergroup contact (Wright & Bougie, 2007). Furthermore, according to McCann and Higgins (1990), social psychologists have also underestimated the significance of language and communication in the field of social cognition, assuming ‘a linear process of information transmission between a communicator who had a single purpose and a passive recipient’ (p. 13). In other words, one can conclude that social psychology generally operates in theoretical and methodological spaces which have been cleared of language; such that language is so

effectively neutralised that it requires no focussed attention. In fact, according to Weatherall, Watson and Gallois (2007): ‘Not too many years ago, it was common for senior psychologists to ask what contribution the study of language, the most social of all human behaviours, could make to social psychology or to psychology more generally’ (p. 1).

On the other hand, a number of important developments in the discipline (more or less in the margins) have seen language elevated to a primary focus. Of relevance to this discussion, is the expansion (since the late 1970s) of a sub-field of social psychology that tasked itself with the study of language in social life – institutionalising and professionally reproducing itself as a ‘social psychology of language’ (Robinson & Giles, 2001; Weatherall, Gallois & Watson, 2007).⁵ This pattern of the neglect of language on the one hand, and attention to it on the other, gives rise to a methodological or procedural question: should an examination of constructions of language in social psychology (of the sociolinguistic orders to which social psychology orients itself) focus only on those areas in which language has emerged as an important topic or theoretical dimension in social psychology; or should it focus also on those areas of the discipline that say little or nothing explicitly about language? Since my objective is not an exhaustive overview of the social psychology of language, but to reflect on how social psychology is constituted as a discipline *in relation to* language, I will adopt the second, inclusive approach. The mainstream neglect of language in social psychology (precisely because the possibility of such neglect relies on unstated assumptions about the relationship between language, politics and subjectivity) is as relevant to the concerns of this chapter as are instances of explicit focus on language in the discipline.

The neglect of language in social psychology cannot be explained solely in reference to the methodological and theoretical peculiarities of this discipline. One should bear in mind that social psychology also shares assumptions about the nature of knowledge, science and society with its neighbouring disciplines. In this regard, consider this recent (and fairly representative) definition of language, as ‘a loose collection of verbal features influenced by psychological variables that are not consciously controlled by speakers, such as anxiety and emotion’ (Bradac & Giles, 2005, p. 203). In many ways, this

definition is innocuous. It is certainly tailor-made for a discipline premised on experimental design and the manipulation of variables: in this case, *speech variables*. It also not only delineates the object of inquiry – language and associated phenomena and processes – but marks (and above all, defends) an academic boundary. In this regard, the definition presupposes the particular methodological regimes that typify modern social psychology as much as it marks a division of labour that neatly maintains the boundaries between ‘the social psychology of language’ and other social science disciplines focused on the social dimensions of language, such as sociolinguistics, the sociology of language and linguistic anthropology (Bavelas, 2005; Duranti, 2001).

However, I will not become embroiled here in discussions of border skirmishes between neighbouring disciplines and sub-disciplines. Whilst differences between disciplinary definitions of language may well be significant, I am more interested in assumptions about language and society that are shared *across* disciplinary borders and discipline-specific definitions of language. Therefore, rather than focusing on social psychological *definitions* of language, or on the reduction of language phenomena to dimensions that are easily parcelled out amongst different disciplines, I suggest that the following kinds of questions be asked: How, in social psychology, is the world imagined as *a world of languages?*; How are individuals and groups imagined in the discipline as *subjects of language?* And finally, to what extent is this linguistic imagination *appropriate* for the intellectual and political challenges (relating to language, politics and subjectivity) of our times?

The following section presents a detailed discussion of the enduring pattern of the neglect of language in social psychology, after which the development (over the last three decades) of the social psychology of language (as an area of specialisation in the discipline) is outlined and discussed. Against this descriptive background, I then proceed to discuss the historical and ideological entanglement of the social sciences (and social psychology in particular) with nationalism and modern forms of disciplinary and biopolitical state power. The aim of this discussion of the relationship between social psychology, nationalism and the modern state is to argue that, whether in approaching or avoiding language, this discipline is in some ways epistemologically primed to reproduce nationally mediated assumptions about language, sociolinguistic processes and linguistic

subjectivities. The development of a critical social psychology of language therefore has to pass through a deconstruction of the language ideological profile of contemporary social psychology.

The annoying baggage of language

I have made (for the purposes of framing my objectives and delineating my approach) a number of fairly sweeping claims about the neglect of language in social psychology. The aim of this is to discuss the nature and extent of the neglect of language in social psychology in more detail, and to develop an argument about why this has become so endemic to this discipline. My argument is that social psychology's disregard of language does not embody a mere oversight, or some kind of other-worldliness, thus revealing the discipline as radically out of tune with the world it operates in. On the contrary, I argue that the disregard of language in social psychology reveals crucial dimensions of the discipline's 'worldliness' – specifically pertaining to social psychology's deep, even constitutive entanglement with the political rationalities of especially modern, liberal democratic state power (Rose, 1996b).

Social psychology, at least in its dominant experimentalist form, has always maintained a rather tortuous relationship with language. Language may seem almost self-evidently significant to the phenomena and processes social psychology deals with: the conduct of everyday social life, replete as it is with interactions, conversations and various kinds of social influence. In this regard, consider the following depiction by Krauss and Chiu (1998):

Language pervades social life. It is the principle vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds. Language is implicated in most of the phenomena that lie at the core of social psychology: attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping, attribution, and so on. Moreover, for social psychologists, language typically is the medium by which subjects' responses are elicited, and in which they respond: in social psychological

research, more often than not, language plays a role in both stimulus and response. (p. 41)

However, despite its almost self-evident centrality, social psychology has spent the better part of its history either ignoring language or anxiously insulating itself against it. According to Miller and McNeil (1968), in one of the earliest attempts to systematically introduce language to social psychology, ‘that language contributes to nearly all the phenomena that engage the attention of social psychologists is obvious to the point of banality’ (p. 666). At the same time, they nevertheless also acknowledge that language has been almost completely neglected by social psychologists and did not (at the time of their writing) inform the way social psychology conceptualised or approached its objects of study.⁶ Nor did language draw much attention as a separate topic area. ‘Its importance is so obvious’, they conclude, ‘that most social psychologists simply take it as one of the basic undefined terms of their science, and so proceed to their other interests, free of responsibility for detailed analysis’ (p. 666). A full decade later, Giles (1979) offered a fairly similar assessment:

One of the important ways in which we can influence others, and be influenced by them, is through language behaviour. In other words, much of individual social behaviour is concerned with the decoding of and encoding of verbal and nonverbal language variables. *It may be then of some surprise (if not concern) to learn that language processes have not been at the core or even periphery of social psychological interests;* admittedly, however, such processes have assumed more salience in European and Canadian quarters. (p. 3, emphasis added)

And remarkably, fast forward yet *another* decade (to the end of the 1980s) and it is still possible to read: ‘Social psychology in general skirts around language, affords it no distinctive focus, and instead focuses upon communication exclusively as information transmission’ (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, p. 188). In the years between (and following) these assessments of the pervasive neglect of language in social psychology were echoed by many others, often as part of attempts to introduce language as a significant academic concern to social psychology and/or to illuminate sociolinguistic phenomena and

processes (e.g., the perception of speech variations, language shift and second language learning) from a social psychological perspective (e.g., Clark, 1985; Fraser & Scherer, 1982; Giles, 1979; McCann & Higgins, 1990; Moscovici, 1967, 1972b; Noels, Giles & Le Poire, 2003; Tajfel, 1972).⁷ Much of these critiques were, regarding the transformation of the discipline as a whole, to little avail. Despite the development of a fairly vibrant social psychology of language from the early 1970s onwards (see the following section), language continued to lead, in the words of Kroger and Wood (1992), ‘a subterranean existence at the fringes of experimental social psychology’ (p. 590). As recently as the present decade Noels, Giles and Le Poire (2003) observed: ‘Despite their evident importance, until rather recently, social psychologists have seldom explicitly addressed communication processes’ (p. 232).

In Kroger and Wood’s (1992) survey of a number of key texts in social psychology, including introductory textbooks and the first three editions of the defining *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Lindzey, 1954; Lindzey & Aronson, 1968; Lindzey & Aronson, 1985), the extent of the neglect of language in social psychology becomes blatantly clear. Compared to other topics in social psychology, language was significantly underrepresented in all of the texts they surveyed. In later texts, which increasingly adopted a social cognition approach to the discipline, the focus on language was even further narrowed to topics like ‘communication’ (in studies of attitude change) and nonverbal communication. Language remained by and large conceptualised as a ‘conduit’ for information (Bavelas, 2005, p. 181; see also Reddy, 1979), as little more than a means of access to more important theoretical constructs such as schemas, attitudes and attributions. Joseph (2006b) makes reference to the way modern linguistics ‘has abstracted language away from the primary reality of people speaking’ (p. 262); in the case of social psychology, it seems, the process of communication has been abstracted away from language and from real, embodied people interacting (Ball, Gallois & Callan, 1989; Weatherall, Gallois & Watson, 2007).

The years following the publication of the Kroger and Wood (1992) analysis have not brought much change, at least with regards to the representation of language in mainstream textbooks and handbooks in social psychology. Consider a fairly recent

edition of the well-known textbook of Baron and Byrne (2003). The index of this textbook does not include any references to 'language': the closest it comes to an explicit consideration of language are some references to 'nonverbal behaviour' and 'communication' – but even these are by no means central issues. Likewise, the equally popular textbook of Taylor, Peplau and Sears (2003) does not include 'language' in their index, although it does include one reference to 'paralanguage' under the entry for 'communication'. Myers (2008) produced an 'international version' of his textbook, but even there language fails to make any appearance in the subject index. Once again, 'communication' is discussed in a number of places, but without specific consideration of the role language plays as a form of social action in itself, or as an important material, differential quality of individuals and groups (different accents and variants, for example) or societies (language diversity and inequality of language status, for example). Not one of these textbooks includes references to any *specific* languages, to accents, to bilingualism or multilingualism, or to language conflicts. The social world is presented as if it is linguistically neutral; and the subject of social psychology, it seems, as little more than 'a mute bundle of muscles' (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 115).

Textbooks that self-consciously brand themselves as *European alternatives* to the dominant US product generally pay more attention to language, but likewise tend to treat language as a separate area of research, rather than as an integral part of that which constitutes the social in social psychology. Despite its initial impetus as a more truly *social* approach to the discipline, spearheaded in the 1970s by eminent scholars such as Tajfel (e.g., 1972) and Moscovici (e.g., 1972a), mainstream European social psychology has in recent years been increasingly Americanised, in no small part due to the sway of social cognition as a metaperspective over the discipline as a whole. Hogg and Vaughan (2002), for example, include a separate chapter called 'Language and communication' (pp. 567-603) in their textbook. Whilst this covers most of the important elements of what have come to constitute the social psychology of language (and even mentions discourse analysis in passing) language issues are nonetheless almost totally absent from the other chapters that make up the book – a book that, in outline, follows the conventional American packaging of social psychological knowledge fairly closely. Interestingly enough, in their treatment of social cognition, language is mentioned most prominently in the form of a

statement about its almost complete *absence*, by their own admission, from contemporary research in the field: 'It generally fails to deal with language and communication, which are two fundamentally social variables' (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002, p. 74).

Hewstone and Stroebe (2001), in the previous (third) edition of another standard, multi-edition and explicitly marketed *European* social psychology textbook, do not devote a separate chapter to language. Language is mentioned in the index, with three entries that refer the reader to two separate chapters: 'language development' and 'speech accommodation' are discussed in a chapter on developmental social psychology (Durkin, 2001), whereas 'language and communication' is discussed in a chapter on social cognition (Fiedler & Bless, 2001). This means that language is confined to considerations of how people perceive and process information about the social world, and is yet again entirely absent from sections of the book dealing with social interaction between people and group processes. Besides considerations of individual language development and social cognition, language is all but absent from most of the other substantive areas of social psychology covered in this book, including its otherwise excellent chapter on intergroup relations (Brown, 2001). Significantly, in the most recent edition of this textbook (Hewstone, Stroebe & Jonas, 2008), published after the first draft of this chapter was written, the chapter on developmental social psychology had been dropped and the discussion of social cognition altered, further reducing the coverage of language in this glossy American-style textbook.

The same basic representational pattern with regards to language in social psychology characterises the edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Gilbert, Fiske & Lindzey, 1998) that appeared after the publication of Kroger and Wood's (1992) survey, and more recent publisher-driven contributions to the genre, such as the *Sage Handbook of Social Psychology* (Hogg & Cooper, 2003) and the *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology* series; the latter with volumes respectively dedicated to intraindividual processes (Tesser & Schwartz, 2002), interpersonal processes (Fletcher & Clark, 2003), group processes (Hogg & Tindale, 2001) and intergroup processes (Brown & Gaertner, 2002). The *Handbook* and *Sage Handbook* contain separate chapters devoted to language and communication processes, but language remains virtually absent from other chapters and thus from the

central theoretical and empirical concerns of the discipline. The predominant image of language in these textbook is once again that of a conduit, a neutral medium for the transmission of information and knowledge: 'Language is the medium within which social knowledge is acquired and communicated in books, mass media and face-to-face communication' (Fiedler & Bless, 2001, p. 143). Kroger and Wood's (1992) diagnosis, it seems, remains entirely pertinent.

The *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology* departs somewhat from the overwhelming pattern of neglect in a chapter on language and social cognition by Semin (2001). Semin breaks with the passive representation of language as merely a means of information transmission by theorising language as an activity; as a form of *doing*. Similarly, Hilton and Slugaski (2001), in a chapter dealing with conversational processes in reasoning and explanation, attempt to take thinking out of the head and relocate it to language and conversation, in order to take account of 'how the interactional context shapes human reasoning processes' (p. 202). For this they rely very strongly on ordinary language philosophy and conversational pragmatics, and thus represent something of a minority position in mainstream, experimental social psychology. The same goes for Semin (2001), whose work has been very influential in the social psychology of language over the last two decades, especially in the development of the linguistic category model and the blossoming of research on linguistic bias (for a summary of this work and Semin's contribution see Sutton & Douglas, 2008), but is still relatively marginal in social cognition research more broadly.

Also refreshing in the *Blackwell Handbook* are some references to actual instances of language politics (French and English in Canada) and a rare acknowledgement in social psychology texts that people in fact speak *different languages* in contexts where language is socially and politically invested (Bourhis & Gagnon, 2002; Pettigrew, 2002). But as my overview thus far should have made clear, these are very rare acknowledgements of the social and above all political centrality of language for issues related to subjectivity and society, and are still fairly marginal in a series of books that stretches over four volumes and in which language is far more frequently ignored by contributing authors than it is seriously addressed or even just mentioned in passing. Finally, to provide final impetus to

the point I have been trying to make here, I mention a very recently published encyclopaedia of social psychology (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). In a book so comprehensive that it even includes an article for a social psychological oddity called 'babyfacedness', it is certainly significant that it nevertheless contains no articles directly dealing with language, conversation, accent, bilingualism, multilingualism or the social psychology of language.

But *why* does this pervasive and continuous neglect of language in social psychology occur? If language is so obviously relevant to social and political life, how is it possible that social psychology so consistently upholds its neglect of language? According to Hogg and Abrams (1988), the neglect of language in social psychology should be attributed to the epistemological limits within which the discipline had traditionally functioned: 'language lies beyond the explanatory reach of the conceptual apparatus of individualistic social psychology. Language is an emergent property of interaction which transcends individuality and has properties of collective mental phenomena such as intersubjectivity and normativeness' (p. 191). This critical note is largely echoed by Bavelas (2005), who goes on to add that 'the experimentally isolated individual becomes the methodological ideal' (p. 183) in social psychology, a situation that leads directly to the interactional, emergent properties of social life (and hence, language) becoming imperceptible in social psychological research and theory. All that *can* be perceived, on this account, is language functioning as a passive utility in the individual's cognitive appropriation of the social world; a world from which he or she is ontologically divided.

However, for this epistemological edifice and its associated knowledge claims about the world to hold up, language needs to be actively and perpetually pacified. Social psychologists have long been under the impression that ordinary language is messy, intrusive and potentially threatening to the scientific validity of research in their discipline. This is why language is so frequently treated as a contaminant: a source of noise, a methodological problem to be solved (Parker, 1994a). This process is perhaps most obvious in the rigorous formulation of pre-fabricated statements in questionnaires, which is intended to draw out information relevant to the research study exactly by neutralising and bypassing the idiosyncrasies of individual speech and acts of meaning.

But it is equally true of the regimented, rigorously scripted interactions of experimental research situations. Consider Milgram's (1963) famous experiments about what is generally referred to as 'obedience'. According to Bavelas (2005):

... [T]he participants did not simply move a lever on the 'shock' machine. Many protested, even refused, and the experimenter countered with equally important discourse, such as assurances that there was no harm in proceeding. *None of this became the formal data.* (pp. 194-195, emphasis added)

Cleansing the data of human noise in this way had a profound impact on what Milgram (1963) could treat as legitimate observations and therefore on how he was able to interpret his results. By reducing his experimental observations to discrete but causally linked sequences of behavioural acts (the giving of an order; the movement of a lever), Milgram could not but observed 'obedience'. Had he not, however, disregarded the interactional, verbal dimensions of his experimental situation, which also included considerable amounts of bantering and laughter (Lubek & Stam, 1995), he might also have observed something like '*reassurance* as an interactional achievement' (Bavelas, 2005, p. 195, emphasis added). More than merely neglecting language as a topic of research, then, social psychology in fact reproduces itself epistemologically and methodologically by continuously and almost anxiously trying to rid itself of 'the annoying baggage of language' (Chow, 2006, p. 5).

However, the neglect of language cannot simply be attributed to theories and practices of *knowing* in social psychology. Social psychology's treatment of language also reveals the political imaginaries (commonsense assumptions as well as explicitly articulated positions) that inform and structure the discipline; in other words, the social and political assumptions that account for those aspects of the world social psychology takes for granted and often reproduce without commenting on it. A remark by Hogg and Abrams (1988), which comes almost as an aside, is most revealing in this regard:

A further reason for language being social psychology's 'blindspot' is not unique to social psychology: it may be common to us all. As we go about our taken-for-granted daily lives, the world is largely treated as being as it appears. (p. 191)

This is a problematic statement, because it does not interrogate *how* the taken-for-granted emerges; how it functions as a source of ideological legitimisation; nor how and why social psychology has become a casualty of the power of 'appearances' in relation to *language* specifically. Hogg and Abrams (1988) may well be correct to say that the neglect of language is not unique to social psychology, and that it is instead a widely shared habit of thought. However, this still begs the question: why exactly *is* this habit of thought so widely shared, and why is it the case that 'the world' should appear as linguistically neutral?⁸ Stated differently, what about the worlds we live in allows for language to be 'forgotten'; for it to be treated as a transparent, finally negligible aspect of the world and of subjectivity? Surely, this commonplace can only be common to 'us all' to the extent that 'we' live in normatively monolingual societies; that is, in societies that have been defined *in terms of* linguistic homogeneity, and that have subsequently been subjected to regimes of linguistic homogenisation. This is indeed a world of appearances: very few, if any, societies are truly or naturally monolingual. This is especially the case when 'society' (or 'the world') is employed as a synonym for 'country' or 'nation' – which is indeed the case in the social sciences and social psychology, as I will argue in a later section.

Accented subjects: The social psychology of language

The story of neglect narrated above, is not the only one to be told about the relationship between language and social psychology. The discipline has also contributed significantly – especially through its work in the areas of language attitudes (e.g., Bradac, Carlisle & Hallett, 2001), ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) (e.g., Harwood, Giles & Bourhis, 1994) speech accommodation (Giles, 1973; Shepard, Giles & Le Poire, 2001) and language and intergroup relations (Giles & Johnson, 1981) – to the social scientific study of language in society. Some of these were in fact developments that originated with social psychology, were exported from there to other social science disciplines, and have subsequently enjoyed productive transdisciplinary careers.

Early examples of what later would develop into a fully-fledged social psychology of language can be dated back at least to the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁹ The work of Canadian social psychologist, Wallace Lambert, deserves to be mentioned in this regard. Lambert was concerned with evaluative responses to different spoken languages, variants and dialects, especially between speakers of English and French in his native Canada (Lambert, 1967; Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum, 1960). Lambert proceeded from the basic sociolinguistic insight that elements of speech and language function as markers that convey socially relevant information about speakers to listeners. In other words, the different languages people speak, or different ways in which they speak those languages, mark people as *different* from one another or from a sociolinguistic norm, and these differences in turn impact on how speakers are perceived and evaluated on given dimensions such as attractiveness, intelligence and trustworthiness. Along these lines, principally through foregrounding language as a factor in interpersonal perception and the attitudinal evaluation of others, the human subject finally became perceptible as a speaking and above all an *accented* being, and society as linguistically stratified, in social psychology.

Since the 1970s these early achievements were consolidated into a more self-consciously defined subfield, namely the social psychology of language, or language and social psychology (LSP). From the outset this new field maintained a somewhat ambiguous relationship with mainstream, experimental social psychology. Weatherall, Gallois and Watson (2007) provide a good depiction:

Thus, it is fair to say that the approach of language and social psychology came *from* social psychology, in that researchers in one way or another emphasize social-psychological themes like motivation, attitudes, and beliefs. At the same time, however, it can also be said that language and social psychology came *out of* social psychology, as a reaction to the increasingly intra-personal and cognitivist bias of that field in the 1970s and 1980s. So, the the study of language and discourse in social psychology also owes great theoretical and methodological debts to

sociology, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and communication studies. (p. 1, emphases in the original)

Landmarks in the development of the social psychology of language include the series of international conferences held biannually since 1979; the founding of the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* in 1982; the publication, in 1990, of the first *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology* (Giles & Robinson, 1990), which was substantially expanded a decade later as the *New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology* (Robinson & Giles, 2001); and finally, the establishment of the International Association for the Study of Language and Social Psychology in 1997. There are probably other key moments that could be mentioned as well; the aim here, however, is not to be exhaustive, but to emphasise the extent to which the social psychology of language has been able to institutionalise itself as a legitimate and productive subfield: of social psychology, but also of the broader domain of the social study of language, including communication studies, the sociology of language and sociolinguistics (Robinson, 2001a). Despite the fact that language continued to be sidelined in the social psychological mainstream throughout this time, the social psychology of language achieved sufficient institutional independence and cross-disciplinary connections (the latter to a larger extent, in fact, than is the case with many other areas of social psychology), so that recent overviews of the state of the sub-discipline often take on a somewhat celebratory air (e.g., Pitts & Nussbaum, 2006; Taylor & Usborne, 2007).¹⁰ The social psychology of language is certainly now a firmly established field of study, encompassing an increasingly diverse range of topics, theories and methods (e.g., Robinson, 2001b; Noels, Giles & Le Poire, 2003).

As is so frequently the case in the psychological sciences (Danziger, 1990; Rose, 1996b), the major impulse behind the social psychology of language was a methodological rather than a theoretical innovation.¹¹ Here it is likewise Lambert that should be credited with providing the discipline with its first major technology, one which made the ‘accented subject’ perceptible in such a way as to become a fully-fledged subject of social psychological knowledge. This was the so-called *matched guised technique*: an experimental method which for years dominated the study of language attitudes (Lambert, 1967; Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum, 1960).¹² In this method research participants

listen to recordings of a message, which is read by the same person, but in different languages, accents, or speech styles. With everything else being equal, researchers are in a position to determine the effects various dimensions of linguistic difference (such as language, accent, volume, and intensity) have on how speakers are perceived and evaluated. These evaluations have typically included, amongst other things, judgments of truthfulness, trustworthiness, intelligence and likeability (for a good summary, see Noels, Giles & Le Poire, 2003). The negative (and often discriminatory) effects of such evaluations on speakers of non-standard varieties of a language have been documented across various settings, including school classrooms, doctors' offices, courtrooms and job interviews (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Noels, Giles & Le Poire, 2003). Dixon and Mahoney (2004), for example, found a link between regional (in this case, Birmingham) accents and judgments of criminality and guilt: 'a regional-accented suspect was rated as more typically criminal and more likely to be reaccused of a crime than was a standard-accented suspect' (p. 70).

It would be impossible to provide a comprehensive overview of the sprawling variety that currently comprises the social psychology of language. In addition, it would certainly be unfeasible to subject its diversity of topics, knowledge claims and methodological approaches simultaneously to what would undoubtedly be an unfairly levelling form of critique. Instead, what concerns me are assumptions in social psychology about the *kind of object* language is, and assumptions about the ways in which language is implicated in particular constructions of the social world and of subjectivity. I therefore confine my discussion here to a subsection of the social psychology of language, focusing mostly on attempts to address language in relation to societal diversity, intergroup relationships and social identity. These are the areas of language attitudes, ethnolinguistic vitality, speech accommodation and ethnolinguistic identity. Other major growth areas within the social psychology of language over the last three decades or so include language and ethnicity (Hecht, Jackson II, Lindsley, Strauss, & Johnson, 2001), language and gender (Coates & Johnson, 2001), language and politeness (Holtgraves, 2001), language and power (Hosman & Silvertanen, 2006; Ng, 2001; Ng & Reid, 2001; Reid & Ng, 1999), multilingual communication (Sachdev & Bourhis, 2001), second language learning (Clément & Gardner, 2001) and language and ageing (Coupland & Coupland, 2001).

The empirical study and theoretical refinement of various dimensions of language attitudes – ‘the perceptual and attitudinal significance of details of language’ (Sanders, 2005, p. 177) – still assumes an important position in the social psychology of language and its adjacent disciplines (e.g., Barker & Giles, 2004; Bayard, Weatherall, Gallois & Pittam, 2001; Bradac & Giles, 2005; Cargile & Giles, 1997; Dixon & Mahoney, 2004; Edwards, 1999; Thomas, 2004). This is hardly surprising: the study of attitudes has always been of central importance in the development and definition of social psychology as a discipline (Allport, 1968; Augoustinos, 1999; Rose, 1996b). The study of accent evaluation, in particular, has brought the pernicious nature of class, ethnic and racial stereotypes in diverse societies forcefully to the fore, showing how aspects of language frequently function simultaneously as markers of category distinctions and as targets of negative evaluation and discrimination against speakers of lower-status language forms (e.g., Bishop, Coupland & Gerrett, 2005; Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Garret, Coupland & Williams, 2003; Lippi-Green, 1997; Mugglestone, 2003; Shuck, 2006): ‘Indeed, the study of attitudes toward accents and dialects and the attendant judgments of speakers who use them is the most enduring topic in the language-attitudes research tradition’ (Bradac & Giles, 2005, p. 208).

A handful of studies on accent evaluation have been conducted in South Africa as well (for summaries, see: Louw-Potgieter, 1991; Painter, 2006a). In one of the earliest language attitudes studies in this country, for example, Vorster and Proctor (1976) studied black attitudes to ‘white languages’ (English and Afrikaans) and their speakers. In their experiment (in which they made use of the already mentioned matched guised technique) male Xhosa-speakers had to rate white Afrikaans- and English-speakers on a number of variables. Unsurprisingly, considering the era in which it was conducted, the study found that English was judged more favourably than Afrikaans, and that English-speakers were perceived as better looking, of a higher social standing, friendlier, kinder and generally more likeable than Afrikaans-speakers. Dixon, Tredoux, Durrheim and Foster (1994), in a methodologically similar but more recent study, found that white, English-speaking South African students rated a coloured Afrikaans-speaking criminal suspect as less likely to be guilty of a crime when he was speaking English than when he

was speaking Afrikaans. Studies like these not only demonstrate how language functions as a significant prompt in interpersonal perception and evaluation, but how such perceptions and evaluations reflect and reproduce widely held assumptions about language, about ideological relationships between languages and constructs like class, race and ethnicity, and about linguistically mediated subjectivities. In other words, they draw attention to the discourses of language, or *language ideologies*, which are operative in South African society. However, due to the resolutely quantitative and above all individualistically reductive nature of mainstream social psychology (e.g., Foster, 1991), these more social and ideological dimensions of language attitudes have not been pursued by social psychologists in South Africa in any significant sense.

The study of language attitudes, especially within the abovementioned context of interpersonal perception and evaluation, introduced an important *psychological* dimension to an area of study which was initially the sole province of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language (Weatherall, Gallois & Watson, 2007). However, much of this work (especially in the 1950s and 1960s) has tended to be rather atheoretical, acontextual, and above all restricted to intra- and interpersonal levels of analysis (Bradac, Cargile & Hallett, 2001). But increasingly, during the 1970s and early 1980s, some of the most important developments in the social psychology of language attempted to bring ‘an *intergroup* perspective to the, at that time, resolutely *interpersonal* psychological research on communication across roles and social identities (e.g., doctor-patient interaction, interethnic encounters)’ (Weatherall, Gallois & Watson, 2007, emphases added). In this sense the development of the study of language in social psychology became assimilated to the concerns of what, during the 1970s, have developed as a self-consciously European social psychology of social identity and intergroup relations (e.g., Tajfel, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The metatheoretical framework of social identity theory (SIT), and intergroup theory more broadly (IGT), provided the social psychology of language with conceptual tools whereby the reconceptualisation of key theoretical constructs (including language attitudes and code switching) became possible.¹³

On the strength of these metatheoretical developments, interpersonal speech encounters were increasingly conceptualised as mediated by both psychological and sociological factors. In speech accommodation theory, for example, social psychologists studied patterns of convergence and divergence between speakers of different variants or language, not only in terms of interpersonal factors and processes, but also as functions of *the group positions of the interlocutors and the structural features of reigning intergroup relations* in a given society (Beebe & Giles, 1984; Edwards, 1985; Giles, 1973, 1978; 1984; Giles & Street, 1985; Shepard, Giles & Le Poire, 2001).¹⁴ Speech accommodation theory, in short, examines ‘the circumstances under which individuals will modify their language or speech style’ (Louw-Potgieter, 1991, p. 329) in interaction with others. Basically, ‘depending of their perceptions of the interactive situation, people change their language and speech style in order to reduce or accentuate the linguistic differences between themselves and their listeners’ (p. 330). A substantial number of research studies in the area of speech accommodation have focused on interethnic communication, especially communicative encounters involving minority and majority group members in multicultural contexts (Bourhis, El-Geledi & Sachdev, 2007; Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977). Whereas speech convergence in these kinds of context may be aimed at manufacturing approval or seeking integration, divergence functions as a strategy to establish distance and to maintain a *distinctive* ethnolinguistic identity. The already mentioned study of Dixon, Tredoux, Durrheim and Foster (1994) was the first to employ speech accommodation theory in South Africa. Besides related work on code switching in post-apartheid South Africa (e.g., Finlayson & Slabbert, 1997; Finlayson, Calteaux & Myers-Scotton, 1998; Setati & Adler, 2000), research on speech accommodation has however not received any significant further attention from social psychologists in particular.

Another important development in the social psychology of language during the 1970s and 1980s was ethnolinguistic vitality theory (EVT), an approach that likewise sought to bridge individual and social levels of analysis. According to Bourhis, El-Geledi and Sachdev (2007), ‘social psychologists concerned with issues of language attitudes, code switching behaviour, language shift and language loss must inevitably deal with the relative strength and weaknesses of the language communities they are investigating’ (p. 13). Giles and his colleagues developed the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) to

capture both the socio-structural and socio-psychological dimensions that impact on various language related perceptions and behaviours, including language attitudes, language shift, second language acquisition, speech accommodation, and support for language policies (Bradac & Giles, 2005; Harwood, Giles & Bourhis, 1994; Noels, Giles & Le Poire, 2003). EV is commonly defined as ‘that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collectivity in intergroup situations’ (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977, p. 308), and an ethnolinguistic group as ‘an ethnic group whose language is held as a primary defining characteristic’ (Finchelescu & Nyawose 1998, p. 53). The basic premises are quite simple. The higher the EV of a group or a language, the more likely they are to continue to exist and flourish as separate entities alongside other groups or languages. In cases of low EV one can expect, according to this theory, forms of cultural assimilation and language shift. Language attitudes and language choices are therefore powerfully mediated through objective and subjective dynamics of the vitality of a language and an ethnolinguistic group in a particular social context.

To further make sense of why low EV would lead to language shift, Giles and his colleagues linked it to social identity strategies, grafting the concept of EV onto the most important development of European social psychology during the 1970s, social identity theory (SIT) (see Brown, 2000; Hogg & Abrams, 1988) to form a hybrid, ethnolinguist identity theory (EIT) (Giles & Johnson, 1987; Louw-Potgieter, 1991). Whereas SIT is a general theory of intergroup behaviour, EIT focuses specifically on groups defined by language and the effects on language behaviour of intergroup situations characterised by unequal relations of status and power. According to EIT, language is frequently an important element in the make-up of social identity. Speakers who identify with a low-status group or language may feel the impact of this on their identities: if they perceive their language or group as inferior, they will suffer negative self-evaluation. This, in turn, will inspire identity strategies aimed at increasing self-esteem. Individuals may dis-identify with their language or group, seeking out the social mobility allowed by adopting a higher status language or identifying with a more powerful group. If this is not possible or desirable, individuals may attempt to increase the power and status of their language or group, by means of political action for example.

The notions of ethnolinguistic vitality and ethnolinguistic identity have informed a few interesting studies in the South African context, but once again, have not generated enough energy to stimulate the development of a vibrant social psychology of language in this country. Louw, Louw-Potgieter, Bokhorst and Patel (1991), for example, studied the ethnolinguistic vitality of different Indian languages, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil, in Durban; Louw-Potgieter conducted a number of interesting studies about language and identity amongst liberal and conservative white Afrikaans-speakers during the later years of apartheid (Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1987; Louw-Potgieter, 1988); and Finchelescu and Nyawose (1998) analysed a number of focus group discussions with Zulu students in the Western Cape about their perceptions of the post-apartheid South African language policy. One can also mention the use of social psychological notions like attitudes, vitality and identity in related disciplines, such as sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, in South Africa. De Klerk (2000a, 2000b), for example, has studied language shift amongst Xhosa-speakers in Grahamstown. She was particularly interested in Xhosa-speaking parents' motivation to send their children to English medium schools. Whilst parents generally gave pragmatic reasons for shifting to English, such as the economic benefits of English and better equipped English schools, the importance of negative attitudes and judgements of low vitality is also revealed in these studies. Whilst quantitative measures indicate that 78% of parents found the decision to send their child to an English-medium school 'very easy' (De Klerk, 2000a), it is the qualitative data that presents striking evidence of the nature of attitudes about and vitality judgments of Xhosa as a language (De Klerk, 2000b). Quite a number of respondents were certain that Xhosa had no future role in South Africa (i.e., had low vitality), and that it would die; others saw it as a language that is appropriate to be used at home, but nowhere else; and whilst some expressed regret over the loss of elements of cultural identity associated with language shift, many parents saw this as an inevitable by-product of modernisation and progress (see also Barkhuizen & De Klerk, 2002; De Klerk & Barkhuizen, 2002).

The South African research mentioned above shares a number of problematic conceptual tendencies with its international equivalents, all of which present significant challenges to the development of a genuinely *critical* social psychology of language. Language attitudes, ethnolinguistic vitality and language and identity are, firstly, generally approached in ways

that are merely descriptive (rather than ideologically constructive) of seemingly independently existing language realities in the world. Secondly, they are conceptualised as individually located psychological states and processes (rather than as irreducible social and political processes) (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Williams, 1992). For example, participants' attitudes in studies like De Klerk (2000a, 2000b) and Finchelescu and Nyawose (1998) are taken at face value, as if they belong to individuals and express unmediated personal evaluations and choices. There has been almost no interrogation in South African social psychology (even in qualitative approaches) of how attitudinal statements may function in rhetorical and especially ideological ways; how, in other words, they may inform, corroborate or challenge normative ideas about language, politics and subjectivity, which exist (as *language ideologies*) and are reproduced (through *regimes* or *practices* of language) at trans-individual and often *nationally mediated* levels of social existence.

In this regard, Blackledge and Pavlenko (2004) claim that the theoretical constructs used in the social psychology of language (notably attitudes, vitality and identity) tend to overly simplify real-life sociolinguistic contexts and the linguistic features, language practices and patterns of identification that characterise them – especially as these overlap with, lend support from, and in turn reinforce broader ideologies and regimes of language: 'As a result, they reduce diverse contexts to a few ad hoc dimensions and ignore power relations and complex sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural factors which shape interactions between various groups in multilingual societies' (p. 6). Furthermore, largely due to its positivist commitment to the production of generalised, universally valid accounts of sociolinguistic processes, the social psychology of language tends to neglect 'the ways in which various language varieties function *in local contexts* and the ways in which local hegemonic structures may oppress or legitimize particular ethnic groups or identities' (p. 7, emphasis added). In other words, because it tends to apply ready-made categories and theoretical models to a broad range of contexts – contexts often 'similar' only to the extent that they are all 'linguistically diverse' – it thereby frequently neglects to interrogate how languages, language varieties, and language groups and identities are constructed and invested with ideological meaning in terms that are specific to the political characteristics and demands of a local context.

These simplifying, but essentially universalising tendencies in the social psychology of language, is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in its approach to language diversity, language groups, and language itself – that is, in the manner in which it tends to conceive of the world in linguistic terms, not only in the theoretical vocabulary it employs to make sense of language in society. Quite significantly, the notion of identity (and especially *ethnic* identity), has been central to how social psychology conceptualises the relationship between language, society and subjectivity – and in fact, to how it defines itself as a field of inquiry:

The social psychology of language focuses on the role of motives, beliefs, and identity in individual language behavior. It tries to link language and ethnic identity together and studies how this identity is formed, presented, and maintained. Ethnic or ethnolinguistic identity *is involved in all social psychological research on language*, even if the research deals with such diverse topics as ethnic language attitudes, second language learning, or communication breakdown (Liebkind, 1999, p. 143, emphasis added).

However, by employing identity as an analytic category rather than as something *to be analysed* in terms of its constitution, elaboration and contestation in relation to language (e.g., Hall, 1992), social psychology in effect naturalises the link between language, group and identity (Bavelas, 2005; Williams, 1992). According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), the social psychology of language is thereby guilty of a form of essentialism: by assuming a one-to-one correlation, on the one hand, between language and identity, and on the other hand, between language and group, it implicitly reproduces a monolingual (and monocultural) bias ‘which conceives of individuals as members of homogeneous, uniform, and bounded ethnolinguistic communities’ (p. 5). In other words, the sociolinguistic order assumed in much of the social psychology of language is one in which language is made visible – and politically relevant – on account of *linguistic diversity*. Linguistic diversity, in turn, refers to the coexistence of different languages and different language groups (activated psychologically to the extent that language serves as a component of their self-categorisation as groups) within a given social context. In other words, from the perspective of the social psychology of language both *languages* and

'ethnolinguistic groups' exist independently as discrete, quantifiable things in the world, neatly calibrated in relation to a social context which bestows both language and ethnolinguistic groups their meaning and visibility, but is nevertheless treated as a neutral container-space for languages, groups and language processes.

Some of these theoretical shortcomings will be further explored and addressed in the following chapter. However, the focus in the remainder of the present chapter is not on the *theoretical* shortcomings in this field of inquiry, but on the sociolinguistic orders that are assumed, serviced and reproduced whenever language, groups and identities are theorised and studied in the traditions that have been outlined in the preceding discussion. With some of the comments above I have already started edging forward in this direction. However, to more fully explore these ideas, and to more meaningfully bring them to bear on the discussions in the previous two chapters, I take a brief theoretical detour to consider the relationship between social psychology, nationalism and the cultural and political demands of modern states more closely. This will allow for a clearer delineation of the language ideological assumptions that inform social psychology – both in its approach and avoidance of language.

Social science, social psychology, and the nation-state

Any discussion of the relationship between a social scientific discipline and the sociolinguistic orders assumed and propped up by its treatment of language, needs to pass through a more specific consideration of the relationship between the social sciences, nationalism, and the cultural and political demands of the modern state society (Bourdieu, 1998, 2004). In this section the discussion initially focuses on the relationship between the national imagination of society (as described in Chapter 4) and the social sciences in general, after which social psychology is addressed more specifically.

Social sciences and the national imagination of society

Nationalism has always posed difficulties for the social sciences – and this cannot simply be attributed to its 'difficulty' as a social science topic (Anderson, 1983). Instead, the reason for the difficulties presented by nationalism is that the social sciences have

historically developed *in response to* the developmental and governmental demands of nation-states, and therefore operate, to a large extent, *in terms of* a nationally mediated epistemological optic. In the words of Calhoun (1995, p. 233): ‘Nationalist thinking also pervades social science. Our very ideas about what “a society” is are shaped by understandings developed under the influence of nationalism and European state-making.’ Bauman (1992), in turn, goes as far as to claim that when sociologists refer to society, they usually have in mind *the nation* – thus, rather than foregrounding its historicity and in so doing opening ‘nationalism’ up for more thorough scholarly analysis, sociologists add to its ideological concealment. Billig (1995) makes a very similar claim, namely that for ‘sociologists it is a banal cliché to define their discipline as the “science of society”’; and it is just as banal a habit of thought to imagine “society” as a bounded, independent entity’ (p. 53). This bounded, independent entity, according to Billig, is *the nation*. In other words, the social sciences reproduce a liberal nationalist notion of society and subjectivity – as a relatively stable container of culturally abstracted and essentially interchangeable subjects as rights-bearing citizens – as a theoretical commonplace. In sum, because the social sciences tend to know *in terms of* a nationally forged social imaginary, they find it hard to know *beyond* that imaginary.

Beck (2003, 2007) has been a major critic of the pervasiveness of the nationally mediated optic in the social sciences, to which he refers as ‘methodological nationalism’.¹⁵ According to Beck (2003): ‘Methodological nationalism takes the following premises for granted: it equates societies with nation-state societies, and sees states and their governments as the cornerstones of social-scientific analysis’ (p. 453). Furthermore, he claims that the nation has come to serve as ‘the main *perceptual grid* of social science’ (p. 454, emphasis added), and that, to a large extent, ‘much of social science is a *prisoner* of the nation-state’ (p. 454, emphasis added). Of course, none of this is really surprising: it was mainly in the service of the development of modern states (those political entities in which sovereignty is subjectively anchored in recollected or projected *national cultures*) that the social sciences developed:

From its inception, social science itself has been part and parcel of this work of construction of the representation of the state which makes up part of the reality

of the state itself [...] It is therefore the task of the history of the social sciences to uncover *all the unconscious ties to the social world that the social sciences owe to the history which has produced them* (and which are recorded in their problematics, theories, methods, concepts, etc.). (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 39, emphasis added)

What Bourdieu (1998) is referring to in this instance is the ‘social world’ discussed in the previous chapter: the modern administrative state with its nationally mediated society and subjectivities. He is not suggesting that the the majority of social sciences are (or have by and large been) nationalistic in any simplistic, straightforward sense. Even the study of ‘national character’, which had attracted considerable attention in social psychology during the early twentieth century, was never a dominant approach and faded from the research agenda soon after World War II (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Sluga, 2006). The issue at stake is not that social scientists explicitly support nationalist agendas, but rather that they often remain unaware of how deeply their conceptualisation of the social world is lodged in a national imaginary. In other words, the social sciences are entangled with nationalism and the modern state at a *constitutive* rather than a merely empirical level. As Bourdieu makes clear, nationally mediated assumptions about the social world and subjectivity have an impact on various levels of the social sciences: its problematics, its theories, its methods, and its concepts. Furthermore, this constitutive entanglement between the social sciences and the nation functions as a mostly *unacknowledged background*; it is, in Bourdieu’s (1998) terms, largely reproduced as an ‘unconscious’ component. This basic insight about the constitutive relationship between social science and nation-state society is also articulated (and critiqued as outmoded) by Wallerstein et al. (1996):

Nearly all social scientists assumed that these political boundaries fixed the spatial parameters of other key interactions – the sociologist’s society, the macroeconomist’s national economy, the political scientist’s polity, the historian’s nation. Each assumed a fundamental spatial congruence between political, social, and economic processes. In this sense, social science was very much a creature, *if not a creation*, of the states, taking their boundaries as crucial social containers. (pp. 26-27, emphasis added)

In summary, it is from the historical matrix of *state*, *nation* and *subjects* that not only the social sciences, but also social scientific *objects* and *approaches* have emerged and subsequently achieved their ontological, epistemological and political consistency (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 2008; Wallerstein, 1991). This has been historically true for language as well. What the social sciences refer to as ‘language’ and frequently treats as a discrete, objectively given social fact, has been shaped by its historically particular national (and along with this, colonial) mediations. More specifically, when the social sciences refer to ‘language’, they generally have in mind a ‘clearly identifiable, well-structured entity: the dominant, standardized *national* language’ (Jacquemet, 2005, p. 260, emphasis added). Bolton and Hutton (2000) go as far as to say that ‘for the mainstream of modern, scientifically oriented linguists, the *fiction* of discrete “languages” continues to underpin the discipline in which they work’ (p. 4, emphasis added). With this they are essentially concurring with what Harris (1981) has diagnosed as ‘the language myth’ in modern Western scholarship, quilted around two widespread, but inaccurate ideas: firstly, communication involves language merely as a conduit for the transfer of messages from one mind to another; and secondly, that languages are distinguishable from one another (and ‘countable’) as unique and singular codes coinciding neatly with the *national* languages of European modernity, and with established cultural or national identities.

The nation, liberal democracy, and social psychology

To what extent is the above narrative of the entanglement of social science and the nation also applicable to social psychology? It is very tempting to dismiss social psychology from discussions about social sciences and society, based on its longstanding reductionism in accounting for ‘the social’ (e.g., Greenwood, 2004; Parker, 1989; Stam, 2006). However, the ease with which the category of the social in social psychology is still habitually reduced to the mental appropriation of an ‘outside world’ by an ontologically isolated and essentially pre-social cognitive-perceptual subject, does by no means imply the discipline did not develop in response to the governmental demands of modern states, or that it does not conceptualise social phenomena (even just at the level of apparent ‘commonsense’) in nationally mediated terms. Social psychology, too, has developed in response to the governmental requirements of modern nation-state societies. In this regard, this discipline has proven to be specifically productive in the

context of liberal democratic forms of rule. And social psychology, too, has internalised a number of historically specific, nationally mediated assumptions about the social world – including the nature of language, the structure of the sociolinguistic order, and the relationship between language, subjectivity and identity.

According to Reicher and Hopkins (2001), ‘social psychology is as thoroughly haunted by the nation as the nation is haunted by psychology’ (p. 6):

... [W]hether spoken or not, it is often the nation that frames the concerns that guide social psychological research, it is often the nation that social psychologists have in mind when they address collective phenomena and it is often through the contemplation of national phenomena that social psychologists frame their core concepts. (p. 5)

Just *how* haunted social psychology is by the nation can be demonstrated by referencing Tajfel’s influential definition of the concept of ‘group’ in social psychology: ‘We shall adopt a concept of “group” *identical* to the definition of “nation”...’ (as cited in Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p. 6, emphasis added). With this definition Tajfel effectively restored the theoretical legitimacy of the group in social psychology, and thus added considerably to the creation of a more socially responsive social psychology. However, the concept of the ‘group’ in SIT is theorised at a level of cognitive abstraction which purposely renders all forms of collective identification psychologically equivalent. In other words, there are no psychological distinctions to be drawn between, for example, nationality, race or gender as social identities. Therefore, even though SIT employed the historically particular phenomenon of the nation as its conceptual analogy in theorising the group, *nationalism* all but disappeared as a topic of empirical and theoretical interest from this approach.¹⁶ According to Reicher and Hopkins (2001), the consequence of the conceptual enmeshment of social psychology and the nation is that ‘virtually every aspect of group psychology is both informed by the nation *and ignores the nation*’ (p. 31, emphasis added).

However, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) made it clear that social psychology is not only haunted by the nation; the nation, in turn, is also haunted by social psychology (see also

Sluga, 2006). This is certainly evident in the brief discussion of the role of social psychology in the normalisation of societal and individual monolingualism as well. In other words, the development of modern, liberal democratic nation-states relied heavily on the theoretical and practical support provided by social sciences in various domains. Social psychology was no exception. Indeed, without denying the discipline's individualism, Rose (1996b, 2008) insists that psychology developed as an irreducibly *social* science, and that it was *as* a social science that this discipline made its contributions to the development of liberal democratic states (and liberal democracy as a political rationality) during the twentieth century. And this was no small contribution. According to Rose (2008), the twentieth century could in fact be referred to as '*the century of psychology*' (p. 447, emphasis added):

What do I mean by saying that the 20th century was the century of psychology? Not just that it was the century when psychology became a discipline, with university departments, professorship, degrees and qualifications, textbooks and the like. Nor just that it was the century in which psychology took off as a profession, with professional bodies, qualifications, employment and so forth. But more because I suggest that psychology across the 20th century helped make up *the kind of society* that we inhabited, and *the kinds of people* we have become. (p. 447, emphasis added)

Psychology's contribution to liberal democratic societies included the development of understandings of psychological normality and abnormality; approaches to psychological distress and its treatment; 'techniques of regulation, normalization, reformation and correction' (Rose, 2008, p. 447) in contexts ranging from childrearing to marketing; and the 'management of human behaviour in practices from the factory to the military' (p. 447). Psychology, as a range of *social technologies*, not only provided liberal democratic governmentality with a secular, scientific language of interiorised individual (psychological) life, but with an assortment of experts, practices and interventions, which rendered individuals 'calculable' and 'manageable' across a broad range of social (read: *national*) contexts and functions (Rose, 2008).¹⁷

Significantly, this political instrumentality of the discipline extended beyond processes of individualisation, and included also ‘a psychologization of *collective life*, the invention of the idea of the group, large and small, of attitudes, public opinion and the like’ (Rose, 2008, p. 447, emphasis added). In other words, psychology was not productive not only at the level of *disciplinary* power, but at the level of the *biopolitical* – the targeting, normalising and optimising of the (national) populations. It is with this ‘psychologisation’ of collective life that *social* psychology (as a branch of general or individual psychology) in particular historically enters the picture. This discipline serviced the governmental strategies, social arrangements and patterns of subjectification that characterised liberal democracies by explicitly thematising *the individual in relation to the social*: by contributing ‘a complex of knowledges, professionals, techniques, and forms of judgment [that] has been *constitutively linked to democracy*, as a way of organizing, exercising, and legitimating political power’ (Rose, 1996b, p. 117, emphasis added).

The deployment of (social) psychology in the various domains where modern power sought to ‘shape, transform, and reform individuals’ (Rose, 1996b, p. 117), was historically *necessary* on the grounds of a fundamental contradiction within liberal democratic governmentality: between the demands of government, on the one hand, and the institutionalisation and legal protection of individual liberties on the other. According to Rose (1996b), social psychology offered a productive *governmental solution*: it made ‘democracy operable through procedures that could govern the citizen in ways consonant with the ideals of liberty, equality, and legitimate power’ (p. 118). Elsewhere, Rose (2008) reiterates and elaborates on this:

Psychology would find its place in all those systems where individuals were to be administered not in the light of arbitrary or wilful power, but on the basis of judgements claiming objectivity, neutrality and hence effectivity. It would provide one technology *for rendering individualism operable* as a set of specific programmes for the regulation of existence. (p. 452, emphasis added)

Thus, the productive role that social psychology has played in modern societies should not be underestimated on the grounds of its individualism and the reductionism of its

conceptualisations of the social. On the contrary, it is exactly on account of the way in which social psychology has foregrounding and delineated *the individual* in relation to the collectivity that this discipline may be best appreciated as a ‘science of democracy’ (Rose, 1996b, p. 116). In fact, even when it seems to be at its most ‘individualistic’, social psychology is fundamentally oriented to the rationalisation of *social* and *political* life:

Yet even in its individualizing moment, then, psychology was a ‘social’ science, a science with a social vocation, organized around social objectives: as we have seen in its link with the ideas of degeneracy and eugenics, and its aspiration to detect the feeble-minded. (Rose, 2008, p. 452)

Rose (1996b) singles out the concepts of ‘the group’ and ‘the attitude’ for specific attention in his account of the contributions social psychology has made to liberal democratic rule. According to him, the conceptualisation of the group in social psychology during the early decades of the twentieth century ‘transformed the problematic solidarities of human crowds into specifiable processes and describable relationships’ (p. 120). The concept of attitude, in turn, ‘rendered intelligible the social actions of individuals in relation to a world of values [...] as an ordered and measurable psychological domain’ (p. 120). Therefore, the questions posed by Rose in relation to the political significance of the study of attitudes do not boil down to issues of their *scientific* conceptualisation and empirical veracity: ‘What were the problems to which the technology of attitudes would promise a solution? What was born when an attitude became an invisible psychological state rather than a visible posture of the body?’ (Rose, 1996b, p. 123).

Of course, this is by now a familiar and influential account of the historical emergence of psychology, and has perhaps even become commonplace amongst critical and theoretical psychologists. Rose (1996b, 2008) has profoundly shaped the way in which contemporary critics and historians of mainstream twentieth century psychology view the development of the discipline in relation the governmental demands, individual normalisation and population management of (especially liberal democratic) states. His account has expanded the analytic scope beyond questions of how psychology has been used or

abused for particular political ends, to consider instead how this discipline became implicated in the historical emergence of contemporary forms of society and political rationalities; in ‘fabricating individuality in the guise of the institutions of power’ (Papadopoulos, 2004, p. 8). In this regard, one can say that Rose, rather than highlighting contextually specific relationships between psychology and *politics*, renders visible the discipline’s more foundational relation to *the political*.¹⁸ Although Rose is not explicit about this in his account of psychology as a disciplinary and biopolitical technology, social psychology calibrates individuality and collectivities in relation to *nationally* defined populations and *state-centred* societies. Both ‘individual’ and ‘social’ are nationally mediated constructs in psychology, and both contribute to the governmental demands of nation-state societies specifically. Psychology and social psychology are therefore no less indebted to (and reproductive of) the national ordering of social life and subjectivity than any other social science.

Demythologising language in social psychology

Because of the nationally mediated nature of the central constructs of (social) psychology, this discipline’s neglect of language cannot *simply* be seen as further evidence of its reductionism, individualism and general unresponsiveness to social and political reality. The ‘problem’ with social psychology is not primarily that it operates in a vacuum (Tajfel, 1972), but that it has developed in (often unacknowledged) constitutive, productive relationships with particular ideologies and governmental strategies in modern national societies.

In this regard, recall the statement by Abrams and Hogg (1988) about language being social psychology’s ‘blindspot’. Instead of just ‘common to us all’ (p. 191), could this ‘blindspot’ perhaps instead be attributed to the dominance of a social psychology that has universalised the features of the particular national context in which it has emerged as a discipline (the USA), as if the features of this society represented the social as such (e.g., Minton, 1992; Moscovici, 1972a)? That there is a link between the reductionism of accounts of the social in social psychology and the social, political and ideological characteristics of the USA (especially as it developed into a liberal democratic, free

market society and a global power in the early decades of the twentieth century) is undeniable (Farr, 1996; Greenwood, 2004). Similarly, there is certainly a link between the neglect of *language* in social psychology, and the way in which the USA has come to be imagined and constituted *as a nation* in relation to language. However, it is important to push beyond Hogg and Abrams' (1988) 'explanatory' remark. Social psychology did not inherit the linguistic features of US society as a 'blindspot' because American social psychologists (unlike their Canadian and Welsh counterparts, who later developed the social psychology of language) lived and worked in a *monolingual* society, and therefore were simply not sensitive to issues of language diversity, and of language as a dimension of person perception and identification.

The reason I should say this is obvious: the USA is by no means a linguistically neutral society, and monolingualism is not a 'taken-for-granted' aspect of daily life in that country. The endemic 'hispanophobia' of the 'English Only' movement, already makes that patently clear (Crawford, 1992, 2000; Padilla, 1991; Zantella, 1997). At present, Spanish and stigmatised (especially African American) variants of English are deeply implicated in the politics of class, race and national belonging in this country. Recently, for example, a group of Spanish speaking US citizens recorded a Spanish translation of the American national anthem. This seemingly innocuous act provoked a huge public outcry, and the feeling that the American anthem *should not* be sung in any language other than English was widely expressed in the ensuing debate about national identity – even by then-president George W. Bush (Butler & Spivak, 2007). Whilst it is acceptable for Americans to speak other languages, their 'Americanness' could only be performed in English. In other words, citizenship in the USA remains linguistically marked, and national identity is *increasingly* contested in relation to ideologies and regimes of language (e.g. Bailey, 2002; Crawford, 1992, 2000; Leeman, 2004; Pavlenko, 2002; Schmidt, 2002; Urciuoli, 1996; Zentella, 1997). Rather than language being invisible in this society, it has to be *made* (publicly) invisible. This involves defining the national population as well as individual subjectivity in language-neutral terms.

However, linguistic diversity and language politics are also not *recent* features of the American body politic. A Cashman (2006) states, the 'territory that currently comprises

the USA has *never* been monolingual' (p. 43, emphasis added). In fact, in 1910 a full 24% of Americans claimed languages other than English as their mother tongues (Cashman, 2006). In the context of mass immigration, this dimension of diversity quickly became perceived as a potential threat to national unity. Increasingly, then, the issue of language shifted to the forefront of debates about national identity in the USA, and processes of assimilating new immigrants to a shared culture *via English* became an integral component of the Americanisation of the national population: 'The Americanization campaign of the early to mid-20th century endeavoured to acculturate and linguistically assimilated millions of recent immigrants from non-English-speaking countries' (Cashman, 2006, p. 44). This project, as Pavlenko (2002) documents, developed during the first decades of the twentieth century:

Language did not come to the forefront of the national identity project in the US until the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, when in the wake of the Great Migration wave, language testing became a part of the naturalization process, and English fluency – and eventually monolingualism in English – *a constitutive aspect of an American identity*. (p. 165, emphasis added)

Significantly then, social psychology emerged as the quintessentially American discipline at a time when the USA deliberately (i.e., *ideologically*) intensified the process of establishing and reproducing itself as a monolingual society. Social psychology was from the outset productively inserted into the various contexts where American social problems and moral panics (including those of national character, immigration and integration), were addressed (Allport, 1968; Farr, 1996; Rose, 1996b). To be sure, the process of making monolingualism (and monoculturalism more generally) a normative feature of the American territory and citizenship was not achieved by political decree: the services of the educational, psychological and social sciences were (directly and indirectly) required and utilised to great effect. The fact that language disappeared from the social psychology agenda during this time does not mean the discipline was unresponsive to the major issues underlying the language ideological debates of the time. Social psychology, in the way in which it successfully erased language (along with culture and ethnicity) as a significant dimension in the conceptualisation of mental functioning, interpersonal

behaviour, and the relationship between individuals and society, added significantly to the ideological production of normative social order in the USA. The human subject, as it emerges in early twentieth century American social psychology, is always already ‘acculturated’: language, culture, ethnicity, and other elements of sub-national identification, are rendered negligible elements in an idealised image of the abstracted, individualised and rational agent of the liberal democratic society (Rose, 1996b, 2008).

The ‘blindspot’ regarding language that Hogg and Abrams (1988) identify is therefore more than merely an incidental oversight in social psychology. It reveals the kind of world and forms of subjectivity social psychology traditionally assumes as natural, but has in fact contributed to establishing. Stated differently, it represents nothing less than the discipline’s ideological (and often very practical) collusion with the *manufacturing* (not just ‘appearance’) of a particular kind of normative social order and subjectivity. Given the historical importance of social psychology to processes of the nationalisation of populations and the national mediation of subjectivities in modern liberal democratic societies, it is no wonder that this discipline should conceptualise subjectivity and the social as essentially abstracted from specific markers like culture, ethnicity and language. What one finds in social psychology, is the psychologisation of liberal subjectivity and liberal society: both are presented as abstract categories, as empty placeholders almost; but both also reproduce the particular values and characteristics of the dominant articulation of subjectivity. The abstract subject of American social psychology seemingly has no gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity or language, but then only because of the naturalisation of a male, straight, white, Anglo-Saxon, English speaking subjectivity as *the American*. Interestingly enough, language only begins to reappear as a social issues (and an issue of concern) in mainstream psychology *in the USA* when African-American English and new waves of Spanish speaking immigrants from Latin America starts causing renewed moral panics and concerns about national identity in the last decades of the twentieth century (e.g., Padilla, Lindholm, Chen, Duran, Hakuta, Lambert & Tucker, 1991). In other words, when the definitions of ‘the American’ is challenged and difference needs to be recalibrated in relation to the social order – either by once again suppressing it, or by inscribing it into the national order of things.

The appropriate response to the neglect of language in social psychology cannot therefore simply be to *reintroduce* it as a topic. Merely insisting on *more language* in social psychology leaves the political and language ideological complexes that shape and structure the way the discipline comprehends topics like language, politics and subjectivity, largely unexamined and in place. Consider another statement by Hogg and Abrams (1988), in their appeal for the development of a social psychology of language:

Little reflection is needed to conclude that virtually all contemporary nations are multicultural; that is, they contain two or more social groups which can be distinguished to varying degrees in terms of culture, where culture includes the entire array of normative practices which distinguish between and characterize groups. Language is frequently a highly salient feature of such cultural differences and can become the most potent symbols of ethnic identity. (p. 196)

I mentioned earlier that language becomes perceptible to social psychology in societies that are linguistically diverse. This diversity, in turn, is defined in relation to a particular context. In the social psychology of language, this ‘context’ (in which languages and language groups emerge as relevant categories), is the nation-state society. But this is not theorised; it is simply assumed – as Hogg and Abrams (1988) insist, ‘little reflection is needed’ (p. 196). Upon reflection, however, it becomes clear that language is rendered visible (and analysable) as *ethnic* in relation to the normative nation; language is problematised to the extent that introduces difference and potentially antagonism into a nationally demarcated social space. Indeed, the social psychology of language (and SIT more generally) emerged at a time when (and in societies where) liberal democratic governmentality had to make concessions to sub-national differences, multiculturalism, and the politics of identity. In this regard a statement by Liebkind (1999, p. 150) is particularly revealing: ‘The ethnic revival gave a veritable vitamin injection to the social psychology of language.’ Initially, it developed as ‘a mainstream reaction to the ethnic revival’ (p. 150); in other words, as an attempt to oppose the potential for claims of sub-national ethnolinguistic identities and minority language rights to cause national fragmentation. In time, however, linguistic difference and multilingualism came to be treated more positively: as embodying ideals of the multicultural state and conceptions of

national identity in which the relationship between unity and difference has been recalibrated (see also Jenkins, 1997). However, even though the social psychology of language re-imagined the subject and national society in relation to language, it still did not fundamentally break with the *national* imagination of national society, discrete languages, and the relationship between language, groups and identity.

The continued ‘nationalisation’ of language is not only revealed in the way in which language has been reintroduced to social psychology in the specific context of the management and regulation of the multilingual (and multicultural) national polity. It is also revealed in the way the discipline continues to conceptualise language in relation to the social more generally. In this regard, the social psychology of language shares a tendency with other disciplines that study language in society: approaching both language and society as discrete and independently existing entities, and language as merely *reflecting* societal (or psychological) dimensions such as categories and attitudes. Cameron (1990) characterises this as follows:

Thus there exists social categories, structures, divisions, attitudes and identities which are marked or encoded or expressed in language use. By correlating patterns of linguistic variation with these social or demographic features, we have given a sufficient account of them. (The account may also be supplemented with crudely functionalist ideas – that speakers ‘use’ language to express their social identity, for instance – or with a slightly less crude model in terms of group ‘norms’ at both macro- and micro-levels.) (p. 81)

Accents, for example, are frequently treated in the social psychology of language, as well as in sociolinguistics, as little more than indexes of speaker identities (Cavanaugh, 2005). They reflect, almost passively, the social position of a speaker. However, according to Cameron (1990), language and society do not exist as separate entities. Languages are ‘regulated social institutions’ (Cameron, 1990, p. 88). This means that language is ‘not an organism or a passive reflection, but a social institution, deeply implicated in culture, in society, in political relations at every level’ (p. 93). Returning to accents, one can theorise, against the reductionist tendency in social psychology, that they are instead *social practices*,

and therefore not reducible to mere descriptive features of individuals or social aggregates. Accents are verbal symbols; they represent culturally meaningful sound in which language ideologies are materialised and enacted. According to Cavanaugh (2005), ‘particular speech sounds can do more than just indicate a speaker’s provenance or membership in a particular group – their “identity”, as it were’ (p. 145). Instead, ‘accents semiotically resonate, placing speakers according to how they sound, not just what they speak’ (p. 145).

In summary, the social psychology of language finds itself facing a curious dilemma: by making language perceptible, the normative sociolinguistic order (nationally defined language and neat overlays of language and identity) is merely corroborated. Language becomes perceptible in social psychology in relation to a set of assumptions about linguistic normativity: minority languages in relation to the language of the nation-state; the dialect and the accent in relation to the standard version of the language; bilingualism and multilingualism in relation to the more normative assumptions about individual and societal monolingualism. In short, things like the dialect, the accent, and the ethno-linguistic identity become visible against the background of an essentially unquestioned but, historically specific normative linguistic order: the standard language, the unmarked code, the national identity; the whole set of linguistic paraphernalia historically associated with the modern nation-state. In subscribing to this view of language (however implicitly or accidentally this occurs), social psychology finds itself in a situation described particularly accurately by Deleuze and Guattari (2004):

But the scientific model taking language as an object of study is one with the political model by which language is homogenized, centralized, standardized, becoming a language of power, a major or dominant language. Linguistics can claim all it wants to be science, nothing but pure science – it wouldn’t be the first time that the order of pure science was used to secure the requirements of another order. (pp. 111-112)

Rather than contributing to the understanding of the *political nature of language* and the *linguistic dimensions of the political*, the social psychology of language essentially reproduces,

primarily by means of its nationally mediated sociolinguistic optic, a widely held series of language ideological themes.

Conclusion

What is to be done? Pennycook (2004), in a provocative article, claims that the language concept ‘has [academically] served its time’ (p. 2). He continues by saying that ‘the over-determined sense of linguistic fixity, with its long ties to colonialism and linguistics needs to be profoundly questioned.’ This is a good point on which to end this chapter: perhaps the language concept has served its time in social psychology as well, and has the time arrived to ‘demythologise’ (Cameron, 1990) or ‘disinvent’ (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005) language in this discipline.

This would not amount to further avoidance of language in social and critical psychology, but instead stimulate interest in how languages and language practices are ideologically constructed and deployed; in how our social and political worlds are imaged, stabilised and governed *in relation to* conceptions, ideologies and regimes of language; and how received notions of language, language practices and language identities may be thrown into question by changing configurations of power, sovereignty and subjectivity in particular national settings and in the world at large. Already researchers in related fields are demonstrating how the spatial and cultural characteristics of globalisation inaugurate language forms, practices and subjectivities that can no longer be accommodated by a ‘national’ imagination of the sociolinguistic order. Examples are the expansion of notions of language and authenticity in global Hip-Hop cultures (e.g., Alim & Pennycook, 2007; Pennycook, 2007), the mixed language varieties of migrant adolescents (Hinnenkamp, 2003), and Jacquemet’s (2005) evocative notion of ‘transidiomatic practices’.

In the next chapter I pursue this in more detail, by recasting some of the central concerns of the social psychology of language (such as language attitudes and language identities) in discursive terms.

NOTES

¹An earlier version of this chapter has been published as Painter (2009).

²In fact, social psychology explicitly sought to position itself as a *theoretical* contributor to sociolinguistics. According to Giles (1979): ‘if we are going to understand why individuals acquire, use and react to language and its varieties in the way they do, we require a greater understanding of the dynamics of attitudes, motivations, identities and intentions, that is, social psychological phenomena’ (p. 2). In this sense, ‘social psychology may be able to increase the explanatory power of sociolinguistics’ (p. 2). Rather than as a conglomerate of different topics, he sees social psychology of language as an extension of social influence, ‘how society and its structures, that is, as reflected along such dimensions as power and control, affect the individual’s social behaviour’ (p. 3).

³What I am referring to here is not the ‘personalised’ form of reflexivity that characterise certain postmodern approaches in the humanities and celebrate dimensions of the ‘subjective’, but Bourdieu’s (2004; see also Robbins, 2007) notion of *reflexive social science*: a social science that strives for scientific objectivity exactly through a systematic inquiry into its own constitutive relationship to the world it studies.

⁴According to Weatherall, Watson and Gallois (2007), ‘the rise of social cognition meant a loss of focus within social psychology on actual behavior, and a privileging, or arguably even reifying, of thoughts, beliefs and cognitive processes’ (p. 1). Along with this came a loss of focus on human interaction, which further eroded the relevance, or visibility, of language.

⁵Also relevant, since the late 1980s, is *discourse analysis*, which elevated languages beyond the status of a privileged focus and topic to the primary and constitutive medium of both social life and the social psychological study thereof. I return to discourse analysis, and a discursive defined social psychology of language, in the next chapter.

⁶In this regard the fate of language in social psychology appears to mirror that of the gradual disappearance of groups and group processes in the discipline (Steiner, 1974; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987); and indeed, both the group and language could be seen as casualties of the individualising tendencies that had plagued social psychology throughout the so-called ‘crisis’ in the late 1960s and 1970s, and continue to reverberate in ongoing current attempts to ‘rediscover’ or ‘reclaim’ the *social* in social psychology (e.g., Greenwood, 2004; Stam, 2006).

⁷According to McCann and Higgins (1990), ‘One of the more curious observations that results from considering traditional research and theory in social psychology is the relative lack of attention paid to language and communication both as important processes in their own right and as critical mediators of such things as person perception and impression formation’ (p. 12).

⁸It is of course these kinds of habits of thoughts and their associated practices which underlies the disagreement between social cognition, social identity and discursive psychology: see the next chapter.

⁹Ball, Gallois and Callan (1989) date the emergence of the social psychology of language as far back as early observational work done on language in the 1930s, but it is only from the 1950s onwards that studies on language in social psychology resemble the recognisable style and approach of the modern discipline. For example, it was ‘not until the mid-twentieth century that

the attitudinal effects of language variations were studied programmatically and scientifically, i.e., empirically and particularly experimentally' (Bradac, Cargile & Hallett, 2001, p. 138).

¹⁰An example of a 'celebratory' statement: 'The field is now poised to have a theoretical impact on the social sciences, and this surely is the next challenge' (Taylor & Usborne, 2007, p. 211).

¹¹Danziger (1990) refers to 'methodolatry' as the practice whereby methods determine what is studied, rather than the other way round.

¹²According to Bradac, Cargile and Hallett (2001), 'to call experimental methods a methodological mainstay of language attitudes research would be to understate the case drastically' (p. 140).

¹³Social identity theory also had a huge impact on social psychology in South Africa, especially on politically progressive approaches to the discipline (e.g., Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991).

¹⁴Nowadays it is more frequently referred to as Communication Accommodation Theory, to include not only speech but all forms of communicative practice between people.

¹⁵However, see also Robinson (1998).

¹⁶It would only be recovered as an important topic and a historically and ideologically *specific* form of group formation and political mobilisation by authors working from more critical and discursive approaches to the discipline (e.g., Billig, 1995; Condor, 2000; Gray, Delany & Durrheim, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

¹⁷'Psychology was a "generous" discipline, it gave itself away to all kinds of professionals from police to military commanders, on condition that they came to think and act, in some respects, like psychologists' (Rose, 2008, p. 447).

¹⁸But the continued relevance of this account has, of course, also been questioned in recent years (e.g., Papadopoulos, 2004). Some theorists, notably then Papadopoulos, believe that we find ourselves in a 'post-disciplinary society', which is no longer premised on the fabrication of mass individuality or institutionally appropriate subjects to the same extent as 'disciplinary society' has been. In the words of Hardt and Negri (2000), it is not that subject formation no longer occurs, but that it is no longer tied to modernist, disciplinary institutions of the kind which Rose and others rightly identified with the development of early psychology. According to these authors 'the place of the production of subjectivity is no longer defined in the same way' (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 196). Where the processes of subject formation were once tied neatly to different modern institutions, each with its own logic – the family, the school, the prison, the army – it 'now spreads across the entire social terrain' (p. 196). One important implication for psychology is that its modernist and traditional sub-disciplinary involvement with subjectivity and society across various demarcated institutions is in crisis; and instead of locating itself there, the brave new psychologies of our time operate on the myriad sites of the programmatic dissembling of individuality – including notions of bodily authenticity – and the incessant makeshift reassemblies and re-inscriptions of individual capacities in always reconfigured spaces of production and control. In the words of Papadopoulos (2004, p. 9), 'Psychology not only responds to the dissolution of disciplinary society but it seems itself to constitute one of the many axes on which this process unfolds.'

6

Ordinary Liberals: Language Ideologies in Action

Whatever you say reverberates,
Whatever you don't say speaks for itself.
So either way you're talking politics.
*(from the poem 'Children of our age', Wisława Szymborska,
1995, p. 149)*

Pragmatics is a politics of language.
(Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, 2004, p. 91)

The preceding chapter examined what could be described as the 'language ideological profile' of social psychology. Two central questions were posed: firstly, how has social psychology been constituted in relation to language?; and secondly, how has it contributed to the formation and reproduction of an epistemologically enduring and politically productive 'eurolinguistic' imaging of the world, and of national and ethnolinguistic subjectivities? The present chapter stays with the topic of language and social psychology, but the focus of attention now shifts to an approach that departs significantly from the dominant experimental paradigm. The approach under discussion affords language a decisive (and even determining) role in the ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations according to which social psychology is defined as a discipline. I am referring to a broad and interconnected set of developments, recognised by various names, including *discursive psychology*, *discursive social*

psychology, critical discursive psychology, rhetorical psychology, and so forth. These forms of social psychology have developed in reference to a broad spectrum of discourse analyses and discourse theories, and thus reflect the discipline's somewhat belated, but meta-theoretically significant confrontation with the so-called 'linguistic turn' in twentieth century philosophy, humanities and social science (e.g., Potter, 1996; Ricoeur, 1979; Shotter, 1993a; Van der Merwe, 1994; Van der Merwe & Voestermans, 1995).¹

In order to fully appreciate the significance of discourse oriented approaches to social psychology, it is worthwhile to reiterate an observation from the preceding chapter. To a large extent, social psychology has always been at pains to keep language at bay, to reduce its significance, and to quell (however faint) the traces of its echo. In the words of Hogg and Abrams (1988), language has effectively been 'exiled from the province of social psychology' (p. 191). What I wish to accentuate with this remark, is not so much the political ramifications of this exile, but the means of its implementation and reproduction. It is primarily through methodological technologies and regimes that the ritual expulsion of language – of the disorderliness of ordinary speech and the proliferation of meanings when language is let loose – has been achieved (and is still being upheld) in experimental social psychology. The experimental method, the structured interview, the questionnaire and, more generally, the 'variabilisation' and quantification of social life (characteristic features of positivism in psychology), are premised on an overruling of the subjectively inflected voice of the research subject.² In order to arrive at what is theoretically 'real' in social psychology, one has to divine that which lurks *behind* speech and language; in order to fathom the underlying mechanisms of social thought (such as memory, categorisation, attribution, attitudes and identification) one has to bypass the idiosyncrasies of the utterance, the spoken word. This epistemological posture is reminiscent, in some telling aspects, to an account of the political repression of speech in a totalitarian society in Javier Marías' (2006) extraordinary novel, *Your face tomorrow 1: Fever and spear*.

I don't know if you quite realise what it meant, Jacobo: people were warned against using their main form of communication; they were made to distrust the very activity in which people most naturally indulge and always have indulged,

without reserve, at all times and in all places, not just in this country and at that particular time; it made an enemy of what most defines and unites us: talking, telling, saying, commenting, gossiping, passing on information, criticising, exchanging news, tittle-tattling, defaming, slandering and spreading rumours, describing and relating events, keeping up to date and putting others in the picture, and of course, joking and lying. That is the wheel that moves the world, Jacobo, more than anything else; that is the engine of life, the one that never becomes exhausted and never stops, that is its life's breath. (p. 324)

The methodological regimentation of language in social psychology is a thoroughgoing, perhaps indeed 'totalitarian' attempt at producing noise-free communicative channels between the scientist and the research object, uncontaminated by the vagaries and nuances of subjective acts of meaning: it deliberately makes an enemy 'of what most defines and unites us' (Marías, 2006, p. 324). In a more scholarly but nevertheless equally illuminating discussion of this quality of experimental psychology, Parker (1994a) refers to the 'repression' of language and meaning in positivist (or, more generally speaking, quantitative) research. His depiction of how language is generally framed as a 'problem' (which poses a considerable threat to the validity claims of psychological experiments) is worth quoting in full. According to Parker, quantitative research approaches

are faced with an insuperable problem when subjects start to make their own sense of the research setting, and the most hard-line experimental psychologists will be making sense of the situation they have constructed for their subject, which is surplus to that which they want to measure and report [...] All quantitative approaches become mired in this problem *as soon as the subjects and the researchers start to talk*; and *the fact that human beings use language is the most important and disruptive problem that these approaches face*. It is understandable, though not surprising, that language, the medium through which social life is maintained, is absent from most studies in psychology. Sometimes the instructions are written in a brief standard form *to screen out the chatter that governs the rest of our lives outside the laboratory*, but whichever technique is employed to stop people talking brings into play the guesswork that underlies demand characteristics and researcher effects, and sets

severe limits on ecological validity. *The pretence that people do not speak* is also the core of the repression of meaning in psychological research... (pp. 7-8, emphases added)

Of course, the experimental researcher is of course entirely correct, and *should* be wary of language. The threat is real. Or perhaps one should say: the threat is precisely the irrepressible reality of language. The interpretative involvement of subjects in their own world, their reflexive, above all linguistic co-production of meaning, *indeed* threatens to undo the idealised, abstracted epistemological space of the experiment. But alleviating this threat comes at the cost of which may well be said to give social and psychological life its specifically human character: language, conversation, and meaning-making. No wonder, then, that Tajfel (1972, p. 69) lambasts the performance of ‘experiments in a vacuum’; that Lubek and Stam (1995, p. 171) refer to ‘ludicro-experimentation in social psychology’; or that Stam, Lubek and Radtke (1998) call for a ‘repopulating’ of the essentially asocial, depopulated and disembodied spaces of ‘this ritual of scientific data production’ (p. 153) and its subsequent texts (see also Billig, 1994; Gergen, 1992). In summary (and somewhat hyperbolically stated) experimental social psychology is constantly aware that human subjects speak, but simply cannot afford to listen to what they have to say. Its epistemology privileges the distant observation and guessing game of the voyeur over the intimacy and mutuality of conversation.

Qualitative research traditions, in stark contrast, have operated in much closer proximity to the subjectively intoned human voice. These traditions have oriented themselves to the idiographic, the contextual, and the linguistic; to the interrogation of meaning as a quality of either lived experience or of larger constellations of sedimented sense, such as culture or ideology (Gergen, 1982; Kelly, 1999; Kvale, 1992; Willig & Stainton Rogers, 2008). But there are significant differences within the broader ambit of qualitative research as well. Humanistic approaches (which include phenomenological, hermeneutical and existential analytics) typically assume the subjective ‘authenticity’ of the experiences and acts of meaning that shape the lives of individuals and groups (e.g., Eatough & Smith, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). Formulated differently, they take research subjects *at their words*: they are concerned with how the world looks, and is uniquely articulated, from the

perspective of those who live and experience it; and they seek, fundamentally, to restore integrity to the first-person perspective in the study of human lives. Constructionist approaches, in turn, take a more distant and at times decidedly *critical* (or ‘suspicious’) approach to experience, meaning-making and subjectivity (Burr, 1997; Danziger, 1997a; Durrheim, 1997a; Gergen, 1985). By insisting on the *constructive* (‘world-making’) as opposed to the merely representational capacities of language, constructionism considers experience, human and social realities (our very selves) as linguistically mediated and hence decentred from ‘authentic’ experiential grounds. It is language itself, *as discourse*, which demands analytic attention: it is within discourse, rather than within individual experience, that meaning emerges and where it resides; and it is in relation to discourse that experience is predicated as meaningful, that the world becomes a *humanly articulated world*, and that subjectivities and identities emerge.

The philosophical reference points for the ‘linguistic turn’ in philosophy, humanities and social science are varied: they range from Wittgenstein’s (1988) assault on logical positivism to Derrida’s (1976, 1982) deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence; and from Austin’s (1962) analysis of linguistic performativity to Foucault’s (1972, 1982, 2008) work on discourse, power and subjectivity (see Kearney, 1995; Pears, 1985 for overviews). All these critical traditions insist that the significance of language is not exhausted by its representational function, and that it is in fact constitutive of social life, psychological phenomena and the nature of knowledge. I will not linger on these philosophical critiques and traditions. I wish to emphasise simply that the ‘linguistic turn’ (in the aftermath of the ‘crisis’ in social psychology and increasingly during the 1980s) has also had a profound impact on how the epistemological foundations of *social psychology* were challenged and reformulated (e.g., Harré, 1987, 1992; Harré & Secord, 1972; Harré & Gillet, 1994; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). More to the point, the ‘linguistic turn’ has contributed to creating the space where a different, discourse oriented social psychology could develop: a ‘government in exile’, so to speak, operating from the displaced position (described in the preceding chapter) that language has always occupied in relation to mainstream social psychology.

This chapter commences with an introduction to discourse oriented social psychologies, and then applies some of its central theoretical and empirical innovations to a corpus of textual data. This data consists of a number of recorded group discussions conducted with learners at an Eastern Cape school on the topic of language and language diversity.³ The relevance of the school context to the study of language ideologies in contemporary South Africa is almost self-evident. Firstly, language in education policies has historically played a defining biopolitical role in apartheid governmentality: it contributed to the consolidation and reproduction of ethnic subjectivities and solidarities whilst also reproducing a racial order premised on white cultural, political and economic supremacy (e.g., Alexander, 1989; Heugh, 2000; Heugh, Siegrühn & Plüdderman, 1995; Mclean, 1999). Secondly, public schooling was racially segregated during the apartheid era, and for many white schools especially, post-apartheid racial integration remains a slow, rather tortuous process (Chisholm, 2004, 2005; Christie, 2006). Schools have thus become prime sites of inter-racial contact, racial violence, practices of marginalisation and exclusion – dynamics that are based on seemingly race-neutral concerns of ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’. In turn, schools have also become sites where racialised identities and subjectivities are being challenged and are transformed in post-apartheid South Africa. The classroom and the playground are therefore particularly germane contexts for the interrogation of discourses, ideologies and practices of language (race and identity) in contemporary South Africa.

It is important to note that this chapter is neither intended to be a thorough overview and critique of discourse oriented social psychologies, nor an exhaustive empirical study of language and education in South Africa. The empirical materials analysed here mainly serve an illustrative purpose. They allow me to develop a number of theoretical and methodological links between social psychology, discourse analysis, and the language ideological themes – of which nationalism and racism form part – that have thus far been discussed in this thesis. My aim is to explore how the introduction of discourse analysis to social psychology may be of assistance in reworking some of the central themes, concepts and approaches in the social psychology of language: most importantly *language attitudes*, *language and identity*, and *linguistic landscapes*. Having said this, the analysis of these empirical materials also generates insight into the particular ways in which language is

constructed and ideologically invested in contemporary South Africa. In this sense, the analysis may be read (especially against the background of the historical and theoretical discussions in the preceding chapters) as a modest case study about language ideologies in post-apartheid South Africa, and as an illustration of the contribution a discursively oriented social psychology of language can make to the study to this topic.⁴ Even though it is neither exhaustive nor generalisable as an account of current discourses about language (or language ideologies) in this country, the analysis nevertheless suggests a number of important future research trajectories, including the exploration of how discourses of national identity and liberal subjectivity become implicated in the reinforcement of racialised and racialising language orders.

Before further elaborating on the empirical component of this chapter, however, it is necessary to make a few remarks about issues of terminology. There have been a number of references above to ‘discourse oriented social psychologies’. This refers to a broad, and at times, theoretically incompatible variety of discursive approaches in social psychology, all of which foreground the importance of language as *discourse* and advocate some form of discourse analysis as its major and often defining methodological technology. The concept of discourse is itself frequently defined in markedly varied ways: sometimes descriptively, as any sample of talk and text; sometimes as the action-orientation of language or the rhetorical savvy of individual speakers within contexts of dialogic encounters; and sometimes as larger, trans-individual complexes of meaning, which are embodied in institutionalised domains of practices and their power effects, and thus demarcating domains of knowledge, experience and subjectivity (Brown & Locke, 2008; McKinlay & McVittie, 2009). Similarly, there is an exhilarating, seemingly ever-increasing range of discourse analytic approaches (as ‘qualitative methods’) on offer – not all of which are strictly speaking indigenous to the province of social psychology (e.g., Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001; Wood & Kroger, 2000). I will explain aspects of this diversity in the following section, and where relevant, draw both principled and pragmatic distinctions between definitions of discourse, conceptualisations of the relevance of discourse to social psychological life, and forms of discourse analysis. However, from here onwards, however, I disregard some of the more arcane theoretical and methodological distinctions between different appearances of discourse analysis in social

psychology and rather employ ‘discursive social psychology’ (henceforth DSP) as an inclusive and broadly descriptive term. In other words, the term DSP is employed to refer to any social psychology founded on a theoretical reconceptualisation of its subject matter in discursive terms – rather than as a designation of the use of discourse analysis as a particular species of qualitative methodology in social psychology.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I outline the foundational principles and major theoretical components of DSP. In the second part, I apply these conceptual and theoretical tools, most notably *attitudes*, *categorisation* and *identification*, to the corpus of textual data.

Part I

Discourse and the Social Psychology of Language

Given the way it foregrounds the relevance of language to social psychology, DSP may be seen as a development in (and even a subfield of) the domain of language and social psychology (LSP) discussed (as the ‘social psychology of language’) in the preceding chapter. Potter and Edwards (2001a), for example, claim that ‘DSP is a relatively new perspective in the area of language and social psychology. Nevertheless it is growing fast and providing challenging new analyses of traditional social psychological topics, as well as opening up new topics of study’ (p. 115). The field of LSP (possibly on the strength of its multidisciplinary profile and its intrinsic appreciation of the importance of language, communication and interaction to social life) has, in fact, been significantly more accommodating of DSP approaches than the ‘general’ social psychology mainstream has been. One example should suffice. A fairly recent text, *The Sage Handbook of Social Psychology* (Hogg & Cooper, 2003), is typical in this regard: (i) It defines social psychology along traditional methodological lines; (ii) does not mention DSP as a substantive theoretical tradition in the field (despite the significant body of work that has accumulated under its name since the mid-1980s); (iii) and does not (despite considerable overlap in research areas between the two paradigms) incorporate DSP research findings

alongside experimental studies in its overviews of the extant social psychology literature.⁵ This trend is broken only, but significantly, in a chapter on language and communication processes in social psychology (Noels, Giles & Le Poire, 2003). In this overview of LSP, discourse analytic contributions are favourably mentioned, and the value of epistemological and methodological diversity in social psychology asserted. However, not surprisingly (given the ongoing neglect of language in the broader discipline), this chapter was omitted from a later abridged student edition of the book. In this regard, language is still a detachable appendage, not an essential dimension of this discipline and of how it conceptualises social processes (Hogg & Cooper, 2007).

In another introduction to LSP, Bradac and Giles (2005) state that they are 'looking forward to the day when we have an LSP text that draws equally on the work of discursive psychologists and the findings of experimental social psychologists of language' (p. 222). But despite such explicit articulations of mutuality, there are a number of reasons to insist that DSP and LSP exist fairly independently: that is to say, they inhabit different epistemological realms, and rarely overlap on the grounds of their main empirical pursuits. Rather than considering DSP to be a subfield of LSP, applying different methodologies to similar subject matter (as Bradac and Giles (2005) seem to suggest), it might instead be seen as an alternative approach to (or paradigm in) social psychology in general. This is, in fact, made very clear by Potter and Edwards (2001a):

Discursive social psychology is the application of ideas from discourse analysis to central topics in social psychology. It is not a social psychology *of* language. Instead, it is an approach to psychology that takes the action-oriented and reality-constructing features of discourse as fundamental. (p 103, emphasis in the original; see also Potter & Edwards, 2001b)

DSP has indeed developed as a 'loyal opposition' to the social psychology mainstream, locating itself in close proximity to the central topics and theories that most typically define this discipline. Its major theoretical and methodological modifications of experimental social psychology have taken effect in the areas of *attitudes* (Potter, 1998; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1988; Durrheim & Dixon, 2004), *cognition*

(Antaki, 2006; Edwards, 1997, 2006; Potter & Edwards, 2003; Te Molder & Potter, 2005), *categorisation* (Billig, 1985, 1987; Edwards, 1997), *memory* (Edwards & Middleton, 1986, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992), *causal attribution* (Antaki, 1994; Antaki & Leudar, 1992; Edwards & Potter, 1993), *social representations* (Potter & Edwards, 1999; Potter & Wetherell, 1998), *social identity* (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Billig, 1995; Edwards, 1998; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), *contact theory* (Buttny, 1999; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005; Dixon & Reicher, 1997) and *prejudice and discrimination* (Condor, 2006; Speer & Potter, 2000; Tileagă, 2005, 2006; Verkuyten, 2005; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). These theoretical developments have been elaborated on across a fairly wide variety of empirical topics, again following (quite closely) the contours of mainstream, experimental social psychology. For example, a recent introductory textbook on DSP has little problem dividing the field up in a manner that almost directly maps onto the structure of mainstream social psychology textbooks. Its dominant empirical topics comprise of familiar social psychological concerns, such as impression management, group and intergroup processes, interpersonal attraction, and aggression (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008).

Potter and Edwards (2001a) insist that DSP is not a social psychology *of* language, but it is exactly as a social psychology of language that LSP has made *its* most significant contributions. This has ironically meant –considering its foundational relationship to language – that DSP has also generally steered clear of addressing the relatively neglected social psychological topics of language attitudes, language identities, language and discrimination, linguistic landscapes, and so forth. For all the interest it has shown in talk, interaction and meaning-making, DSP has nevertheless neglected the social implications of language diversity; that is, as a material dimension of human difference, rather than as a universal feature of human nature. This is possibly one of the major disadvantages of being defined so closely in response to the ‘central topics in social psychology’ (Edwards & Potter, 2001a, p. 103): by reproducing a mirror image of the structure of the discipline (however critically reconceptualised it proves to be), some of the exclusions that characterise the social psychology mainstream are inevitably also reproduced in the process.

Of course, there are occasional references to language in DSP research that are relevant to the concerns of the social psychology of language. In this regard, I am claiming that language is *neglected* as a major concern in DSP, not that it is completely absent. For example, in their now classic study of racist discourse in New Zealand, Wetherell and Potter (1992) mention some significant comments by their respondents on the teaching and status of Māori languages:

For the contentious issue of Māori language teaching, a typical and prevalent pattern was to argue, on the grounds of principle, against the compulsory learning of Māori, to acknowledge that Māori could be an optional extra, but to express scepticism about the practical value of Māori language given the ‘characteristics of the modern world’. (p. 187)

Commonly held ideas about language (especially in a linguistically diverse context such as New Zealand) are shown to be part and parcel of the everyday business of perpetuating and legitimising racialised identities and inequalities. However, in comparison to culture and nationalism, language is but a minor focus in Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) study. It comes into brief focus as a component of constructions of culture and national identity, but not as an independently significant topic. Despite this and other scattered instances of attention, language politics and discourses of language have not received noteworthy research attention in DSP. Significantly, this is also true of DSP in South Africa. DSP accounts for a significant segment of social psychology in this country (e.g., Foster, 2006; Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker, 1997; Painter & Terre Blanche, 2004; Ratele & Duncan, 2003; Stevens, Franchi & Swart, 2006). Frequently assimilated into the academic and political objectives of critical psychology, DSP has been productively applied to the study of race, racism and other forms of identity and inequality in South Africa, such as gender and sexuality (e.g., Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006). Yet the politics of language has only rarely been considered in DSP locally, and almost never as the chief topic of interest. In fact, the data discussed in this chapter is drawn from the first, and still one of the only, DSP studies explicitly focused on language attitudes, language and identity, and language and racism in post-apartheid South Africa (Painter, 2005, 2006b; Painter & Baldwin, 2004). That South Africa is linguistically diverse; that language

intersects with (and reinforces) South African identities in complex and often contradictory ways; and that language has been implicated in historical processes of dispossession and oppression (and with legacies of ongoing inequality and marginalisation) – are areas that have, thus far, not received much attention in DSP locally.

Fortunately, this is not because DSP is not theoretically and methodologically geared for the study of these historical and contemporary dimensions of language in society. On the contrary: I will argue that DSP provides the social psychology of language with a number of crucial theoretical and methodological tools. These are tools which, firstly, allow the social psychology of language to break with the language ideological structure of experimental social psychology (as described it in the preceding chapter); and secondly, enable a productive dialogue between a discursively reconceptualised social psychology of language and the extant field of language ideological research.

Debates, orientations and approaches in DSP

McKinlay and McVittie (2008) identify and discuss no less than seven approaches to discourse and discursive research in contemporary social psychology. These are: conversation analysis; discourse analysis; critical discourse analysis; Foucauldian discourse analysis; discursive psychology; rhetorical psychology; and narrative analysis. They also make it clear that there are no hard and fast rules by which to confidently distinguish between these approaches; in fact, these approaches are more like ‘flavours’ than mutually exclusive paradigms, theories or analytic strategies. They warn readers should be aware:

that the flavors of discursive research are a bit like the flavors of ice cream. An ice cream shop might sell chocolate, strawberry, and banana flavored ice cream. So, in one sense, these flavors are easily distinguishable because each ice cream tub is clearly labeled. However, different ice cream sellers may use different recipes, and so they may disagree as to what exactly constitutes ‘chocolate’ ice cream or ‘banana’ ice cream. Moreover, the customer will often order more than one flavor

in the same dish, only to find that within minutes the different flavors have begun to melt into one another. (p. 9)

Despite this (or perhaps indeed *because* of it) there is no shortage of debate in DSP about: (i) how best to define discourse; (ii) how discourse relates to the materiality of practices and institutions; (iii) what the relationships are between discourse and cognition, discourse and power, discourse and ideology, discourse and subjectivity; (iv) and how to appropriately analyse discourse. DSP as a domain is very much divided, and thus not representative of a monolithic paradigm united against a commonly defined epistemological and methodological opposition. The major debates in the field over the last two decades or so have touched on a bewildering array of important issues, including: whether discourse analysis is best considered a paradigm or a method (Hammersley, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Potter, 2003a, 2003b); whether DSP should be developed in line with a constructionist/relativist or a critical realist epistemology (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995; Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007a, 2007b; Speer, 2007); whether it is epistemologically legitimate to bring extra-textual considerations (such as theoretical concepts, historical context and political orientation), to bear on the analysis of conversational data (Billig, 1999a, 1999b; Schlegoff, 1997, 1998, 1999; Wetherell, 1998); the relative value of Foucauldian vs. more micro-textual analytic styles in DSP (Hook, 2005a; Potter, 2005; Willig, 2005); and whether or not (and how) psychoanalysis is relevant to the development of DSP (Branney, 2008; Billig, 2006; Gough, 2004; Parker, 2005; Wetherell, 2005).

It is indeed difficult to distinguish consistently between different ‘flavours’ or ‘genres’ of DSP. As opposed to McKinlay and McVittie’s (2008) list of seven, others have argued for *two* major orientations to discourse in social psychology (e.g., Burr, 1997; Stevenson, 2004; Wetherell, 1998; Widdicombe & Wooffit, 1995). In this regard, Burr (1997) distinguishes between *discourse analysis* and *the analysis of discourse*. Wetherell (1998) essentially concurs and characterises this distinction as follows: ‘Typically, the boundary lines are drawn between styles of work which affiliate with ethnomethodology and conversation analytic traditions and analyses which follow post-structuralist or Foucauldian lines’ (p. 388). Thus, the first orientation typifies discourse as the

conversational and rhetorical activities in which individuals engage when they construct versions of reality, and on the basis of which psychological categories are made relevant to the performance of situated social actions. It is a bottom-up, textually based analytic, that (according to McKinlay and McVittie's schema) include discourse analysis, discursive psychology, and rhetorical psychology; particularly as these approaches have all, to some extent, developed in theoretical and methodological dialogue with ordinary language philosophy, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Potter, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998).

In turn, the second orientation in turn typifies discourse as semiotic and material configurations of meaning from which historically specific subjectivities, knowledges and truth claims emerge. This approach has been imported to social psychology from the broad area of post-structuralism, with the work of Foucault being especially influential in this regard (Parker, 1992, 2002). This second tradition is typically more top-down in analytic approach and is more concerned with textuality and discourse practices as dimensions of institutional arrangements and practices than with isolating and analysing the rhetorical and argumentative patterns of individual language use within snippets of talk and writing. In terms of McKinlay and McVittie's (2008) schema, this orientation roughly encompasses the approaches of Foucaultian discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The CDA they refer to is a theoretical and methodological tradition that has developed independently of social psychology (e.g., Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 1989, 2001; Luke, 2002). However, as outlined below, I will employ 'critical' in a less restrictive manner when applying it to DSP.

The two-tiered distinction between *discourse analysis* and *the analysis of discourse* is helpful, and I will draw on it during the remainder of this section and chapter. But, as distinctions go, it is also not fail-safe (Wetherell, 2007). To be sure, disagreements about the *criticality* of discourse work in social psychology cuts across what is essentially a macro-micro or molar-molecular distinction (Wetherell, 1998, 2007). Within the first orientation outlined above (which focuses broadly on the conversational or rhetorical dimensions of language-in-use), some scholars persistently underplay, and at times, actively reject the political or critical dimension of discourse work. This can be detected in the approach

McKinlay and McVittie (2008) refer to as discursive psychology – a development that focuses more on topics of cognitive psychology than on those traditionally associated with social psychology (e.g., Edwards, 1997, 2006; Edwards & Potter, 1992, 2003). This is also apparent in a recent (and increasingly) theoretical and empirical rapprochement between DSP and conversation analysis (e.g., Browne & Locke, 2008; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2008). On the other hand, there are just as many scholars in this tradition who insist on accentuating the intrinsically critical and political nature of discourse work in social psychology, and who remain interested in issues of inequality, power and ideology: in other words, they share *political* concerns and commitments with Foucaultian discourse analysis and CDA. As Wetherell (2007) observes:

Meanwhile, other discursive researchers in psychology (including myself) have remained more focused on issues in social psychology and have not been so persuaded by the apparent limits and boundaries placed by conversation analysis around the object of study. (p. 665).

In this regard, Wetherell (2007) also makes reference to *critical discourse analysis*, but she has in mind a category that is more inclusive than the field of CDA mentioned by McKinlay and McVittie (2008): one ‘which combines micro and macro discourse approaches including, increasingly, narrative analysis and often combines these with other approaches such as psychoanalysis or social identity theory in social psychology’ (Wetherell, 2007, p. 665). It is this more inclusive use of the term ‘critical’ that I invoke when referring to *critical* DSP or critical discourse analysis. Billig (1999b) offers a particularly lucid account of the differences between conversation analytic approaches, on the one hand, and the concerns of broadly and inclusively defined critical discourse analysis on the other hand:

The specific tasks of CDA are frequently part of a wider analysis of social inequality. Moreover, CDA wishes to theorise the presuppositions that must be brought to the micro-analysis of interaction. CDA does not claim epistemological naivety in the fulfilment of its methodological tasks, but explicitly wishes to incorporate insights from social theory and other social sciences, including macro social science, into the analysis of particulars. (p. 576).

What Wetherell (2007) and Billig (1999b) are championing, is a version of DSP that is not methodologically formalistic, that engages a diversity of relevant social theories and analytic strategies, and is critical in its orientation to social and political life. However, this version of DSP nevertheless distinguishes itself by approaching discourse as the action-orientation of language-in-use, as opposed to monolithic, Foucaultian structures of meaning, practice and power – as is, for example, associated with the work of Parker (1989b, 1992, 2002).⁶ In this regard, it is relevant to note that in the United Kingdom, DSP has tended to become rather factional, to make shibboleths of minor methodological differences, and to increasingly resemble experimental psychology's tendency to proceed research agendas by means of the accumulation of strictly demarcated (and at times fairly trivial, from a critical or political perspective) empirical results. This is at least partially the result of British academic politics; of the jockeying for position between researchers, departments and traditions specific to that context. It is therefore not surprising that some of the most interesting work in DSP (which lives up fully to the more inclusive, academically meaningful and politically relevant vision elaborated by Wetherell (2007) and Billig (1999b)), has occurred outside its place of origin (in Australia and South Africa for example) over the last decade or so (Painter, Terre Blanche & Henderson, 2006).

Discourse, the psychological, and the accomplishment of social action

Above I have outlined some of the major debates, orientations and approaches in the broad catchment area of DSP. I will now proceed to provide a more coherent account of how DSP conceptualises the phenomena and practices of social psychology in relation to language and discourse. In this regard, I should emphasise two things: Firstly, my account leans more heavily on the conceptualisation of discourse analysis as the action-orientation of talk than on Foucaultian approaches to discourse analysis in social psychology. Secondly, I am presenting a *critical* orientation to DSP, which means that I am concerned with the ideological role discourse and discursive action play in the manufacturing of normative social orders and the legitimisation and reproduction of social inequality, marginalisation and oppression.

Wetherell's (2007) depiction of the key theoretical focus of DSP is worth quoting in full:

The emphasis in discursive psychology is on the publicly available social practices which constitute the psychological. Much work (following Wittgenstein) has focused on the discursive practices or language games which determine how mental predicates – knowing, remembering, feeling, perceiving, seeing, thinking, etc. – gain meaning as recognisable activities. [...] Discursive psychologists study discourse as practical, social activity, located in settings, occurring between people and used in practices. We usually take discursive practices, rather than the individual, as our unit of analysis. And, because we are psychologists, we are interested in studying how people do psychological things – emotions, memory, gender, identity, knowledge – in talk and texts, as discourse. (pp. 664-665; see also Potter, Edwards & Wetherell, 1993)

In other words (as was mentioned earlier), DSP first and foremost concerns itself with reworking the theoretical notions of *cognitive* social psychology – and social cognition in particular – in discursive terms. This means that ‘in each case the topic is respecified *in terms of situated practices*’ (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005, p. 595, emphasis added). The notion of ‘situated practices’ is vitally important in this approach to social psychology. It implies that DSP is not simply interested in decontextualised instances of language use (talking and writing) – referred to as ‘pragmatics’ within the context of linguistics. Instead, DSP busies itself with understanding how language use is enfolded into social actions as an intrinsic part (and indeed a constitutive component of) the accomplishment of those actions. In other words, discourse does not primarily represent underlying psychological processes or events in the world, but contributes to the constitution of psychologically meaningful social action. Edwards and Potter (1992) articulates this as follows:

[...] [R]ather than seeing such discursive constructions as expressions of speakers’ underlying cognitive states, they are examined in the context of their occurrence as situated and occasioned constructions whose precise nature makes sense, to

participants and analysts alike, *in terms of the social actions those descriptions accomplish*.
(pp. 2-3, emphasis added)

This also sheds light on what Wetherell (2007) refers to as the '*publicly available social practices which constitute the psychological*' (p. 664, emphasis added). The psychological, according to DSP, is constituted and invoked as a dimension of social action, not as its underlying cause. In other words, one of the aims of analysis in DSP is to reveal how particular forms of social action are accomplished *in terms of* the psychological, not *in response to* the psychological. A linguistically articulated attribution of blame, for example, is not conceptualised in DSP as a mental event that is merely reflected in speech and that might cause a behavioural response. Instead, it is considered to exist only in relation to – and as a dimension of – its public embodiment in discursive action; as an emergent and constitutive property of the accomplishment of a particular, situated social practice and its interpersonal (and more broadly social) specification in terms of a shared psychological vocabulary. Attributions, just like other 'cognitive processes', are thus conceptually shifted in DSP from an interior, isolated mental space to the interpersonal, dialogical space of human interaction and conversation. Cognition is considered to be discursive as opposed to being limited to mental processes. It is therefore contextually specific, action oriented, and rhetorical (Billig, 1987). Psychological ascriptions are neither *about* mental states nor *about* social actions; instead, they are instances of thought-in-action, and hence part of (and only meaningful within) the accomplishment of social actions (Durrheim, 1997a; Billig, 1997; Harré & Gillet, 1994). Cognitive acts (and the psychological more broadly), cannot be abstracted from language and discursive practice, as if they exist on a separate, interior plane. Shotter (1993b) goes as far as claiming that 'an understanding of *anything* psychological is an understanding of the role of language in human affairs' (p. 73, emphasis added).

DSP's second focal point (following on the reconceptualisation of cognitive processes in discursive terms), relates to 'constructions of accountability and versions of reality' (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005, p. 595). In other words, DSP studies how people make sense of the world, events, other people and themselves, and how they position themselves in relation to others as (morally) accountable and intentional agents. These two focal points

(which are areas of both disciplinary self-definition and application) are inextricably related: firstly, DSP employs theoretically reconceptualised notions like ‘attitudes’, ‘categorisation’ and ‘identification’ to study how individuals discursively construct and articulate (usually self-interested) versions of reality; secondly, it pays attention to how individuals (rhetorically) manage issues of moral and ethical accountability (issues of ‘stake’); and thirdly, it calculates the interpersonal and broader *political* ‘outcomes’ of particular constructions of the social world. For example, a person might construct a version of events which portrays an immigrant as out of place and unwelcome in his or her country, but nevertheless manage their account in such a way as to inoculate themselves against charges of xenophobia or racism (Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson & Stevenson, 2006). Moreover, people don’t construct their versions of events from scratch; they draw from socially shared discursive resources. These shared resources are sometimes referred to as ‘discourses’ or ‘interpretive repertoires’ (Edley, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Negative constructions of immigrants, for example, are not only rhetorically oriented to the pursuit of conversational and interpersonal outcomes. They become *ideologically* effective in the legitimisation and reproduction of not just prejudiced *images* of others, but practices of discrimination and oppression in the broader social context. For this reason, critical approaches to DSP have insisted that social cognition is not only discursive and rhetorical, but *ideological* as well; it reflects as well as contributes to the everyday reproduction of the status quo in contexts that range from nationality to race and gender (Augoustinos, 1999; Billig, 1982, 1991, 1997; Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988; Durrheim, 1997b).

Ideology enters the analytic arsenal of DSP as soon as its focus is extended beyond the strict confines of the interactional situation, to the relationship between situated speech acts, the broader social and political context, and widely circulated ideas, images, metaphors and other discursive tropes, by which the social world is revealed as socially constructed and politically invested in favour of dominant social groups and interests. The analytic emphasis in DSP, however, is less on ideology (as a fixed container of distorted or false sets of ideas), and more on the *ideological outcome* of particular ways of speaking and making sense of the world.⁷ In other words, the analytic focus shifts from *ideology as such*, to the study of *ideological practice*; that is, to the discursive strategies and

resources that are exploited and mobilised to enact, justify, sustain and legitimise the status quo as somehow obvious, natural and true (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). A good summary of the relationship between cognition, rhetoric and ideological practice is provided by Every and Augoustinos (2007). They assert that DSP studies:

[...] [H]ow talk and text are socially organized to achieve local actions, such as identity management, *as well as ideological effects that rationalize and legitimate oppression*. It examines both the broad patterns and themes within talk (interpretive repertoires or discourses), as well as the resources and linguistic tools through which accounts are imbued with the status of fact and truth. It also examines how accounts are organized argumentatively, i.e. how they are designed to compete with alternative versions of social reality. (p. 416, emphasis added)

Attitudes, Categorisation and Identification

As outlined above, DSP has reworked a number of central concepts and theories in social psychology, detailing them in discursive rather than mentalist terms. The three areas of discursive reconceptualisation most relevant to my discussion of the social psychology of language in this thesis and chapter are: *attitudes*, *categories* and *identities*. In this section, I discuss each of these in turn. Thereafter, in the two sections that follow, I also discuss the social psychology of *spatiality* and *racism*, both from a DSP perspective. Whereas each of these topics allow the further clarification of how social psychology is reconceptualised in relation to *language* in DSP, they are also directly pertinent to the development of a reconceptualised critical social psychology of language; especially one that pays attention to the articulation and reproduction of language ideologies and their associated subjectivities, spaces and practices.

Attitudes

Social psychology has heaped much theoretical and empirical attention on the study of attitudes, but (according to DSP) has also ‘virtually ignored examining what people *actually do* when they offer their opinions’ (Billig, 1991, emphasis added; see also Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The principle reason for this is that ‘attitude’ has been understood in

social psychology as mental state, and certainly not as anything approaching a ‘speech genre’ (Bakhtin, 1986; Danziger, 1997b). The concept of ‘attitude’ in experimental social psychology refers to how an individual thinks and feels about a particular object or category in the world. It is assumed that, once formed, such a cognitive and evaluative stance remains fairly stable and coherent, and can therefore be abstracted (as a *psychological* object) from, and generalised beyond, its particular expressive and enunciative context. Quite simply, the attitude has traditionally been conceptualised as a mental state that exists *prior to language*, and thus anticipates the behaviours that may (or may not) be caused by it. Not surprisingly, then, social psychologists spend a lot of their time measuring attitudes as stable individual quantities (aggregated at the level of social groups) and determining the causal link between attitudes and behaviours. Indeed, one of the major and ongoing theoretical debates in the literature on attitudes concerns the question of whether attitudes have a causal impact on behaviour, what the nature and strength of attitudinal impact is, and how this impact is mediated by other factors (Augoustinos, 1995).

Billig (1991), in the following statement, neatly captures the contours of DSP critiques of conventional experimental social psychology approaches to attitude research:

Too often, social psychologists have assumed an ‘attitude’ is a mental reality, and that in speaking their attitude people are giving an outward expression to an inner mental state. It is the inner state which is presumed to constitute the reality of the matter. For the discursive social psychologist, this assumption needs to be theoretically inverted; *the giving of the attitude – the use of attitudinal language – is the reality which needs to be studied.* (p. 15, emphasis added)

Close qualitative analysis of how people engage in opinionated or evaluative talk, has revealed that so-called ‘attitudes’ display a level of contextual inconsistency that is difficult to reconcile with existing experimental social psychology conceptualisations and measures. This gives theoretical credibility to the idea that attitudes, if anything, are to be approached as variable features of speech, rather than as stable, generalisable mental constructs (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Durrheim & Dixon, 2004). Thus, instead of

addressing attitudes in mentalist terms, discursive social psychologists are concerned with analysing evaluative practices as they are articulated (that is to say, *attitudinal talk* in specific discursive contexts), by paying close attention to the perceptual, rhetorical, behavioural and ideological currency they wield in those settings (Potter, 1998). This form of analytic practice includes the following aspects: the ways in which research participants formulate and express their evaluative judgments about people or objects in terms of conversational strategies and socially available ideas or ‘interpretive repertoires’ (Edley, 2001); the manner in which participants build rhetorical authority (or ‘warrants’) into their accounts in order to give these accounts a semblance of legitimacy and truthfulness within contexts where dispute and subsequent loss of face is always possible (and undesirable); and the immediate interactional and broader ideological effects participants achieve through their evaluative talk.

A fundamental shift in the conceptualisation of the relationship of attitudes to behaviour (or attitudes to action), is hereby introduced. Whereas experimental social psychology is concerned with understanding attitudes as causal determinants of behaviour, DSP considers the expression of evaluative statements as integral to the accomplishment of social action. In other words, one’s evaluative actions are not *caused* by an underlying attitude. Instead, the expression of evaluative statements (attitudes) belongs to the accomplishment of social actions that includes these expressions as a constitutive dimension. In this regard, one can refer to Wittgenstein’s (1988) well-known example about the expression ‘to jump for joy’. Joy, in this expression, is not an underlying psychological state which exists separately from its expression, and which causes the person to jump. We do not say: ‘He is jumping *because* he is joyful’. We say instead: ‘He is jumping for joy’; in other words, jumping, in that context, is part and parcel of the expression and meaning of joy; it is a constitutive component of that which defines a particular sequence of activities (and makes it publicly recognisable) as ‘joy’.

McKinlay and McVitty (2008) articulate the relationship between attitude and action in DSP as follows:

Discursive researchers, like their experimental counterparts, also have an interest in understanding the relationship between attitude and action. However, discursive research does not share the experimentalist's concerns with the structure and function of mental states. Instead, discursive researchers are interested in how attitudes come to be manifested through discourse. For some discursive researchers, this means understanding how attitudinal talk plays a role in wider ideological discourse. For others, it means analyzing the way people in talk-in-interaction display and orient towards their own and others' beliefs and in the evaluative practices which accompany the expression of those beliefs. (p. 113)

Just as significantly, DSP research also suggests that the attitude object (that which an evaluative judgment is directed at or is ostensibly *about*) does not simply exist as a discrete entity independent of (and unaffected by) the attitudinal discourse itself. Thus, unlike in experimental social psychology conceptualisations, the attitude object is not simply *referenced* by attitudinal discourse, but partially *constructed* by it. This means that the attitude object exists at least partly in relation to discourse, and that the way in which it is discursively invoked (or spoken about) thus partakes in its reality as an object. Exactly *how* attitude objects are discursively constructed, and what these constructions contribute to the ways in which participants position themselves in relation to others, make sense of the world, and defend/challenge the status quo, is an important (perhaps even defining) focus of discursively informed attitudinal research. In Durrheim and Dixon's (2005) research about informal strategies of racial segregation in post-apartheid South Africa, for example, attitudinal talk about the desegregation of spaces like beaches (and about the categories of people who negotiate the parameters of engagement and disengagement in these spaces), is revealed as discursively significant not only because it is used to explain and provide justification for racialised patterns of retreat and avoidance. It is also significant for revealing the variability of attitude objects according to the identity, ideological investment and rhetorical aims of the speaker. In other words, Durrheim and Dixon's white and black participants do not necessarily express different attitudes about a similar phenomenon; in fact, on closer inspection it becomes clear that the opposite is true: they construct 'desegregation' and outgroup categories in very different ways, and with very different rhetorical and ideological effects.

One of the most important DSP critiques of traditional attitude research is that researchers privilege their own, naïve realist delineations and constructions of attitude objects over how these objects emerge as discursively variable and ideologically meaningful in participant discourse. Thus, the experimental social psychologist ignores how the discursive construction of aspects of the social world – the construction of particular kinds of spaces, for example – function as constitutive components of social actions and identities. In Durrheim and Dixon's (2005) work, for example, it is clear that racialised patterns of contact and avoidance do not only occur within discursively neutral spaces; spaces are not just 'containers' of actions and therefore another 'variable' within a quantifiable calculus of attitudes and identities (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). On the contrary, discursive constructions of space powerfully mediate the kinds of actions that are deemed appropriate to these spaces, as well as the categories of people that can legitimately navigate them. In other words, understanding evaluative talk does not require the addition of more *variables* to the study of the determinants and behavioural effects of attitudes, but instead require that attention is paid to the *variability* of accounts of the social world that are generated in the context of performing and accomplishing social life.

The copious use of the concept of attitude in the social psychology of language (see Chapter 5) makes these reflections on attitudinal talk very pertinent to that field of inquiry as well. As I have mentioned earlier, DSP has not paid any sustained attention to the social psychology of language, and hence there has been no attempt to reformulate the study of language attitudes in discursive terms. There are, however, strands of research in the fields of language ideology studies, sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, which conceptualise language attitudes in ways that are fairly similar to the discursive approach I have outlined in this chapter (e.g., Attinasi, 1983; Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Woolard & Schieffelin, 2004). The following statement, by Woolard and Schieffelin (1994), serves as a good example:

Although the extensive body of research on linguistic prestige and language attitudes grew up in a social psychological framework, the intrapersonal attitude can be recast as a socially-derived intellectualized or behavioral ideology

(Bourdieu's *habitus*). Such meanings affect patterns of language, style-switching, shift, change, and policy. Moreover, symbolic revalorization often makes discrimination on linguistic grounds publicly acceptable, whereas the corresponding ethnic or racial discrimination is not. (p. 62)

This reveals a theoretical commitment to rethinking language attitudes in social rather than individualised psychological terms; that is, to conceptualise them as publicly shared rather than privately held meanings, and thus to link meaningful, evaluative accounts of different aspects of language to the politically informed readings of language in society engaged in by language ideological researchers (see Chapter 2). Blackledge and Pavlenka (2002), likewise, comment on the relationship between language ideologies and language attitudes: 'Language ideologies are about more than individual speakers' attitudes to their languages [...] Rather, they include the values, practices and beliefs associated with language use by speakers, and the discourse which constructs values and beliefs at state, institutional, national and global levels' (p. 123). It should be evident that DSP's focus on rhetoric and ideology (and the manner in which attitudes are reconceptualised as situated discursive practices which mediate between social meanings and individual actions) dovetails significantly and productively with the non-individualistic treatment of language attitudes in studies of language ideologies. In Part II, where the corpus of textual data will be analysed, I return to the discursive nature of language attitudes and their relevance to the study of language ideologies.

Categories and categorisation

Categorisation is central to social cognition approaches to social psychology (Augoustinos, 1995; Billig, 1985, 1987), but also to the alternative, theoretically linked intergroup theory traditions of social identity theory (SIT) and self-categorisation theory (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971; Turner, 1982, 1995; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). In all these experimentally oriented approaches (rooted in forms of social cognitive theory), categorisation is conceptualised as an intra-psychic process; a mechanism whereby the cognitive representation of different classes of stimuli is managed, and whereby the encoding, storage and retrieval of information is facilitated. Categorisation is considered to be a

mental and, thus, an ontologically *individualised* process: firstly, it cognitively represents classes of stimuli that exist independently in the world; and secondly, it becomes *social* only when the stimulus domain to be categorised consists of social objects – *other people* – rather than of inanimate objects (Billig, 1985).

Therefore, in cognitive social psychology (including SIT), categorisation is understood as a basic building block of all thinking – social thinking included. Tajfel, for example, states emphatically that ‘social categorization lies at the heart of commonsense, everyday knowledge and understanding [...] it is central in social life’ (as cited in Billig, 1985, p. 81). Categorisation, because it belongs to a cognitive apparatus with limited information processing capacity, also oversees the functional *simplification* of the stimulus field. This frequently generates perceptual biases, such as the over-accentuation of similarities within, and differences between, categories. In turn, when directed at the *social* world, categorisation is understood to generate (almost invariably) a certain level of distortion, which causes biased, stereotypical and even prejudiced perceptions of others. In SIT, as I have discussed briefly in Chapter 5, social categorisation has been elaborated into a fully-fledged theory of the psychological nature of groups and intergroup processes. The social world, according to SIT and self-categorisation theory, is made up of hierarchically ordered social categories. These categories become psychologically real as *groups* only when they are internalised by people as part of their social identities. The process of internalisation, in turn, is conceptualised as a process of *self-categorisation* (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner et al., 1987).

In contrast, Billig (1985) insists on approaching categorisation as discursive action which is responsive to the rhetorical and ideological demands of particular communicative or enunciative contexts. According to Billig (1995), the major theoretical problem limitation of social cognition approaches is their assumption that subjects engage the social world as isolated, perceptual agents. This not only compounds the individualism of experimental social psychology (fixing the discipline to a perpetual individual-social divide), it also denies the role of *language* and discursive processes in social thinking. In other words, what traditional social cognition approaches do not appreciate, is that subjects do not primarily make sense of the world in a solitary, largely cognitive-perceptual fashion, but

more frequently in the context of joint, discursive and conversational activities with others. In an interview with Haste (1994), Billig refers to ‘the thinker as arguer’ (p. 169). In this manner, he makes a theoretically vital distinction between perceptual categories, which have dominated social cognition work, and *linguistic categories*:

... [A]lthough perceptual schemes may simplify information, it is not clear that linguistic categories must do so. Thus language can be used to both simplify and to enrich; similarly, language can be used to categorize or ‘lump together’ particulars, but it can also be used to particularize and to argue for special cases. (Billig, 1985, p. 85)

In other words (and taking into account that it is in and through language that social thinking generally occurs), Billig (1985) proposes that *language itself* provides the better model for understanding that which is traditionally studied as ‘social categorisation’. Empirically speaking, this means that it is more productive (and meaningful) for social psychology to study the ‘actual categories of language, rather than the inferred categories of perception’ (Billig, 1987, p. 135). The ‘actual categories of language’, as Billig refers to them, have a historical rather than a perceptual genesis; exist socially rather than at the level of individual mental representations; are perpetually invoked, repeated and renegotiated by people for purposes of understanding (or impacting on) the world, and are enmeshed with ideological themes, especially constructions of selves and others, which reinforce the naturalisation of particular configurations of intergroup relations, status and power in a given society. Potter and Wetherell (1987) provide a good depiction of Billig’s (1985, 1987) contribution to the study of social categorisation:

Instead of seeing categorization as a natural phenomenon – something which just happens, automatically – it is regarded as a complex and subtle social accomplishment. [...] (T)his work emphasizes the action orientation of categorization in discourse. It asks how categories are flexibly articulated in the course of certain sorts of talk and writing to accomplish particular goods, such as blaming and justifications. (p. 116)

In summary, DSP insists that categorisation (as an aspect of social thinking and meaning-making) is addressed more accurately when its discursive, rather than information processing aspects, are accentuated. In other words, and not unlike its approach to the study of attitudes, DSP considers categorisation as something people *do* and *accomplish* with language in communicative, interpretative and expressive contexts. It is not something ‘the mind’ does to ‘information’ independently of how (and *why*) people formulate, construct and use such ‘information’. But if categorisation is approached in DSP as a discursive, action oriented process, which occurs within actual sequences of talk, how are *categories* to be conceptualised? In line with the discursive rethinking of the attitudinal object, ‘categories’ are not understood as cognitive representations of independently existing objects in the world. Instead, categories are seen as *products* (or outcomes) of discursive processes of description, demarcation, negotiation and contestation. Discursively speaking, categorisation refers to the process whereby the world is meaningfully and purposefully constructed *in categorical terms*. According to DSP, people do not act on the strength of pre-existing cognitive structures called ‘categories’; instead, they engage in social actions (racism, for example) which incorporate acts of categorisation (and the discursive construction and reformulation of categories) as constitutive features.

Identities and identification

This brings the discussion to the related notion of ‘identities’ and ‘identification’. The theorisation and study of social identities, as I have mentioned in Chapter 5, is one of the central innovations of European social psychology. In SIT, categories and identities are theoretically linked (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Simply stated, identification is a process of categorisation: it refers to categorisations that are directed at the self and others – in other words, patterns of distinction and recognition that are socially and psychologically meaningful and are expressed at the level of intergroup perception and behaviour. Identities, in turn, are category memberships that are cognitively represented as components or dimensions of the individual’s self-concept, and typify the individual as both a unique individual (different from others) and a member of social groups (similar to other ingroup members). The latter refers to the individual’s *social identities* (the theoretical construct SIT uses to explain how social categories become psychologically, as

opposed to sociologically, real at the level of individual perception and behaviour): in other words, how 'the individual becomes part of a social group and a social group becomes part of the individual's self-concept' (De la Rey, 1991, p. 44). Identification, like categorisation, is therefore a cognitive process; and identities, like categories, are conceptualised as cognitive structures that represent already existing groups.

According to SIT, social identities function as cognitive-perceptual hinges between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour. When social identities are made salient in the context of interaction (through processes of categorisation and self-categorisation), people literally proceed to engage with others on the basis of category memberships, *as representatives of social categories or groups*, rather than on the basis of their *individual* characteristics. An interpersonal encounter is thereby psychologically transformed into an *intergroup* encounter (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Of course, this simply adds fuel to stereotyping, prejudice and intergroup conflict. Thus, the concept of social identity (from a SIT perspective) attains a powerful explanatory function in the study of intergroup processes, and especially in the study of social conflict. Social identifications and identities (like social categorisation and categories) are functional and adaptive components of social cognition, and that frequently become implicated as psychological causes of phenomena like discrimination, racism and war, especially in culturally diverse and structurally unequal societies.

Billig (1995), amongst others (e.g., Michael, 1989; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), has critiqued SIT for 'flattening' social analysis and treating all forms of 'identity' as psychologically equivalent:

Social Identity Theory, especially in its 'self-categorization' variety, flattens out different ways of representing the world. The search for the psychological factors leads the analyst to the psyche of the categorizing individual: identity is understood as an inner response to a motivational need. In conceiving identity in these terms, social psychologists narrow their focus unnecessarily. (p. 68)

What Billig (1995) is concerned with, is how different articulations of identity, such as national identity, emerge from historically and ideologically *specific* processes (or ‘genres’) of identification, categorisation and othering. Rather than being used as a ready-made, one-size-fits-all explanatory construct, identity needs to be examined in terms of how it is discursively constructed; how it becomes invested with interactional and ideological meaning, and how it accomplishes the mobilisation of collectivities in the context of specific social and political objectives and outcomes (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). From the DSP perspective, identifications are historically and contextually shifting patterns of signification, whereby individuals and groups position themselves vis-à-vis other individuals and groups; identity, in turn, is an outcome of group processes rather than their psychological root cause. Identification is therefore not conceived of (in DSP) as a cognitive process rooted in categorisation; just as identity is not conceived as an individualised cognitive structure that is causally invoked in the explanation of intergroup processes. Instead, identification is approached as a discursive process that is *productive* of the very categories of difference and similarity it seemingly invokes as elements of social reality. Formulating ‘identities’ and making them relevant to a social context, is itself a powerful social action – one which needs to be understood as a social and above all discursive accomplishment; and one that cannot be reduced to putatively universal accounts of psychological functioning.

This reconceptualisation of the processes of categorisation and identity is highly pertinent to a discursively reformulated social psychology of language. As indicated in Chapter 5, the social psychology of language is firmly rooted in SIT. This tradition has attempted (and to a large extent has achieved) to move beyond descriptive research about the role of language in interpersonal perception and evaluation, to more socially responsive accounts of how language becomes tied up with politics of identity in contexts that are characterised by intergroup differences and inequality. The result: a far more comprehensively *social* account of ethnolinguistic subjectivity, but also a rather static view of the relationship between language and identity, and the nature of ‘language’ itself (Blackwell & Pavlenka, 2004; Williams, 1992). On the strength of its reconceptualisation of categorisation and identification, DSP enables (to a degree) an approach to linguistic subjectivity that does not assume linear links between language, categories and identities,

but instead explores how and why language is conceptualised *in terms of* categories and identities (and, in turn, categories and identities in terms of language) within discursive and ideological contexts. Of course, this implies that language is not just activated or made salient as an existing, clearly demarcated object in processes of self-categorisation. Language and identity are mutually and interdependently constructed and articulated in discourse. Rather than assuming language as a category of identification, then, a DSP approach to the social psychology of language allows the exploration of how language is invoked in constructions of categories and identities, and how such categories and identities are in turn corroborated, contested and renegotiated in relation to language.

Language and the production of space

After years of neglect, the study of space now commands significant attention in the social sciences. Sustained theoretical and empirical work in this expanding research area over the last two decades, has occasioned a ‘shift away from a conception of social space as an inert background to social life towards a conception of social space as a meaningful and dynamic production that constitutes our collective relations and identities’ (Dixon, 2001, p. 587; see also Groat, 1995; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1989; Urry, 1995). This shift implies that space is no longer regarded as a transparent backdrop to (or mere container of) human action and the articulation of identities. Instead, human actions and identities are considered to be, to a significant degree, spatially mediated and accomplished. Similarly, space becomes constituted as meaningful only *in* and *through* human action (which includes discursive action). Whether it occurs through everyday activity or through formal, ritualised occasions, the ‘production of space’ (Lefebvre, 1991) is now recognised as an integral component of social life. As an example of the importance of the discursive production of space to the ideological accomplishment of racism, consider the following observation by Goldberg (1993):

The category of space is discursively produced and ordered. Just as spatial distinctions like ‘West’ and ‘East’ are racialized in their conception and application, so racial categories have been variously spatialized more or less since their inception into continental divides, national localities, and geographic regions.

Racisms become institutionally normalized in and through spatial configuration, just as social space is made to seem natural, a given, by being conceived and defined in racial terms. Thus, at the limit, apartheid space – so ab-normal and seemingly unnatural – will be shown to be the logical implication of racialized space throughout the legacy, colonial and postcolonial, of the West's hidden hand (of Reason). (p. 185)

However, spatiality has not been similarly theorised in the experimental social psychology mainstream: the spatial mediation of social practices and identities and the social construction of space by and large remain unexplored. This is probably nowhere more evident than in DSP critiques of experimental social psychology research on interracial contact (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). What these critiques reveal is that patterns of contact and avoidance between different (often racialised) groups are powerfully mediated through the historically particular, situationally variable, and ideologically effective constructions of spaces of encounter. Similar to its critiques of mainstream theories of attitudes, categories and identities, DSP takes experimental social psychology to task for treating space as a stable and easily quantifiable variable that exists independently of social action. Instead, space should be considered as discursively constructed and ideologically activated in accounts of difference, belonging, and being out of place.

The issue of space seems particularly germane to social psychology in South Africa. Apartheid was a spatial and *spatialising* regime which elevated the logic of partitioning, segregation and patterns of avoidance to its overriding objective and technology of reproduction. It is therefore almost unthinkable that studies of race, identity, contact and (de)segregation could bypass analyses of how discourses of space (and specifically the ongoing racialisation of both private and public space) impact on patterns of engagement, identification and othering in post-apartheid South Africa. And indeed, in recent years DSP in South Africa has been at the forefront of addressing the spatiality of contemporary racism, as it is articulated in discourse and embodied in everyday spatial practices of engagement, avoidance and segregation (e.g., Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Hook & Vrdoljak, 2001, 2002).

This surge of interest in the discursive construction of space and its relevance (specifically) to the study of racism, has however, not carried over into the field of language and social psychology. Internationally, some relevant research has addressed so-called 'linguistic landscapes': the study of how the presence or absence of visual and material linguistic objects (including public signage and advertising) in public spaces reflect a sociolinguistic order and impact on social psychology (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Gorter, 2006). However, landscape (and thus social space), is still too frequently treated as a neutral container of social action in this research tradition. More problematically, space is approached as a merely independent variable, measured for its possible impact on phenomena like language vitality, language attitudes and linguistic identities (Daily, Giles & Jansma, 2005; Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Space is not considered to be dynamically implicated in the construction and reproduction of languages, language regimes and linguistic identities. In other words, what is *not* asked about the relationship between language and space is how languages, language regimes and linguistic identities exist in relation to particular kinds of spatial arrangements. Likewise, no question is asked about how particular spaces (including micro-spaces like schools and macro-spaces like nation-states) are constituted, inhabited and reproduced in relation to particular languages, language regimes, and linguistic identities.

The field of language ideological studies offers more productive reflections on the often constitutive relationships between language and space. According to Collins and Slembrouck (2005), 'there is a gap between commonly voiced representations of language, person, and place and actual practices of language use, identity assertion, and spatial occupation' (p. 189). In other words, the 'spatialisation' of relationships between language, people and places is not a given; instead, it needs to be made the object of empirical and theoretical inquiry. Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005, p. 197), in turn, ask: 'how does space organize regimes of language? Can space be seen as *constitutive* and *agentive* in organizing patterns of multilingualism?' Their answer is that

the particular environment *organizes* a particular regime which *incapacitates individuals*. A lack of competence to communicate adequately is here not seen as a

problem *of* the speaker, but *for* the speaker, lodged not in individual forms of deficit or inability but in the connection between individual communicative potential and requirements produced by the environment. (p. 197, emphasis in the original)

In other words, space is considered to be constitutive and even agentive in the organisation and materialisation of normative language orders. Consequently, the spatialisation of language may directly contribute to the organisation of ‘an everyday landscape of oppression’ (Jones & Merrimen, 2009, p. 164); to the often invisible boundaries that render people out of place and literally dispossessed of speech. In fact, given the historical and ontological rootedness of language in the territorial imperatives of nationalism historically (discussed in Chapter 4), it is clear that any social psychology of language has to orient itself to the complementary processes of the spatial accomplishment of language orders and the linguistic accomplishment of spatial dynamics of inclusion, exclusion, belonging, and being rendered out of place. In this regard, DSP approaches to constructions of space in ordinary accounts of social social life, offer a useful point of departure for exploring the spatial dimensions of language ideologies in the social psychology of language. It enables new questions regarding the relationship between language and space to be asked, and to explore these questions in the particular context of social psychology: How are constructions of language mobilised in order to secure spaces to particular ideologies of normative social order or particular identity projects? How are discursive constructions of space, in turn, mobilised to secure particular language orders, language regimes, language practices, or linguistic identities?

Language, race and racism

The study of race and racism within the context of social psychology is an important area in which DSP embodies a significant departure from experimental social psychology. Arguably, it is within this field that DSP has made some of its most lasting contributions to the social sciences (e.g., Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Its understanding of the variability and constructedness of phenomena like attitudes, categories and identities is one of the strong points that DSP brings to this domain of

study. Instead of approaching racism as located in individual attitudes and cognitions, and 'races' as readymade categories and identities, DSP insists on the discursive, and above all, ideological quality of processes of *racialisation*; that is, it attends to the way in which 'race' is constructed and articulated in the context of the justification, legitimisation and warranting of social inequality, marginalisation and oppression (Miles, 1989; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In this regard, DSP is attuned to the widely held social scientific insight that the idea of racial difference, and the subsequent naturalisation of human inequality, evolved as *a historically specific ideology* in European philology, ethnology and biology, and thus developed in the service of European political projects like nation-building (involving the racialisation of ethnic and class differences) and imperialism (involving the racialisation of the 'non-Western') (Harrison, 1995; Hesse, 2007; Malik, 1996; Poliakov, 1974). As Goldberg (1993) argues, 'race has been a constitutive feature of modernity, ordering conceptions of the self and other, of socio-political membership and exclusion' (p. 148).

In experimental social psychology, on the contrary, racism is generally approached as an instance of more general social psychological processes, such as intergroup conflict and prejudice. Racism is not theorised as an ideology that shapes and legitimises social inequality and exploitation in historically *specific* ways (as has been the case in the contemporary social sciences more broadly), but instead as a characteristic of individuals; as an epiphenomenon of perception and information processing; or as a consequence of group conflicts over scarce resources. Indeed, racism is typically explained in terms of personality dynamics, social cognition or intergroup relations (De la Rey, 1991; Foster, 1993; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). These reductionist approaches to racism in social psychology have elicited some fierce critiques (e.g., Foster, 1999; Henriques, 1984; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). When racism is reduced to characteristics of particular personality traits and dynamics (and is thus tied to an individualistic level of analysis) its enmeshment with the social structures that govern and legitimise inequality and exploitation (precisely by casting human differences in *racial* terms) is rendered all but imperceptible (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Foster, 1999). When racism, in turn, is reduced to the system-failures of social cognition (to the information processing errors that bedevil normally functional heuristic devices), racism is not only individualised, but also

normalised (Billig, 1985; Henriques, 1984). Intergroup theories have attempted to transcend the individualism of experimental social psychology accounts of prejudice, but tend to reduce the ideological and historical specificity of racism to generalising – and historically levelling – accounts of intergroup relations. When there is no theoretical distinction drawn between different *forms* of intergroup conflict and different articulations of identity, accounts of racism are de-historicised, whereby the capacity of social psychology to understand the pernicious nature of specifically *racialising* accounts of selves and others becomes blunted (Billig, 1996; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Furthermore, its rootedness in a cognitive-perceptual account of categorisation and identity (Billig, 1985; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), intergroup theory approaches to prejudice and discrimination, also tends (in the manner of social cognition accounts) to cognitively ‘normalise’ the psychological processes that lead to racism (Henriques, 1984; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

DSP has, however, contributed far more to the study of racism in social psychology than its sensitivity to the constructed nature of racial categories, and to the ideological nature of processes of racialisation. It has further oriented the study of contemporary racism firmly to *language* and *discourse*; to the way in which racism is articulated, expressed, accounted for and resisted in especially *ordinary* discourse and *everyday* encounters. This is why the DSP literature on racism is filled with references to ‘the language of racism’ (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), ‘white talk’ (Trainor, 2005), ‘talking white’ (Steyn & Foster, 2008) and ‘discourses of whiteness’ (Green & Sonn, 2005), to mention but a few scattered examples. This is also why DSP, like discourse analysis more generally (e.g., Van Dijk, 1993, 1999; Wodak & Reisigl, 1999), has focused on the commonsense, seemingly reasonable, and almost socially acceptable dimensions of racist talk, rather than limiting its focus to the study of extremist right-wing discourse (but see Billig, 2001; Orfali, 2006). Racism has its most pernicious effects exactly in its widespread, self-justifying and auto-disclaiming existence in everyday, seemingly reasonably and even-handed accounts of human differences. Subsequently, DSP has paid attention to the content and major ideological reference points of racist discourse (e.g., Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999; Augoustinos, Lecouteur & Soyland, 2002; Durrheim & Dixon, 2000, 2005; Gaudio & Bialstok, 2005; Mallinson & Brewster, 2005); to its articulation and reproduction in

various contexts ranging from informal conversations to the media (e.g., Durrheim, Quayle, Whitehead & Kriel, 2005; Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008; Teo, 2000; Verkuyten, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and especially to the rhetorical strategies whereby racism is justified, disclaimed, denied, and also resisted (e.g., Anderson, 2008; Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Fozdar, 2008; Liu & Mills, 2006).

In this regard, DSP research on racism has dovetailed neatly with an important conceptual shift in the contemporary study of racism in the social sciences. I am referring to the theoretical emergence of notions of so-called ‘new’ or ‘modern’ forms of racism (Holdaway & O’Neill, 2007; Leach, 2005; Pederson & Walker, 1997; Walker, 2004). What is at stake in these formulations are articulations of racism that are not steeped in explicitly theorised racial hierarchies or elaborations of racial difference, but are instead expressed in ‘symbolic’ (Sears, 1988), ‘subtle’ (Duckitt, 1992; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), ‘covert’ (Balibar, 1991b; Coates, 2008; Durrheim & Dixon, 2004), ‘sanitised’ (Reeves, 1983) or ‘color-blind’ (Bonilla-Silva, 2002) terms. In other words, *these forms of racism* are expressed in public discourse by other, seemingly non-racist, means; their functionality *as* racist discourses rely precisely on whether they can be inoculated from accusations of being racist. Visker (1999) provides a good description of this ‘new’ racism:

Racism is no longer what it used to be. Since it discovered that it could do without the notion of race, it has proved itself all too willing to grant its critics their point. Better still: it took over their values and utterly confused them by missing no occasion to stress the importance of difference. In this *heterophilic* form of today’s neoracism could easily profile itself as radically anti-discriminatory, and thus: anti-racist! (p. 328)

The fundamental assumption underlying theories of ‘new’ or ‘modern’ racism, is that the expression of racism is no longer socially acceptable; that it is in fact censured (at least in public discourse) in most liberal democratic societies – and that the expression of racist ideas, or the defence of racial privilege, therefore needs to seek new, publicly acceptable forms. According to Leach (2005), the assumption is that

there was a marked change in the formal expression of racism after the 1970s, when *de jure* equality was achieved in most societies. It is argued that the formal expression of racism had to change in order to jive with the new reality of *de jure* equality. (p. 434)

Some scholars, including Leach (2005), contest the novelty of this aspect of racism, namely its rearticulation in non-racial terms. According to Leach, racism has always sought non-racial forms of public expression, and thus has always partly lived a subterranean discursive existence. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that (especially in societies where racist talk is socially and even legally censured, but where racial privilege and racialised identities remain intact and are maintained precisely through discursive means) racist discourse is characterised by various self-reflexive rhetorical strategies that are oriented towards disclaiming and denying its racism (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). This, of course, has left social scientists with the ongoing empirical task of studying the shifting discourses used to bolster racist practices in different contexts. Social psychologists, in particular, have had to expand their understanding of the ‘codes and practices which sustain racism’ (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 1) beyond accounts of biological differences and explicitly invoked racial hierarchies. Racialised distinctions, divisions and privileges are perpetuated in legally ‘non-racial’ societies through accounts of differences based on seemingly acceptable characteristics such as culture, nationality, and tradition – to name but a few. Schmidt (2002) claims: ‘A *new racism* has developed in recent decades in which specific cultural forms have come to signify racialised identities’ (p. 154). Balibar (1991b) also points to the increasing importance of discourses of *cultural difference* in modern racism (see also Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a). He refers to this as ‘differential racism’:

It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions. (p. 21)

In order to ensure that race always remains ‘the last thing to be said’ (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 133) in racist discourse, ‘differential talk’ is frequently articulated in terms of seemingly liberal democratic values. A substantial body of research in DSP reveals the extent to which liberal notions, such as ‘equality’, ‘fairness’, ‘merit’, ‘human rights’, ‘democracy’, ‘individualism’ and ‘privacy’, permeate white talk, especially in the context of seemingly ‘principled’ (and therefore non-ideological) oppositions to policies of social transformation or redress (such as affirmative action or relaxing immigration laws). Liberal discourse is mobilised in defence of racialised a status quo by stressing the importance of the individual over the group, and by portraying public life as equally accessible to all, where social boundaries are more inclusive than they truly are (e.g., Augoustinos, Tuffin & Every, 2005; Berry & Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Durrheim & Dixon, 2001). In the words of Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every (2005), ‘Liberal principles such as individualism, merit, and treating everyone the same under one idealized system [are] drawn upon to justify and legitimate opposition [...] in ways that [present] the speaker as fair, principled and lacking in prejudice’ (p. 330).

Both differential racism (with its reliance on the contemporary political legitimacy of discourse of cultural differences) and the powerful ideological warrants provided by racist discourse (that claims to employ seemingly liberal democratic values) should be essential to the development of a DSP informed social psychology of language. Although DSP has not paid much attention to the ideological connections between language ideologies and contemporary racisms, they have received significant attention in the broader, multidisciplinary field of discourse analysis – including contributions from applied linguistics, education studies, linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. Research in these fields has focused, for example, on the role of language differences (different languages, different accents) in the racialisation of both ingroups (often in organically nationalist terms) and (especially ethnic minority) outgroups (e.g., Blommaert, Creve & Willaert, 2006; Karmani, 2006; Linke, 2004; Ronkin & Karn, 1999; Urciuoli, 1996). It has also focused on how linguistic characteristics and demands function as ideological proxies for race and racism in linguistically diverse societies (Hill, 1995; 2008; Leeman, 2004; Schmidt, 2000, 2002; Shuck, 2006). Blackledge (2003, 2006b),

for example, has studied the racialisation of cultural practices in terms of language differences as well as the broader racialisation of language in British political discourse. According to him, language functions as a form of symbolic racism, often articulated in liberal terms that accentuate values of equality and (national) inclusivity: ‘Racism is no longer acceptable, so linguistic discrimination takes its place, in a process of symbolic racism’ (Blackledge, 2006b, p. 68).

Thus, language is revealed for its capacity to mark social differences through the (mostly disavowed) racialisation of forms of speech (Blackledge, 2002a), particular categories of subjects (Karmani, 2006), and also of public spaces (Hill, 1995; 1998; 2008). Interestingly enough, very little research has been conducted about the relationship between language and the production and sustainment of ‘whiteness’. Whereas the study of ‘the racial project of whiteness’ (Trechter & Bucholtz, 2001, p. 4) has come to occupy a central position in the study of racism over the last couple of decades, the manner in which whiteness is articulated in relation to particular languages, accents and other speech practices, has received less attention:

Current anthropological examinations of race now acknowledge the centrality of whiteness as an ideological pivot, the usually unmarked term in a series of hierarchically arranged racialised binaries such as white/black, white/Indian, Anglo/Latino, and Westerner/indigenous. Far less recognized is the fact that such linguistic binaries as standard/nonstandard, English-speaking/non-English-speaking, monolingual/bilingual, even formal/colloquial, literate/illiterate, and written/spoken also partake of this ideology, though often covertly, and that it is largely through language itself that that such racialised binaries come to be produced and reproduced. (Trechter & Bucholtz, 2001, p. 4)

Whiteness not only renders itself invisible, but also *inaudible*. It is through their being positioned as ‘neutral’ forms (as unmarked codes) that certain languages, variants and accents bolster not only ideological constructions of whiteness, but come to function as material dimensions of patterns of white dominance in public space, education and everyday encounters. The relevance of the linguistic component of the production and

reproduction of whiteness to the study of race and racism in South Africa should be obvious. In my discussion of the corpus of textual data in Part II of this chapter, I will address the relevance that the linguistic component of the production and reproduction of whiteness (along with differential racism and liberal discourses) has on the linguistic imagining of post-apartheid language orders in South Africa.

Part II

Liberalism, nationalism, and racism in ordinary accounts of language

Part II of this chapter further explores the relevance of DSP to the development of a discursively oriented social psychology of language. This is pursued (against the background of the theoretical discussions in Part I) through an analysis of a small corpus of textual data. The analysis may be seen as a case study of how of language in a fairly run-of-the-mill setting (namely a public secondary school in South Africa) are discursively constructed and ideologically employed. In the context of discussing and debating the role and position of various languages in their school (and the country at large), the participants in this case study engage in discursively complex and dynamic acts of evaluation, categorisation and identification. Language emerges as a politically charged and ideologically capricious topic of conversation, irreducible to the static mainstream social psychology optic of ‘attitudes’, ‘vitality’ and ‘ethnolinguistic identity’.

In contrast, DSP makes it possible to engage with language ideologies *in action*; in other words, as they are articulated, contested and reproduced at the level of everyday sense-making, talk and interaction. In this regard, the language ideological articulation I wish to explore, is how these participants invoke particular ideas, values and arguments to account for, defend, and thereby reproduce, a sociolinguistic order (characterised by linguistic inequality, practices of silencing and marginalisation, as well as insidious forms of racialisation) – but in terms that make principled claims to fairness, inclusivity, and anti-racism.

As discussed in Chapter 2, studies of language ideologies frequently focus on *debates* about language (e.g., Blommaert, 1999). The reason is that language and linguistic phenomena are often *explicitly* problematised and contested in the context of debate, and that the ideological ‘charge’ of contrasting conceptions of language (and their associated sociolinguistic orders) is thereby revealed. In other words, ‘language ideological debates’ are discursive events in which contestation about language (and the normative sociolinguistic order) take on social and political significance beyond language pragmatics, and become sites where competing conceptions of social reality are articulated, reproduced and challenged. Therefore, the significance of language ideological debates do not reside in what they reveal about *language*, but in what they reveal about the social and political contradictions which characterise the context within which these debates are articulated and within which they are invested with ideological interests. This is especially the case in societies that are linguistically diverse, and where language has played (or plays) a constitutive role in the shaping of the social order, the articulation of subjectivities, and the arrangement and reproduction of social inequalities. South Africa is clearly such a country. Yet, language has been placed relatively low on the research agendas of the social sciences – and of social psychology in particular.

According to Bokhorst-Heng (2005), nation-building and the meaning of nationality remain central preoccupations in language ideological debates around the world: ‘language ideological debates involve different versions of what it means to be a citizen of a nation, and different visions of the ideal nation, all embedded in power relations’ (p, 187; see also Pujolar, 2007). Why the nation-state and nationality are still the dominant discursive frameworks within which (and in relation to which) language is ideologically actualised as either a source of ‘symbolic capital’ or an instrument of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1991), has been discussed in at length in the preceding chapters. The important point to reiterate here is this: not only linguistic justice and linguistic subjectivities, *but language itself*, remains by and large nationally mediated. Therefore, it hardly comes as a surprise that people almost invariably invoke discourses of nationality (and of the nature and limits of national identity) when envisioning, defending or contesting languages and normative sociolinguistic orders.

Similar discursive themes and strategies were apparent in the corpus of textual data analysed here. Normative constructions of nationality (more specifically, of an idealised, post-racist South African state and identity), were invoked by participants in order to achieve a number of contextually and ideologically significant discursive effects. One of these effects was the unremitting racialisation of languages other than English. Another was the construction of English as necessary for (and, in fact, *constitutive of*) a post-racist and trans-ethnic social order in South Africa. In short, participants attempted to discursively reproduce racial privileges, racialised language categories and identities, and what is essentially *white public space*, by deploying discourses of inclusive nationality, liberal democratic values (such as the right to choose), and the apparent rejection of ethnolinguistic segregation and racism.

By focusing on the relatively neglected topic of language, the analysis contributes to the growing literature on white (and especially ‘differential’, ‘symbolic’ or ‘cultural’) articulations of racist discourse in South African social psychology (e.g., Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Dixon, Reicher & Foster, 1997; Durrheim & Dixon, 2000, 2001; Macleod & Durrheim, 2002; Painter & Macleod, 2002). It further also makes a small contribution to the growing literature in DSP internationally on the ideological productivity of *liberal democratic* discourses and rhetoric in the context of the reproduction of contemporary forms of racism (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999; Berry & Bonilla-Silva, 2008), as well as to the equally burgeoning literature in language ideological studies on the superimpositions of language and racism – in particular, the racialisation of languages, speech varieties, speech communities and public space (large, abstract spaces like the nation-state or smaller, more concrete ones like schools) in relation to (and by means of) ideologies and regimes of language (e.g., Bailey, 2002; Blackledge, 2003, 2005, 2006b; Blommaert, Creve & Willaert, 2006; Hill, 2001; 2008; Karmani, 2006; Leeman, 2004; Linke, 2004; Ronkin & Karn, 1999; Shuck, 2006; Urciuoli, 1996).

Context, participants, procedure and analytic approach

The corpus of textual data analysed here is drawn from a larger study that has been published elsewhere (Painter, 2003, 2005, 2006b; Painter & Baldwin, 2004). The practical

considerations of research design and the pertinent issues of language in South African educational settings (which framed the study), were discussed in those publications. Because the data is revisited here for theoretical rather than comprehensive empirical purposes, I will only summarise the most relevant issues of context, procedure and methodology.⁸

The data was collected at a public secondary school in an urban area in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa in 2001. At that time the majority of learners were white and lived in the traditionally white, working class neighbourhood in which the school is located. These learners were mainly English and Afrikaans speaking, with the former in a slight majority. Both English and Afrikaans were used as languages of instruction in the school, which means the schools formally followed a dual medium policy. English, in part because the majority of educators were native speakers of this language, was slightly more prominently represented in the day-to-day operations of the school than Afrikaans.

Ever since the legal desegregation of South African public schools in the early 1990s, an increasing number of black and coloured learners also started attending the school. However, at the time of the study they were still in the minority – numerically speaking, but also with respects to the institutional culture of the school. The presence of a growing number of Xhosa speakers had had virtually no impact on the linguistic status quo of the school. Xhosa was offered as an additional language, but was not used as a language of instruction. It also played no role as an administrative language in the school, or as a language of broader communication. In fact, Xhosa speaking learners were actively dissuaded from speaking their language during the school day, both in the classrooms and during breaks. Although not a school policy (and definitely in contradiction of national education policies), some educators deemed this ‘Xhosa ban’ necessary for ‘maintaining discipline’ in the school: control requires that educators understand what learners are saying, which means that Xhosa speaking learners were required to speak English to one another. This was by no means an isolated case; in fact, it frequently occurs in formerly white public schools in South Africa (Singh, 2009). English and Afrikaans are seen to be part of the institutional cultures of these schools, and although black learners are welcome to join, they need to assimilate in appropriate

ways. This needs to be borne in mind when reading the analysis, because these language regimes and practices created an institutional space within which the strong normative requirements for non-racialism and racial integration did not translate into corresponding requirements for multilingualism and the valuing of indigenous languages. In fact, an assimilationist approach to creating a ‘non-racial’ school context in fact worked *against* the public status of a language like Xhosa.

The data consists of four small group discussions in which Grade 12 learners participated.⁹ The first, second and third groups consisted of English, Afrikaans and Xhosa first language speakers, respectively. The fourth group was mixed and consisted of first language speakers of English and Afrikaans. The reason for the mixed language group was to create conditions for contestation and debate. Unfortunately, a mixed language group including also Xhosa speaking learners proved practically unfeasible on the days of data collection.¹⁰ To keep the process manageable and to create as ‘informal’ an atmosphere as possible, groups were kept small, at four participants each. Participation was entirely voluntary, and there were no criteria imposed regarding the gender and race composition of the groups. Even so, the three ‘monolingual’ groups consisted of two male and two female participants each, whilst the mixed group included three males and one female. Not unexpectedly, the Xhosa speaking group was made up entirely of black participants. The English speaking group, in turn, consisted entirely of white participants; and the Afrikaans speaking group included one coloured female; and the mixed group two coloured, English speaking males.

To allow participants to speak in the language of their choice, and to feel free to steer the conversation in directions they deemed relevant, no interviewers were present during these discussions. Instead, each group was presented with a number of conversation topics, written on flashcards, and asked to discuss these as they saw fit.¹¹ The topics included the following: the advantages and disadvantages of having more than one language in the school; the role and status of their own and other languages in the school; the characteristics of the kinds of people who speak their own and other languages; their opinions about the different languages spoken in their school; and the future of language diversity in the school, South Africa, and the world more generally. There were no topics

included on the flashcards which explicitly mentioned issues of race and racism. The reason for this was that I was interested to see *whether*, in *which contexts*, and *with what effect*, issues of race and racism would emerge in a discussion about language diversity in a typical South African setting.¹²

Although no group leader was assigned, one person generally took the lead in reading out the question and topics in each group, sometimes paraphrasing and repeating them, and also in directing the group back to relevant topics when the discussion seemed to derail. The discussions lasted just over 30 minutes each and were, with the informed consent of the participants, tape-recorded and later transcribed (see Appendix A for transcription notation). To assure anonymity, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant.

Liberal voices, conservative echoes?

According to Wetherell and Potter (1992), to ‘define something as compulsory is, in terms of the liberal discourse of freedom and human rights, to define it negatively’ (p. 189). In other words, invoking seemingly liberal democratic values and principles is (ideologically speaking) an effective strategy for resisting social change and defending a status quo (see also Blackledge, 2001; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a). In the data analysed here, *compulsion*, *force*, and their ideological opposite, *choice*, likewise played a crucial role in arguments *against* changing (and *for* maintaining) a linguistic status quo in which English (and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans) increasingly assumed a hegemonic position – as a language of public interaction, national subjectification, and territorialisation. Stated differently, it added ideological force to the perpetuation of linguistically mediated forms of (especially white) privilege, in part because it defended *white* public space against the intrusions and contaminations of unwanted difference in liberal terms.

The use of liberal rhetoric introduces contradictory elements into accounts, sometimes referred to as ‘ideological dilemmas’ (Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988; Edley, 2001). For example, participants may employ liberal notions of equality, freedom and human rights, but nevertheless assume positions in arguments and accounts that quite obviously run counter to the equality, freedom and rights of others.

When such an ideological dilemma becomes apparent, it has to be managed rhetorically in ways that address issues of stake and accountability. In Wetherell and Potter's (1992) study, participants resolved this contradiction by raising various 'practical' concerns as qualifiers of a stated support for liberal political values and agendas. The participants in the study discussed here adopted a different approach. They proceeded to construct English in such a way that it assumed, seemingly naturally, the role of language of rational (and, as I shall discuss below, *national*) choice.

Extract 1 (an exchange between three white English speakers) provides a good illustration of how participants employed ostensibly liberal values to distance themselves rhetorically from racism (or, in this instance, from the history of apartheid), but to nevertheless reinforce their own socioeconomic interests and class positions by characterising attempts at social transformation (such as affirmative action) as a mere 'reversal' of racism and apartheid, and hence as illegitimate. It also illustrates just how easily (at least in South Africa) talk about language and talk about 'race' and racism overlap – in this regard, recall that race and racism were not mentioned explicitly in the topics they received to respond to.

Extract 1

- Nick: In the apartheid era they were all forced to learn Afrikaans, so, like, it was quite unfair.
- Tanya: Yes, well, it's unfair that they score all the jobs, and we have to suffer (.) in the future. You know that they ask for Xhosa speaking people, and some of the English people don't even know it, and we're losing out on the jobs.
- David: Most of the bosses are black now also.

The perceived injustice of a past linguistic and racial order (in which black people ('they') were *forced* to learn Afrikaans), is here directly linked to a present (and even envisioned future: 'in the future', according to Tanya) situation of reverse racial discrimination. Apartheid was an injustice because it violated the individual's right to choose – in this example by *forcing* people to learn and use a language – and this injustice is now simply

repeated in the preferential treatment of ‘Xhosa speaking people’ and black people in the workplace (‘the bosses are black now also’). On the surface there is nothing surprising about this brief sequence of white post-apartheid talk: the notion of ‘reverse racism’ is stock rhetoric in white objections to affirmative action and other attempts to structurally transform a historically racialised and radically unequal society (e.g., Böhmke & Neves, 2005; Franchi, 2003; Steyn & Foster, 2008). However, besides illustrating this ‘liberal’ strategy of opposing social change by equating it with apartheid (and thus to a form of reverse racial discrimination), the extract also illustrates the manner in which talk about language and talk about race overlap – how they, in fact, become exchangeable.

I will explore various discursive effects of this strategy of equating apartheid with current political measures of transformation throughout the remainder of this chapter. In this particular instance it accompanies (and supports) at least three different rhetorical moves. Firstly, the linguistic injustice of imposing Afrikaans is used as a metaphor for racial injustice in general. This means the participants can identify reverse discrimination *even in the absence* of the enforcement of Xhosa: it is enough to simply argue for a *general* advantaging of blacks. Secondly, it enables the very illuminating rhetorical shift from a seemingly neutral ‘they’, to the linguistic category ‘Xhosa speaking people’, and from there to the racial category ‘black’. Although the context of the discussion is about language, and apartheid is initially addressed in relation to particular *language* policies (‘they were all forced to learn Afrikaans’), the exchange here shifts almost seamlessly from language to race and racial discrimination against *whites*. Xhosa not only signifies blackness, it becomes interchangeable with it: ‘Xhosa’ *means* ‘black’. This (as I shall argue later on) has far-reaching ideological repercussions for how this language is constructed in relation to an inclusive, non-racial South African public realm, and in relation to national identity in particular. Thirdly, Afrikaans (and speakers of Afrikaans) is subtly – but almost irrevocably – linked to apartheid.

The latter point is significant enough to explore further, because the construction of Afrikaans as *language of apartheid* is a powerful rhetorical tool: not only to establish the merits of English (over Afrikaans) as a language of national and rational choice; but also to secure a space of liberal subjectivity which articulates itself as located *outside* the drama

of both apartheid and post-apartheid ‘reverse’ discrimination. Whilst the injustice of apartheid is thus (at least rhetorically) acknowledged in the above extract (and used to argue against current practices that taken as the mirror image of those earlier injustices), the participants rhetorically distance themselves from its legacy. It is not simply white people, but *English speaking people in particular*, who are singled out as current victims of reverse racism (‘the English people ... are losing out on the jobs’). However, historical culpability for apartheid is kept safely at a distance. This is achieved primarily (in this extract but also in other sections of the data) by exploiting the English-Afrikaans divide within the white South African population. In short, apartheid is mentioned only in relation to Afrikaans in this extract. The rhetorical effect of this (at the risk of overstating the significance of this brief interaction) is to imply that they (‘the English people’) are victims *now*, but that they were never perpetrators. They essentially find themselves stranded between historically mirroring forms of illiberal, anti-democratic politics.

This discourse (or interpretive repertoire) of *equivalence* between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa regarding perceived violations of individual rights is supported by two further rhetorical strategies in this extract, namely arguments based on *time* and *position/perspective*. The first refers to the temporal structure of the account: it is explicitly located ‘in the past’, ‘now’, as well as ‘in the future’.¹³ Besides suggesting a historical continuity with regards to unjust racial discrimination (to which they have been, are and will be outsiders), the projection of the account into the future arguably also reduces the vulnerability of the account to contestation based on current contrary evidence; in other words, it is more difficult to dismiss a speculative statement about the future than a factual statement about a present state of affairs. The second rhetorical strategy is the privileged perspective Tanya claims for herself: counterarguments are thereby implicitly positioned as a result of political naiveté (‘some of the English people *don’t even know it*’ – emphasis added). This claim of privileged perspective also inoculates Tanya from the potential counterargument that she is merely reproducing *stereotypical* racist views: because her insight is privileged, it is by definition not just a repetition of well-worn ideas. (Condor (2000) has observed a similar rhetorical strategy in everyday talk about national identity in England.)

Extract 2

- Tanya: What are the problems? Okay, for instance, okay black people, umm (.) they will find a problem because their life, their whole life, they've been learning how to speak Xhosa. They know how to speak English because it is generally all around us. Afrikaans, I mean, it's just, they've been forced to learn Afrikaans, whereas we (.) I think we're much luckier because we are not forced to take Xhosa. Did you know, I actually think they're gonna be making it compulsory in schools soon?
- David: Thank God we're going!
- Tanya: Ja, that they have to start learning Xhosa, because it is now a part of the national language, like, the language of the country.

Here (in Extract 2) Tanya is articulating (in response to one of our questions) the difficulties and challenges that are created by language diversity in their school. The liberal rhetoric of 'choice' once again features strongly in her argument. Although she starts out answering the question in relation to Xhosa speaking learners (in other words, Xhosa speakers are immediately invoked in relation to language *problems*; the significance of this will become clear shortly), by presenting them as linguistically disadvantaged, Tanya does not attribute this in any way to the predominance or hegemony of English in the school or the country. She neither explicitly refers to the marginalisation of Xhosa. In fact, the account is thoroughly depoliticised (this, in fact, characterised the data set as a whole). From the outset, English is not presented as part of 'the problem'; it exists, like liberal subjectivity itself, *outside* or *beyond* it. Xhosa speakers are represented as mostly able to speak English, because 'it is generally all around us'. In contrast, even their first language, Xhosa, is something they had to *actively learn*. One should perhaps not read too much into this distinction, but I believe it is fair to say that the 'linguistic disadvantage' Xhosa speakers suffer is hereby attributed to obstacles presented to them by languages *other* than English. These include their own language, which they have been learning 'their whole life'; and, of course, Afrikaans, which they have been *forced* to learn.

Therefore, the real 'problem' with language diversity (as Tanya presents it here), is not the politics of language inequality, but the threat that people might be forced to speak

languages other than their language of choice; in other words (and once again), the ‘problem’ is the violation of individual language rights. Here too Tanya links her resistance to compulsory language with another speculative threat, namely that English speakers might in turn be *forced to learn Xhosa*. This would mean that they are once again subjected to the mere reversal of an apartheid injustice – compulsory Afrikaans. In this manner, Tanya and her interlocutors manage to problematise, for black and white learners alike, the presence of Xhosa (and Afrikaans) in public domains. English itself is simply there: people were not forced to learn it; they did not even have to *learn* it, it came naturally. Furthermore, whereas the account starts with Xhosa speakers as victims of linguistic disadvantage, invoking the discourse of equivalence allows it to end with English speakers occupying the ‘victim’ position. Whereas Tanya thus initially presents language diversity as a problem for others (black people), it is eventually constructed as a problem for ‘us’.

But who is the ‘we’ invoked here? When Tanya states that English is ‘generally all around us’, the usage seems very inclusive. I would argue that this is indeed the case, and that this rhetoric of broad inclusion adds force to the resistance of the encroachment of Afrikaans and *especially* Xhosa in public domains. It also helps solve the ideological dilemma that is created by supporting individual language rights as an inviolable principle, but nevertheless expecting others to speak English. The logic of this ‘we’ works as follows. Rather than the categorical ‘us and them’ created and sustained by languages like Xhosa and (to a lesser extent) Afrikaans, English is associated with an ‘us’ that overrides intergroup differences. Just how ‘generally all around us’ English is, is revealed in the statement that Xhosa will be made compulsory – and that it will henceforth be the ‘national language’, or the ‘language of the country’. The ‘us’ associated with English is no less than a deictic reference to nationality (Billig, 1995); and it is nothing less than national unity, rather than the sectional interests of English speakers, that is threatened by languages that are illegitimately *enforced*. In other words, the inclusive, national ‘we’ is rhetorically opposed to uses of ‘we’ that are exclusionary and which threatens the integrity of national identity and harmony.

Stated differently, these English speaking, white South African rely on a particular, moderating construction of 'new' South African nationhood to single out their particular linguistic habitus (Bourdieu, 1991), rooted in English, as universal enough to support a trans-ethnic, post-racist national identity. In short, the normative language order should be organised according to the primacy of the 'I', and should reflect the abstract individual's right to choose whatever language he or she wishes to speak. The primacy of the 'I', furthermore, is immunised from charges of sectionalism (because the rhetoric of 'I', of course, can be construed as representing the interests of a *particular* 'we', and thus not be an abstract, individualised category at all) by invoking the over-riding order of both *rational* nationality and *national* rationality: the national 'we' demands *particular* rational language choices.¹⁴ I will return to this logic of inclusion and exclusion further down, but first it is necessary to explain that these liberal nationalist rhetorical effects are not peculiar to the conversational setting analysed here; in fact, it is endemic to liberal political philosophy as such.

It is not surprising that this insistence on individual freedoms and rights is linked to the value of a shared national identity, to an overriding 'us' or 'we'. Rather than an ideological contradiction, this is very much part and parcel of traditional liberal conceptions of citizenship (May, 2001; Stavropoulos, 2007; Williams, 1999). Liberalism holds that all citizens of a democratic state should be singled out for rights, privileges and obligations *as individuals only*. In an ideal liberal democracy, individual citizens are not favoured or discriminated against based on their belonging to any social category. This means that individual mobility should not be constrained or facilitated by, for example, gender, race, or age; the sanctification of individual rights and liberties allows only the mobility enabled by things like *individual merit*. Of course, this universal citizenship is generally only universal in relation to a particular nation-state; or, stated differently, it is particularised in relation to the nation-state, and in relation to an inclusive and above all functionally homogeneous nation. When liberalism therefore opposes the idea of *group-differentiated rights*, it is because it already favours a *particular* group: the transcendent national group itself. Whilst plurality within civil society is tolerated, and religious, cultural, ethnic or linguistic association defended as basic human rights, these are also usually relegated, as far as possible, to private spheres of existence. The public sphere is defined by an either

tacitly accepted or actively promoted national culture that is understood to transcend whatever other diversity it harbours. As May (2001) articulates it, liberalism

addresses the person *only* as a political being with rights and duties attached to their status as citizens. Such a position does not countenance private identity, including a person's communal membership, as something warranting similar recognition. The latter dimensions are excluded from the public realm because their inevitable diversity would lead to the complicated business of the state mediating between different conceptions of 'the good life'. (p. 103, emphasis added)

The idea that the public domain and national identity are neutral, however, and that liberalism and oppression are antithetical, has been thoroughly discredited in political theory (e.g., Ramsay, 1997; Stavropoulos, 2007). In the words of Young (1990), inequality and oppression, often directed at minoritised social categories within the state, are ever-present within 'the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society' (p. 41). National culture, in turn, usually reflects the historical hegemony and cultural, political and economic dominance of the more powerful group(s) within a country, rather than reflecting a real combination of the common features and values shared by the totality of civil society. The recent history of civil rights movements, identity politics, feminism and the power struggles of immigrants in established liberal democracies (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4) accentuate this point. Therefore, although it is clear that liberalism stands in principled opposition to a system where privilege is allocated or denied according to the racial characteristics of individuals, its individualism and the way in which it frequently assumes the neutrality of the national culture, is still faulted for glossing over structural inequalities (Ramsay, 1997). The liberal insistence on individual rights and on merit, specifically, is often at odds with attempts to rectify imbalances created by discriminatory systems – whether these are directed at immigrants, national minorities, women, or different racialised groups. Since any attempt to single out a group or a social category for special treatment, even for the purposes of affirmative action, is seen as violating individual rights, liberal ideology is vulnerable to the charge that it merely substantiates the status quo. In the words of Stavropoulos (2007), since its

inception in the eighteenth century liberalism offers ‘rights that were claimed to be universal, but were accessible only to the privileged few’ (p. 101).

What is rhetorically placed in the foreground and often successfully exploited in ordinary liberal talk is a series of ideological contradictions that are very much inherent to the logic of liberal conceptions of citizenship and difference within nation-states, and that trades on the political dominance of liberal subjectivity. The universalistic pretensions of liberal subjectivity merely cover up its status as a *particular* form of subjectivity: traditionally, this subjectivity has been male, white and middle-class. Likewise, in the extracts discussed thus far a white, middle-class, and then specifically also *English* habitus (Bourdieu, 1991), is elevated to the level of a seemingly inclusive, all-encompassing *national* subjectivity. In fact, liberal discourse is made successful because those who do not embody the particular habitus assumed and reproduced by it still frequently accept its ideological validity; or, at least, they invest their hopes in its ideological promise of equality and especially individual mobility. The rhetorical *generalisability* of particular liberal themes (and of the promise of an unmarked liberal subjectivity) in South Africa becomes quite clear when we move away from white, English speaking conceptions of language diversity, to (briefly) consider also the opinions of black, Xhosa speaking learners.

Extract 3

Gladwell: You know Xhosa, but you **must** speak other languages too.

Constance: Yes, but then, don’t you think it’s going to cause confusion because like having it (.) if perhaps one is black, okay, and speaks Xhosa at home, and now she must go to an English school and she must learn English.

Mawethu: And Afrikaans.

Gladwell: I’m not against English.

Constance: I’m not against English because English is an international language, so that means broadening yourself into a wider range if you speak English. But for the people (.) that’s why I’m saying they have a choice. They can have a choice. All I’m for is that black schools should have black teachers who teach blacks in their language, Xhosa and Xhosa textbooks.

Gladwell: No.

Constance: Don't say no, because everyone should have a choice.

Extract 4

Gladwell: But we shouldn't learn Afrikaans.

Constance: No, that's a choice you have. Like in [name of another school] you get to choose between Afrikaans and Xhosa.

Gladwell: That's better.

Constance: They should do the same thing here.

Gladwell: That's better because I don't see a reason why we should learn Afrikaans because we don't even **know** Afrikaans.

Mawethu: They must remove it. Afrikaans was enforced by the Boers of the old order, but they are no longer the ruling party.

Gladwell: They must take it out, change it.

In Extract 3, Gladwell emphasises that it is necessary to be able to speak more languages than simply Xhosa. It is clear throughout the extracts that the additional language should be English, and that the reason for this choice, primarily, is its international currency. (Another reason, of course, is the fact that it is *not* Afrikaans, a sentiment that makes sense against the background of the earlier discussion, in Chapter 3, of the respective roles of Afrikaans and English during the apartheid era.) There is some disagreement here, however, about *where*, respectively, English and Xhosa should legitimately be spoken. Constance draws two essentially *spatial* distinctions. The first is between the public space of the school and the private space of the home. The second is between international and national, or global and local, domains. In the first instance, English is endorsed as the language of the school, a *public* language. In opposition to this, Xhosa is a private language, which one speaks at home. While this is seen as beneficial for the internationalising opportunities it might bring, it is also portrayed as a possible source of tension or *confusion* for the Xhosa speaker.

The acknowledged *local* currency of Xhosa also allows Constance to challenge the private/public distinction: he demands that education in Xhosa should also be made available – based, again, *on the right to choose*. Here the rhetoric of choice, however, creates

an altogether different ideological dilemma. Because the hegemony of English itself is not questioned, and because Xhosa is implicitly constructed as an exclusively *black* language, the request for Xhosa as a language of education inevitably seems like an endorsement of racially segregated education ('black teachers who teach blacks'). Significantly, Gladwell resists the idea of segregated education, although the implied choice between racial division and language loss is not questioned: not in this extract, and nowhere else in the data. English is constructed as essentially non-negotiable. Hereby, it once again becomes clear how a general insistence on the liberal value of choice, coupled with a particular construction of English, obscures some of the linguistic effects of apartheid, as well as the reproduction of racialised public space.

Before considering the construction of English in more detail, a few remarks on the presentation of Afrikaans in these extracts are relevant. When Mawethu includes Afrikaans into the languages that 'must' be learnt at school, Gladwell and Constance both respond that they are 'not against English'. The implication of this is rather clear: they *are* opposed to Afrikaans. The reason is easy to discern. Afrikaans is associated with apartheid, and more importantly, it was compulsory, 'enforced'. Note that Constance, in Extract 4, describes the new linguistic order and the changed position of Afrikaans in the educational system by once again endorsing the value of choice; of not being forced or coerced to speak a language. Whether used by English or Xhosa speakers, the effect of the use of the liberal rhetoric of choice was primarily system-preserving: it left English in an almost unquestionably dominant position, not simply as a language, but as a dimension of public space and a liberal national subjectivity. Even when the right to choose was invoked in an argument for Xhosa-medium instruction, the effect was a rather uncritical reproduction of an either-or option: either racially divided education, or the exclusion of Xhosa. The right to choose, especially through the singling out of Afrikaans as example of an illegitimately enforced language, rendered English ideologically transparent; it became an unmarked code and social position.

Universalising English, racialising Xhosa

From the above it should be clear that English is generally absolved from the rhetoric of force and coercion that affect other South African languages; in short, it seemingly

effortlessly assumes the place of 'language of choice'. The important question to ask in this regard is how this construction of English is discursively achieved. According to Pennycook (1998):

It is common *in current liberal discourses* on the role of English in the world to pronounce that it is no longer tied to its insular origins, it is no longer the property of Britain, or America, or Canada, or Australia; it is now the property of the world, owned by whoever chooses to speak it, a language for all to use in global communication. But is it? (pp. 190-191, emphasis added)

In this subsection I explore how constructions of English as a universal language in the data certifies its status as the language of choice in public domains, relegates other languages to private domains, and in this way sustains especially the status of Xhosa as a fixed racial signifier. In other words, rather than presenting *all* languages as mutually exclusive markers of ethnic or political identity (and so justifying perhaps a form of ethno-linguistic segregation), English is instead constructed as the language of inclusion and mutual understanding. Resistance to other languages (and to multilingualism) is therefore rhetorically achieved by blaming *them* for violating a public space in which mutual understanding and non-racialism is valued and protected. This is a particularly powerful ideological effect, because it trades on the values of both liberal individualism and national unity; of both self-interest and community. In exploring these ideas, I follow the example of a number of critical scholars who have illustrated how the global expansion of English is routinely, and generally very successfully, described as politically neutral. As Pennycook (1994) observes, 'the view of the spread of English as natural, neutral and beneficial is central to the discourse of English as an international language' (p. 11). Similar images of English are to found throughout the data, and not only English speakers invoke and utilise them. Speakers of Afrikaans and Xhosa similarly accept, frequently without objection, the primacy of English, based on its status as an international language. In fact, rather than 'international', English is constructed more emphatically as 'universal'.

English is constructed as universal in at least two ways. Firstly, in the sense that it is international or global: English is found everywhere and thus not, like Afrikaans and Xhosa, confined to South Africa. The second construction of the universality of English was even more important. In this regard, it was constructed as universally *shared*: everyone can speak it, and it belongs to everyone. In the latter case the universality of English elevated it above other languages even in the *specific local context* of South Africa or a South African school: while trans-national enough not to feed into existing ethnic tensions, English is also, because it is universally shared, constructed as *more national*, in the sense of being more inclusive of different sub-national categories, than any of the ‘local’ languages. These constructions also resonate with the rhetoric of choice discussed in the previous section: a language that everyone wants, owns, and can speak, is not *forced* on anyone. English is presented as ‘generally all around us’; it is a language people ‘just pick up’. As an uncontaminated and non-constraining medium, English is also not seen as unfairly advantaging particular groups of people.

Extract 5

Tanya: Okay obviously we need to learn to speak Xhosa, English and Afrikaans. Not in this **world**, just in this country. To live in South Africa you have to know how to speak English.

Extract 6

Tanya: Our language is a universal language, and I mean, most or many people around the world speak English. Black people, I mean in South Africa for example, you won’t find many people who can’t speak English. And it’s like very seldom that you actually, like very seldom, come across a black that can’t speak English.

English is presented (in both these extracts) as *simultaneously* globally and nationally shared. Therefore, in Extract 5, the need to speak more languages than English in South Africa is qualified as a *local*, not a global requirement. However, even *here* (in South Africa, in the Eastern Cape, in the school) it is not possible to get by without knowing English. Of course, this does not mean English is *forced* on anyone. As Tanya states in Extract 6,

South Africans resemble other people around the world at least in this: *most of them can speak English*. Despite qualifying her initial universal claim for English with the qualified ‘or many’, the overall gist of the account is that, at least from her experience or perspective (‘very seldom, come across’), most South Africans can speak English. Significantly, she specifies the majority of *black* people speak English. This resonates once again with the inclusive use of *English as a national language* mentioned in the previous section, and rhetorically positions English beyond racial politics and divisions.

Extract 7

Susan: Oh well, they are more than us so obviously the, the main language in the class is English, so having lots of different languages is (.) it’s basically just out on the playground where we have different languages.

Extract 8

Marc: Okay, you can’t expect everyone to speak one language.

Andrew: We don’t actually speak many languages at school. I mean, the black people (.) the black people will speak to each other in Xhosa and they’ll basically know how to speak one other language, let’s say English and they’ll speak to everyone else in English.

Charmaine: What about the Afrikaans kids?

Andrew: The Afrikaans kids only really speak to their family in Afrikaans basically and to everyone else =

Charmaine: = ja I know but =

Andrew: = but that’s only here though.

Wayne: Ja, but there are schools where the Xhosas just stick to themselves and talk Xhosa and the whites and everyone else stick to themselves and talk English and Afrikaans.

Despite the liberal notion expressed by Susan (a white Afrikaans speaker) in Extract 7 (namely that everyone cannot be expected to speak the same language), English is presented in both Extracts 7 and 8 as (obviously?) dominant in the school. This dominance relies on an implicit distinction that is drawn between public and private

linguistic functions and spaces. In public functions (in class and also in intergroup communication), English asserts itself as the natural medium; the reason for this, implicitly as well as explicitly, is once more its universal status. Xhosa and Afrikaans, in contrast, are relegated to private functions (social communication on the playground and at home). The responses given by Andrew and Wayne (both English speakers) to Charmaine's hesitant resistance ('ja I know but') to this allotment of linguistic roles and places is worthwhile looking at more closely. Andrew seems to sense her resistance, and then qualifies the statement about Afrikaans as true 'only here'. This strategy of arguing for the dominance of Afrikaans *elsewhere* in South Africa was used more than once in the data. These *elsewheres* were usually fairly arbitrary: other schools or other towns. By identifying a local exception to the universal linguistic norm, however, English speakers managed to achieve at least three rhetorical outcomes: (i) they countered possible charges of pushing the universal claims made for English too far; (ii) they defused Afrikaans claims for increased linguistic recognition by directing them elsewhere; (iii) they placed Afrikaans generally somewhat above Xhosa on a language hierarchy, the latter which was never afforded any similar exceptions to the rule of universal public English.

Wayne's (a white English speaker) response to Charmaine's muted criticism is equally revealing. He contrasts the image they have carefully created (in other parts of the data) of their own school as harmonious and racially inclusive to other schools where this is not the case. More importantly, he links language to the relative level of racial harmony in a school: simply put, language diversity creates *racial divisions*. In other words, if English is not affirmed as the language used for intergroup communication, black and white learners will just 'stick to themselves'; communication between the groups will break down. Hereby the marginalisation of languages other than English in public domains is made to look legitimate, on the grounds of the quintessential post-apartheid South African values: desegregation, reconciliation, racial harmony – values that foster the elusive ideal of an integrated South African political community. Furthermore, choice arguably attains a different ideological loading: choosing to speak Xhosa in a public domain not only gives rise to disharmony, mutual misunderstanding, and suspicion; it also leads to *self-exclusion* from the inclusively imagined 'liberal nationalist' community. As

I shall demonstrate shortly, marginalisation and even racism is hereby effectively blamed on those who suffer their effects.

As was mentioned before, Xhosa was throughout the data explicitly constructed as a *black* language. Furthermore (and unsurprisingly), this racialisation was *negatively* attributed to the language.

Extract 9

Michelle: We are an English school.

Tanya: Ja, this is mainly an English and Afrikaans school. Xhosa is just like a bonus subject that, I mean, **black** people take.

Extract 10

Tanya: Okay, Afrikaans comes either first or second, because it's an English and Afrikaans speaking school. Xhosa is obviously a third language...

Extract 11

Susan: It doesn't, it doesn't work effectively because if for instance in class we have two different [languages

Johan: [three =

Susan: = three different languages.

Extract 12

Nick: If you know Xhosa, it's just a bonus because =

David: = all the black people, most of them, can speak English and Afrikaans, so it doesn't matter.

In Extracts 9 to 12, Xhosa is very explicitly marginalised and even devalued, by white Afrikaans and English speakers alike. Rather than being seen as essential (or even just important), Xhosa is constructed as a *bonus* subject or language (Extracts 9 and 12). Rather than a first language (even for *Xhosa* speakers) it is constructed as a second or

even *third* language (Extract 10). In Extract 11 the language is even momentarily omitted or forgotten as one of the languages represented in the school. This devaluation and marginalisation of Xhosa is clearly linked to its racial status: Xhosa is a language *black people* speak and learn. Furthermore, since black people are presented as capable of speaking other languages, it is also *unnecessary* for white people to speak Xhosa. As David says in Extract 12, ‘all the black people, most of them, can speak English and Afrikaans, so it doesn’t matter’. But maintaining Xhosa as a devaluing signifier of ‘blackness’ is not the only racial effect of the liberal talk about language we have been discussing here. We have already mentioned that English was presented as inclusive and, in the context of the school, a contributing factor to racial harmony. For this reason (and resonating with some of the comments made above), *speaking Xhosa* can be constructed as negatively politicising the school.

Extract 13

Susan: Ja, it’s not that we are racist. It’s just, you know, that black people and the white people don’t understand one another. You have one out of how many white people who can understand a black person.

Extract 14

Johan: Okay well, there are not many people that speak different languages to me. They speak English or Afrikaans, obviously. Those that don’t speak English or Afrikaans, not being racist, they don’t (.) the way they look at you when they talk. You can see they’re talking about you.

Extract 15

Johan: When you get out on the playground you have (.) it causes friction, that’s why it’s not effective, that’s all. Because you get people speaking Xhosa, you don’t understand what they are saying, you think they [are

Susan: [swearing
at you, and you want to beat them up.

Johan: Ja, but the way they look at (.) they’re looking at you and they’re talking about you.

- Megan: Ja, okay.
- Susan: I was in that situation yesterday and I almost hit them [laughter]. Okay, what problems can it cause? Just as we said.
- Johan: Friction.
- Megan: Violence.
- Johan: Lots of **violence**.
- Susan: And then it becomes [umm
- Johan: [social problems.
- Susan: Umm, no (.) racism.

Numerous researchers have noted the rhetorical use of disclaimers (as found explicitly in Extracts 13 and 14) in the accomplishment of racist talk (e.g., Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Van Dijk, 1993). Such disclaimers are employed to indicate that, according to the speaker, claims made about others are not prejudiced (or based on racist ideation) but justified, reasonable and realistic. In these extracts (from the Afrikaans speaking group), black people are seemingly accused of violating the rules of acceptable *public* behaviour: they don't hide the fact that they talk about you; they look at you inappropriately. This is linked to their linguistic behaviour. It is when they *speak Xhosa* that misunderstanding, suspicion and anger are evoked. In other words, once again a particular construction of public space, along with an almost *moral* imperative for mutual respect, understanding, and harmony (which throughout the data, as I mentioned before, was linked to a certain inclusive 'South Africanism'), is invoked to problematise Xhosa and to rationalise certain actions towards its speakers. Against the careful construction of English as neutral, universally shared, and inclusive of a national 'us', Xhosa is forcefully rendered out of place: it is ideologically and politically loaded, regionally and ethnically restricted, and above all, divisive. Just as Afrikaans is deemed historically illiberal for being forced upon people, Xhosa is now constructed as inherently illiberal for forcing itself – not upon people, but *into public space*.

The consequence of this (of coming between people and of creating misunderstanding) is nothing less than racism and racial violence (Extract 15). This is essentially a 'lay theory' of *interracial contact*. According to the 'contact hypothesis', optimal contact conditions

between antagonistic social groups will lead to the reduction of intergroup prejudice (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005). DSP researchers have shown that the contact hypothesis needs to take participant accounts of contact situations seriously, since discursive constructions of categories and identities, of place and space, and of the nature and expected outcomes of contact scenarios have powerful mediatory effects on how and whether racialised patterns of interaction will be reproduced or changed (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Durrheim & Dixon, 2004). In Extracts 14 and 15 (and elsewhere in the data), participants employ 'lay theories' of contact and optimal contact conditions to explain prejudice and racism. The optimal contact condition is one in which white and black people will understand one another; where black people will abide by what is commonly held appropriate behaviour in public spaces; and where everyone will essentially speak the same language. Like the mainstream 'contact hypothesis' researcher in social psychology, then, participants in this study express a desire for less prejudice and better intergroup relations. However, through their particular constructions of language and normative public space, black people can be blamed of violating the optimal contact conditions, and thus of fuelling white prejudice. Linguistic and racial marginalisation is, ironically, rhetorically justified through the discursive deployment of the very liberal vocabulary that characterises one of the most influential prejudice reduction approaches in social psychology.

Conclusion

This chapter has pursued two principle objectives. The first was to respond to the misrepresentation (as I have discussed it in the preceding chapter) of language in mainstream social psychology. In this regard, I have introduced and discussed an approach to the discipline (DSP) which radically departs from the cognitivism and mentalism of mainstream experimental social psychology. DSP considers *language* to be central to its conceptualisation of social life and psychological categories and processes. In others words, DSP represents a profound rethinking of both the discipline *and* subjectivity *in terms of* language: social life, psychological processes, and subjectivity, are linguistically mediated. Social actors narrate, debate, reason and lie; and they rely on (and are positioned within) socially shared, historically evolving and often ideologically

invested linguistic repertoires (or discourses) for meaningful engagement with the world and others.

Although DSP has traditionally not paid much explicit empirical attention to language politics and language ideological debates as research topics, it nevertheless offers (especially on the strength of its dynamic, action oriented reconceptualisation of key social psychology phenomena and processes such as attitudes, categorisation and identification, and through its discursive informed theorisation of spatiality and racialisation) a productive approach to these important political topics. To be sure, a large quantity of research in the area of language ideological studies proceeds at a sociological or political economic level, rather than at the level of social psychology. This research tradition frequently privileges official documents (such as policies), powerful discourses and discourse producers (such as parliamentary speeches by politicians), and public debate (such as represented in newspapers) over the routine, seemingly mundane conversational activities of ordinary social agents. It has also not paid much attention to the articulation of language categories, identities and attitudes at the level of everyday interaction and encounter, which is precisely the focus of DSP.

In other words, what DSP potentially contributes to the study of language ideologies, is an optic, a vocabulary and a series of reading strategies, which foreground the reproduction and contestation of normative sociolinguistic spaces, identities and practices at the level of lived reality; in other words, at the level of individuals engaging in meaningful interaction, navigating social space, and enacting, relaying, and sometimes impacting on, more formally articulated language ideologies. The case study presented in Part II of the chapter made this clear. Categorisations and identifications (the ‘English speakers’; the national ‘us’; the racialised ‘they’), for example, were revealed to be discursive strategies aimed at accomplishing conversational and ideological outcomes, not underlying ‘psychological’ mechanisms and cognitive states which cause particular behaviours. Furthermore, languages were not approached as stable entities to which positive and negative evaluations were merely tagged as individually held attitudes. Evaluative talk (‘attitudes’) about languages and their speakers were invoked and developed conversationally, drew on socially mediated discourses (e.g., ‘English as

universal'; 'Xhosa as black'), and were also employed in pursuit of conversational and ideological outcomes. What is politically revealing about such talk, is not whether participants are positive or negative about a language or a linguistically defined group, but how particular evaluative constructions (which include reflections on the *spaces* and *functions* different languages are appropriate for) support or undermine the reproduction of normative spaces in which languages are assigned naturalised positions on a hierarchy of locations, functions, and identities. Furthermore, the case study made it clear that talk about language could not be separated from talk about race (at least not in contemporary South Africa). Constructions of language and race are not only interlinked at the more abstract historical and biopolitical levels discussed in Chapter 3, but in fact interweaved into the very textures of ordinary South African life. In the example presented here, construction of languages, linguistically defined identities, and language practices played a crucial role in the reproduction of particularly *white* privileges and forms of spatial dominance, throughout in seemingly nonracist and non-divisive terms.

This brings me to the second objective of the chapter. Besides introducing and demonstrating DSP as a form of social psychology that has reconceptualised its academic identity and approach in linguistic terms, the case study also allowed me to engage once more with some of the central themes that reverberate through each of the chapters of this thesis, albeit here at a different level of articulation: *ordinary conversations* as opposed to history (Chapter 3), political philosophy (Chapter 4), and meta-theoretical assumptions in mainstream social psychology (Chapter 5). In this regard, I am specifically referring to nationalism, practices of racialisation, and the reproduction of inequality and marginalisation in terms of ideologies and regimes of language. These recurring themes are hereby illuminated from yet another angle that is relevant to the development of a critical social psychology of language.

In conclusion, the tentative analysis of textual material presented here alerts one to the importance of studying the use of liberal and otherwise seemingly 'tolerant' and 'inclusive' discourses in South Africa for their potentially paradoxically conservative and system-preserving ideological effects. In this particular case study, a discourse of inclusivity is effectively employed to manufacture and rationalise 'linguistic' exclusions.

Interestingly enough, the racialising effects of talk about language was not restricted to a conservative notion of immutable cultural and ethno-linguistic boundaries used to legitimate racial segregation (Balibar, 1991b). Rather, a liberal conception of individual rights and a public order, characterised by a universal citizenship, was endorsed and made dependent on a particular language – English: because it is universal and accessible. This construction of the politics of language in South Africa might seem the antithesis of a racist linguistic order, but it hides its racist effects *precisely* in these liberal terms.

As I have mentioned before, rather than an anomaly introduced by our respondents, this reveals a fault line running through liberal political philosophy itself. By adopting a stance that celebrates individualism, rationalism and moral neutrality, political liberalism too readily offers us ‘a picture of the well-ordered society as one from which antagonism, violence, power and repression have disappeared’ (Mouffe, 1993, p. 141); however, this is only because these aspects ‘*have been made invisible*’ (p. 141, emphasis added). Whilst I have explored some of these strategies of exclusion in a very limited context in this case study, further studies of racism, whiteness and South African national identity, especially in relation to constructions of language, would do well to explore the linguistic repertoires of ordinary liberals in much more detail.

NOTES

¹It was belated in the sense that the linguistic turn had already impacted on social sciences like anthropology in the 1960s, whereas social psychology only started grappling (and then only in its margins) with the implications of non-referential accounts of language for the discipline from the late 1980s onwards.

²For a discussion of the ‘variabilisation’ of social life in positivistic psychology, see Tolman (1994).

³This data has been used previously in the following publications: Painter (2002); Painter and Baldwin (2004); Painter (2005), and Painter (2006b).

⁴On the need for ‘modesty’ in issues of epistemology, see Cilliers (2006).

⁵I refer use ‘experimental’ here in a fairly broad sense, meaning all forms of quantitative social psychology, for which the experimental method serves as the scientific gold standard.

⁶According to Parker (1994a), discourse analysis ‘addresses the ways in which language is so structured as to produce sets of meanings, discourses, that operate independently of the intentions of speakers, or writers. Discourse analysis treats the social world as a text, or rather as

a system of texts which can be systematically “read” by a researcher to lay open the psychological processes that lie within them, processes that the discipline of psychology usually attributes to machinery inside the individual’s head’ (p. 92).

⁷Billig (1982, 1996) has produced some of the best discussions of theories of ideology in social psychology, but see also: Augoustinos (1999), Durrheim (1997b), and Hayes (1989).

⁸Elements of the analysis have occasionally been amended here, but then to better illustrate the relevant theoretical themes, not to substantially alter or deepen the analysis that has already been published elsewhere. The reason I mention this, is because in the case of a thorough re-analysis of data the study is reconstituted (to a larger extent than is the case here) as an empirical inquiry, which possibly demands a more expansive revisiting of issues of research design, methodology and procedure.

⁹The data was collected by a research associate, Robyn Baldwin. She was a temporary teacher at the school in question at the time of study, as well as enrolled for an honours degree in Psychology at Rhodes University in East London. She got permission to collect the data, and also used some of it for her honours research project in Psychology.

¹⁰This was not unrelated to the sense of marginalisation and isolation Xhosa speakers experienced in the school, and their desire to ‘lay low’ and not attract too much attention as a minority.

¹¹This is a marked departure from the practices of ‘focus group’ research, but the idea was to create an informal set of discussions that could occur as spontaneously as possible, and that would not be constrained by the linguistic abilities, identities and even conversational agendas of the researchers. It was a slight gamble, but paid off: the data generated proved spontaneous, rich and interesting.

¹²Of course, I was quite certain that the discussion about language *would* lead to race talk, and hence did not feel it was necessary to introduce more artificiality into the situation by explicitly asking them to talk *about* race. It was much more interesting to see how they spontaneously spoke *in terms of* racial categories.

¹³For a study on time and temporality in relation to narratives of national belonging, see Taylor & Wetherell (1999).

¹⁴For a treatment of ‘we’ as a category in political discourse, see Íñigo-Mora, I. (2004) and Levitas (1995).

PART IV

BEYOND DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

7

Conclusion: Towards a Psycholinguistics of the Postcolonial

I felt trapped. Besieged by language. Language struck me at that moment as something material, something with a physical dimension, a wall rising up in the middle of the road and preventing my going further, closing off the world, making it unattainable. It was an unpleasant and humiliating sensation.

(Ryszard Kapuściński, 2008, p. 20)

I cannot analyse this politics of language head-on, and I would not like to make too easy use of the word 'colonialism'. All culture is originarily colonial. In order to recall that, let us not simply rely on etymology. Every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some 'politics' of language.

(Jacques Derrida, 1998, p. 39)

The various interventions around the theme of language, politics and subjectivity reported in this thesis have all (whether in the context of history, philosophy, social science metatheory, or everyday conversational practice) been pursued resolutely at the level of discourse and ideology. I have foregrounded and explored discourses and ideologies of language in relation to their contribution to, inter alia, the production of normative sociolinguistic orders; political subjectivities mediated at the

level of both the nation-state and globalisation; patterns of ethnicisation and racialisation within (post)colonial, national and transnational settings; practices of marginalisation and exclusion across an array of both macro- and micro-social spaces, and forms of social scientific commonplace (in which the commonplace is generally speaking the nation) which too often render many of the aforementioned language ideological effects analytically all but invisible. These interventions and analyses, I would argue, bring one significantly closer to an articulation of *a critical social psychology of language*. Stated differently, the variations on the theme of language, politics and subjectivity pursued in this thesis have opened up a number of conceptual, theoretical and methodological spaces – spaces, that is, within which social psychology can be rearticulated in relation to language; and language, in turn, be rearticulated as an object of social science inquiry in relation to its irreducibly (but historically and contextually specific) political nature.

In the light of the above, the thesis has arguably achieved its major objectives. What is more, it has summarised (and to a large extent consolidated), the research about and reflections on the theme of language, the political and subjectivity I have been pursuing over the last number of years. It is always difficult to determine whether one has *done enough*. On one level, one inevitably hasn't: so much remains to be said; so much could have been said more effectively, or even just differently. On another level, a thesis is not just an abstract contribution to knowledge, but a situated reflection, a *report* on the particular (sometimes meandering) paths one has had to navigate through an often complex conceptual, theoretical or empirical domain – not only to produce 'knowledge' about a topic, but to come to terms with the particular ontological, epistemological and methodological demands posed by the topic. In this sense of the thesis as a timely report – or perhaps a punctuation mark within an ongoing dialogue – one may well have done enough; and perhaps even more than just enough.

Therefore, even if it did not always take on the form of a centripetal or even methodologically coherent 'project', the interventions reported here (and brought into deliberate dialogue with one another and with a set of overarching objectives) have allowed me to come to terms (conceptually and theoretically) with how one would *begin* to study language in social psychology – and they have allowed this *precisely* on the

grounds of their multidimensional and multi-sited quality. I have wanted this thesis to pose questions rather than provide answers; to be suggestive rather than conclusive; and to produce connections (*between* language and other social phenomena) rather than results (*about* language). Of course, these rhetorical registers could have been more creatively and emphatically employed. The voice one hears when reading this thesis (the academic *accent*), is still too frequently authoritative, declarative and interpretive, rather than unpredictable, questioning and problematising. It is certainly too frequently temperately even-handed rather than passionately biased. Perhaps the ideologies and regimes of language in that characterise the academy have gotten the better of me: a ritual like this also has a ‘biopolitical’ component, producing a population of academics who perceive and speak about the world in particular ways. In fact, in some ways the thesis attempts to present as a coherent account something which could also be seen as a number of false starts; a number of hesitations; a number of dead-ends and new beginnings. In acknowledgement of (and in keeping with) this, these concluding remarks do not seek to neatly draw the thesis to a close, but instead attempt *to suggest other ways ahead*.

Subjectivity beyond discourse and ideology

Language, or more accurately, *discourse*, certainly does not exhaust all there is to be said about the social world, politics and subjectivity. Neither does it exhaust all there is to be said about the various ideological overlays and transfers that exist between language, the political and subjectivity – some of which were discussed in this thesis. If it is true that critical social psychology has been heading into seemingly ‘post-discursive’ waters in recent years (Brown & Locke, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2008), it has done so on the strength of several strands of critique. These include critiques of the alleged *linguistic reductionism* of certain forms of discourse analysis and social constructionism more generally (Bayer & Shotter, 1998; Burkitt, 1999; Frosh, 2001; Hook, 2001, 2002, 2006; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999); of the ‘thin’ and at times *derivative accounts of subjectivity* in post-structuralism and critical theory (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos & Walkerdine, 2008; Henriques et al., 1984); and of the pervasive *neglect of the materiality and corporeality of the social and the psychological* in positivist and social constructionist psychology’s alike (Burkitt, 1999; Cromby, 2005; Csordas, 2008; Voestermans, 1995;

Stam, 1998). In turn, these critiques have added impetus to various alternative trajectories and modes of theoretical articulation in the discipline, such as renewed engagements with psychoanalytic theory (Frosh, 2001; Parker, 2005a; Parker & Hook, 2008) and scholarship about embodiment, affect and experience (Blackman, 2001; Cromby, 2005, 2007; Clough & Halley, 2007; Middleton & Brown, 2005; Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006).

On the basis of these and related developments, one could claim that critical social psychology has attempted (in various ways and over the last decade especially), to *flesh out* its accounts of subjectivity; and, perhaps even more significantly, to bring such accounts of embodied, affective and experiencing subjectivity to bear on social and political analyses. Informing the majority of these developments is indeed an explicit and increasingly programmatic ‘re-prioritization of subjectivity as a *primary category* of social, cultural, psychological, historical and political analysis’ (Blackman et al., 2008, p. 1, emphasis added). Although no single approach to subjectivity could claim theoretical primacy in what is currently a diverse, contradictory and at times bewildering theoretical terrain, it would not be inaccurate to suggest that the majority of these emerging approaches share a desire to move analysis in critical (social) psychology beyond lingering forms of discursive and ideological reductionism (Burkitt, 1999; Hook, 2007; Nightingale & Cromby, 2009). Treating subjectivity as pre-discursively mediated at the level of embodied and affective being; and as *productive* of experience and sociality (rather than as merely derivative of or *produced* by power, history or discourse), has extended the theoretical and political reach of critical social psychology enormously.

Although I have insisted throughout the thesis on the *materiality* of language ideologies – by focusing on regimes and practices, not only on ‘conceptions’ of language – language was by and large neglected as *a corporeal component of subjectivity*; as something embodied, felt, and experienced. Subjectivity has essentially appeared in one of two guises in this thesis. In the first it was portrayed as *discursively produced* and institutionally mediated: ideologies and regimes of language were interrogated for their capacity to be historically and situationally productive (and reproductive) of subjectivities. Individuals and groups were seen as defined, positioned and subjectivised – as nations, ethnic groups, races, classes, etc. – in relation to historically powerful ideas, knowledges, institutions and

practices of language. In its second appearance, subjectivity wore the guise of a rhetorically skilled, thinking and arguing *discourse user*, who possesses the ability to exploit various registers of talk and signification for the production of essentially self-interested effects (cognitive, interpersonal as well as ideological) within dialogical and other communicative encounters. In both these guises, little conceptual space was left open for acknowledging and theorising subjectivity as also ‘pre-discursively’ mediated through embodied structures and processes (Baerveldt & Verheggen, 1999; Hook, 2006).

If one acknowledges that – in accordance with a theorist like Bourdieu (1998) – social structures are not relayed to the level of the constitution and enactment of subjectivity *primarily* via discourse and ideology (as articulated *contents* of consciousness), but that bodies (and their behavioural and affective capacities and registers) are ‘directly’ invested with (and socially moulded according to) the political coordinates of a particular social field, then this neglect is a serious one indeed. Hook (2007) pursues a similar line of argument with his work on ‘technologies of affect’ (a theoretical merger of Foucaultian governmentality theory and psychoanalytic theories of the body and affect):

This is an oblique mode of subject production able to affect passionate attachments – and equally powerful divisions – that often speak louder than words and typically feel as if they predate the immediate history of either subject or community. In the question of affect, we are dealing with an elusive, powerful, and, more importantly yet, instrumentalizable aspect of subjectivity, indeed, with a factor of subjectivization that can be taken up as a component part of an affective technology (of, say, racism, xenophobia and nationalism) which may be linked in turn to a strategy of governmentality. It profits us here – given this movement between rational and affective registers of analysis – to think about the consolidation of affect positions. I have in mind here the case of certain patterns, regular routings of affect, where, despite a degree of latitude regards the rules of discursive formalization, there is nevertheless a general bounding and conducting of affective forces toward a series of ideals. (pp. 271-272)

Foregrounding embodied and affective subjectivity in these ways does not set up a renewed dichotomy between the phenomenological and the political, or between the body as an authenticated (and authenticating) component of subjectivity and discourse as socially derivative and mediated. The body itself is irreducibly social; it is both mediated by and mediating of the social. This poses considerable challenges to the study of language, politics and subjectivity (and, especially, to the study of *language ideologies*), because language is clearly also a corporeal component of human bodies, not just a repository or technology of the disembodied 'meanings'. Therefore, rather than simply continue the study of language, politics and subjectivity in terms of either top-down, historically unfolding patterns of ideological interpellation (such as nationalism) or in terms of the more situationally specific, calculative practices of various forms of discursive action (such as evaluation, categorisation and identification), it may be productive to engage more directly with the corporealisation of language *at the level of embodied subjectivity*.

Language, meaning and corporeality

Philosophy, social theory and the critical social sciences have been embroiled in a romance with language and discourse throughout the twentieth century (Kearney, 1995; Ricoeur, 1979). However, they have generally approached language and discourse as abstract systems of signifiers, or essentially trans-idiomatic acts of signification, not as particularised, corporeal dimensions of individual and social bodies; language, one might say, has been approached as Language, not as French, German or broken English. But it is not just in relation to language as an abstract, universal category (as chains of signifiers that are generally abstracted from the *particular* languages people speak), that the subject emerges *as subject*. Subjectivity is also articulated, embodied *and felt* in relation to the particular languages people inhabit, and which inhabit them. According to Lacan (2001): 'Speech is in fact a gift of language, and language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, *but body it is*' (p. 95, emphasis added). Indeed. In a recent book, Dolar (2006) offers some illuminating remarks on what he regards as the neglect of this dimension of the materiality of language, and especially of *the corporeality of the individual voice*, in philosophy and social theory:

If we speak in order to ‘make sense’, to signify, to convey something, then the voice is the material support of bringing about meaning, yet it does not contribute to it itself. It is, rather, something like a vanishing mediator, [...] it makes the utterance possible, but it disappears in it, it goes up in smoke in the meaning being produced. Even on the most banal level of daily experience, when we listen to someone speak, we may at first be very much aware of his or her voice and its particular qualities, its color and accent, but soon we accommodate to it and concentrate only on the meaning that is conveyed. The voice itself is like the Wittgensteinian ladder to be discarded when we have successfully climbed to the top – that is, when we have made our ascent to the peak of meaning. The voice is the instrument, the vehicle, the medium, and the meaning is the goal. This gives rise to a spontaneous opposition where the voice appears as materiality opposed to the ideality of meaning. The ideality can emerge only through the materiality of the means, but the means does not seem to contribute to meaning. (Dolar, 2006, p. 5)

The materiality of language, on Dolar’s (2006) account, includes qualities of the individual voice like ‘the prosody, the intonation and the accent, the melody, the redundant, the variations and so forth’ (p. 9) – those things that mark and distinguish individual speech *as* individual speech, but that also reveals the *domesticated* voice: the socially encoded and politically regimented aspects of human language production. When people speak, as I have implicitly and explicitly accentuated in many parts of this thesis, they do so in different accents, dialects and, of course, in altogether different languages. They make different sounds in worlds where aural differences fulfil functions similar to the visual stigmata of sex or race: they are principles of both visibility and invisibility; they propel subjects along different social and political trajectories; and they enable and restrict vertical and horizontal mobility across the social and political terrain. Dolar (2006) diagnoses a pervasive ‘linguistic bias’ in contemporary philosophy and theory, one which reduces the human voice (the corporeality of language and the material dimension of the speaking subject), to that ‘*what does not contribute to making sense*’ (p. 5, emphasis in the original).¹ In other words, language is approached in relation to meaning and

signification, which is in turn assumed to exist independently of the corporeality of speech. Meaning, and along with it accounts of subjectivity rooted in language, discourse and signification, is essentially *decorporealised*.

However, the corporeality of language does not make itself felt solely in relation to the quality and materiality of the voice. In fact, language is revealed as subjectively corporealised precisely in relation to *felt sense*; to various affective and emotive registers of being open and closed off to the surrounding world. Perhaps, then, it is not only conceptions *of* (and beliefs *about*) language that should be taken into account in research on language, politics and subjectivity, but especially also the visceral relationships subjects maintain to language: their felt sense of inhabiting a language or being inhibited (or prohibited) by it – their sense of language flowing off their tongue or sticking in their throat. These are more than merely body metaphors in talk about language; they reveal embodied and affective dimensions of speech that are crucial for understanding how linguistically mediated subjectivities are manufactured, reproduced, vigorously defended or violently resisted. They reveal ‘language ideologies’ are operating not just at the level of discourse or even social practices, but forcefully also at the level of felt sense; of socially structured and structuring affect. For a good example of the *felt* nature of language, consider the following by J.M. Coetzee (1998), from his autobiographical work *Boyhood: Scenes from provincial life*:

When he speaks Afrikaans all the complications of life seem suddenly to fall away. Afrikaans is like a ghostly envelope that accompanies him everywhere, that he is free to slip into, becoming at once another person, simpler, gayer, lighter in his tread. (p. 125)

Significantly, in Coetzee’s (1998) account, this realisation, this felt sense of the language as a corporeal space and quality, comes in the midst of a reflection on his alienation from and dislike for his Afrikaans-speaking peers, and his discomfort with the Afrikaans parts of his identity.

These have been cursory statements, but they highlight a serious conceptual lack in the work reported in this thesis, and they represent one of the avenues along which I will further develop research on language, politics and subjectivity.

Of homecoming and humiliation

This focus on the corporeality of language in relation to subjectivity – as an object of comfort and discomfort, belonging and alienation, love and hatred – almost inevitably raises the question of the contradictory discourses about ‘mother tongues’ versus ‘other tongues’ (Derrida, 1998; see also Bennington, 2000). Whereas it is the abstracted national language which has come to dominate social science perception, it is in relation to mythologies of the mother tongue that individuals and groups mostly orient themselves – and mostly *passionately* – in relation to language. On a very literal level, ‘mother tongue’ simply refers to the language one speaks first; literally, the language one learns from one’s mother as a child. On a more mythical level, however, the notion of the mother tongue casts language as an organic, inviolable bodied dimension of subjectivity; and, moreover, links subjectivity (via its familial metaphor), to social bonds frequently understood as also organically ethnic or cultural – and even racial.

Significantly, in much of the social sciences preoccupied with language, the notion of the mother tongue has come to achieve almost unquestionable status as a datum of meaningful existential, psychological and cultural life. One of the reasons for this is the perceived need for advocacy on behalf of the language rights of minorities. Therefore, it has become fairly common in the social sciences to claim, like Dorian (1999), that ‘[e]ach of the world’s languages encodes human experience in its own fashion’ (p. 32); or, as Findlow (2006) summarises a similar position, if ‘language and culture (or languages and *specific* cultures) are connected so deeply that different languages embody different ways of seeing the world’ (p. 19, emphasis in the original) it follows that ‘change in a given language, even just in terms of a loss of range, logically produces a corresponding change-loss in the culture it embodies’ (p. 20). The mother tongue is thus cast as a space of experiential primacy, the necessarily *shared* medium which serves as a condition of possibility for authentic individual experience within the irreducible context of a *speech*

community (Gumperz, 2001; Morgan, 2004). It is on the strength of this sort of account that Padilla (1999, p. 116) can argue that, since it is the main medium of socialisation for children, it is through *language* that ‘the young child learns what his or her parents and community value by way of their cultural beliefs and practices. Thus language becomes associated *with the emotional and behavioral texture of what it means to be a member of a certain group*’ (p. 116, emphasis added). In psychological and educational discourses, likewise, the value of the mother tongue is frequently taken for granted, and in fact elevated to a principle of meaningful human survival: ‘The mother tongue is needed for psychological, cognitive, and spiritual survival’ (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 58). It is not surprising in this context that discourses of language rights are so frequently articulated in terms of identity politics, and the claims for minority cultural and political recognition, within the institutional framework of existing states (Extra & Gorter, 2002; May, 2001; McCarty, 2003; Myhill, 1999; Paulston, 1997; Scholtz, 2002).

It would be easy to simply debunk this mythology of the mother tongue, and argue that it is fictional or invented – a mere matter of nostalgia for cultural origins, the product of missionary labour and cultural engineers, or a form of proto-fascism (Buchotz, 2003; Coupland, 2003; Hutton, 1999; Makoni, 1994; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005). But it would also be *all too easy* to assume that the relationship people maintain with languages, including the mother tongue, is merely instrumental; that it becomes an affective component of subjectivity, a passionate attachment, only in relation to outmoded forms of romantic nationalism. Gellner (1994), for example, makes the following claim: ‘Changing one’s language is not the heart-breaking or soul-destroying business it is claimed to be in romantic nationalist literature’ (p. 60). In another context he comments that languages are ‘easy to shed’ (Gellner, 1983, p. 63). No doubt, in many cases this is true. People do ‘shed’ languages; they also adopt new languages, or live in-between languages, frequently in contexts of migration and exile (e.g., Hoffman, 1989).

However, to insist on linguistic instrumentalism as normative and emotional attachment to a language as mere ideological projection of the fictions of cultural nationalism, is to underwrite a very narrow conception of linguistic subjectivity.² The premise is that individuals are rational choice actors and econometrically oriented to accumulating and

investing the right kinds of linguistic capital. Linguistic subjectivity amounts to little more than an image of the person as currency converter, the rational manager of a linguistic investment portfolio solely based on the kinds of material and social benefits that can be reaped from speaking or not speaking particular languages. In the words of Grin (1999), 'people are assumed to act rationally in order to maximize their well-being' (p. 13), and this includes their 'linguistic wellbeing' (p. 13). Language is merely a skills set to be capitalised on, a transparent dimension of subjectivity and social life for those who manage to transcend the regressive hold of ethno-cultural fictions. This is not a politically neutral position against the politicisation of language in nationalist mythology. On the contrary, it is the product of a pervasive political mythology which privileges a liberal cosmopolitan conception of subjectivity and belonging.

Gunew (2004) observes that, when language is seemingly invisible and inaudible, when we don't even *notice* its sounds and it thus fades into the background as white noise, 'it most emphatically registers the fact that we are at home' (p. 96). The cultural politics of 'home' (along with its emotional register of love, loss and longing), especially within contexts of migration and often forced displacement, are not simply reducible to sedimented remnants of cultural nationalisms. Both liberal and Marxist cosmopolitans have arguably underplayed the affective economies of being different or displaced, and of maintaining complex and contradictory images of 'home' within networks of cross-border sociability and familiarity, within abstract and homogenising structures like nation-states. This includes the subjective charge of language; or, perhaps, the linguistic charge of subjectivity. Languages are objects of love and hate; they are moveable, morphing sites of homecoming and alienation; of affirmation and humiliation. Acknowledging this is not simply to reiterate nationalist fantasies of essentialist (and essentialising) cultures and organic links to particular peoples and places. Instead, it is to insist that the theorisation of language and subjectivity is not exhausted with the deconstruction of the nationalist mythology of the mother tongue. There remain the subjective, affective components of speaking a language, or of inhabiting the sounds, rhythms and conceptual spaces of a language.

In other words, passionate attachment to (and detachment from) the mother tongue is often (corpo)real beyond the rhetoric of nationalism or essentialising ethnicity. Stated differently, the affective registers in terms of which languages and linguistically mediated relationships are expressed cannot be reduced to mere rhetorical ploys which serve questionable ideological motives. Languages are the *matter* of love and hate; and a critical social psychology of language, politics and subjectivity can hardly proceed without pausing to reflect on the affective (and affecting) dimensions of language. Consider in this regard (as an aside) the poem, 'My Faithful Mother Tongue', by the great Polish poet, Czesław Miłosz:

My faithful mother tongue

Czesław Miłosz

Faithful mother tongue,
I have been serving you.
Every night, I used to set before you little bowls of colors
so you could have your birch, your cricket, your finch
as preserved in my memory.

This lasted many years.
You were my native land; I lacked any other.
I believe that you would also be a messenger
between me and some good people
even if they were few, twenty, ten
or not born, as yet.

Now, I confess my doubt.
There are moments when it seems to me I have squandered my life.
For you are a tongue of the debased,
of the unreasonable, hating themselves
even more than they hate other nations,
a tongue of informers,
a tongue of the confused,
ill with their own innocence.

But without you, who am I?
Only a scholar in a distant country,
a success, without fears and humiliations.
Yes, who am I without you?
Just a philosopher, like everyone else.

I understand, this is meant as my education:
the glory of individuality is taken away,
fortune spreads a red carpet
before the sinner in a morality play
while on the linen backdrop a magic lantern throws
images of human and divine torture.

Faithful mother tongue,
perhaps after all it's I who must try to save you.
So I will continue to set before you little bowls of colors
bright and pure if possible,
for what is needed in misfortune is a little order and beauty.

Berkeley, 1968

Tellingly, Milosz writes from the vantage point of exile. The image and experiential world of exile evoked here by the poet is pertinent, as should be clear from my comments above: the phenomena of migration, exile and transnational mobility have come to define globalisation. It has led to the porosity of national borders, but also to the intensification of border regimes. Languages may have become badges of authenticity in the commodification of culture under globalisation, but it also retains its efficacy as a mark and instrument of difference; of not-quite-belonging; of racialisation. It remains biopolitically charged with setting epistemological limits to populations, even though these may now also operate on a transnational level. In discussions of the stateless, of the out-of-place, language certainly demands centrality – and then as a corporeal dimension of both being out of place and negotiating spaces of ‘home’.

But back to Milosz. This is a love poem to a language; to Polish. The relationship between the speaker and his language, as articulated by the poem, is abstracted (or sublimated) beyond his relationship with a people or even a physical homeland; it allows for a contradictory relationship with the Polish and with Poland itself. The language is not just experienced as a space of being at home, but as a space of being significantly different; as a bulwark against existential disappearance. His relationship to his language is expressed not in *nationalist* terms, but in ethical, aesthetic, and emotional ones. It is a felt relationship with language, quilted around experiences of alienation and the inalienable, which defies the instrumentalist accounts of language endorsed by scholars

like Gelner (1983, 1994). One could say that this is *a poet's* response to language, but what Gunew (2004) makes clear is that the experience of exile, of not-being-at-home, materialises and corporealises language into an element of experiential and embodied awareness. In other words, when people are not at home; when they are on the move, migrating, in exile, language becomes visible and audible; their language becomes as palpable to them as it is for poets; as it is for Miłosz in the poem quoted above. It powerfully registers the experience of exile as *loss*, as Bhabha (2004) makes clear: 'The object of loss is written across the bodies of the people, as it repeats in the silence that speaks the foreignness of language' (p. 236); and, quite beautifully, he refers to the exiles, émigrés and refugees, who are 'gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency in another's language' (p. 199); and the 'silent Other of gesture and failed speech ... the Stranger whose languageless presence evokes an archaic anxiety and aggressivity' (p. 238).

The experience of exile and the diasporic community have come to dominate the area of postcolonial theory (Young, 2003). Whilst certainly very relevant to considerations of identity, community and inequality in a globalising world, I would argue that the diasporic context does not exhaust all the political and existential contradictions of the postcolonial existence. This is especially so with regards to language: the postcolonial society (i.e., the former colony, not the diversifying spaces of the erstwhile colonial power) introduces its own contradictions between language, mother tongues, and subjectivity.

Postcolonial voices

Bakhtin (1981) once observed that language is not a neutral medium that 'passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions'; instead 'it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process' (p. 294). What if one should engage with this statement in the context of colonialism, and more specifically in relation to the creation of colonial (and, subsequently, postcolonial) language orders and their associated linguistic subjectivities? Is it not true, quite literally, that indigenous languages under colonialism have always been overpopulated with the

‘intentions’ of European others; and that the ‘intentions’, so to speak, of colonial language agents – missionaries, philologists, travel writers and scholars – became entangled with the fundamental problematic of the status of indigenous populations – the so-called ‘native question’ – in the establishment of colonial and later also postcolonial rationalities of rule?

This line of inquiry – already touched on in Chapter 3 – overlaps with Bhabha’s (2004) discussion of the colonial authority of the book, and more specifically (in Bhabha’s case), the *English* book. In its evangelical, literary and scientific forms, amongst others, the English book served as ‘an insignia for colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline’ (p. 146): ‘The immediate vision of the book figures those ideological correlatives of the Western sign – empiricism, idealism, mimeticism, monoculturalism (to use Edward Said’s term) – that sustain a tradition of English “cultural” authority’ (p. 150). On Bhabha’s reading, then, ‘the Bible translated into Hindi, propagated by Dutch or native catechists, is still the English book’ (p. 154). The arguably applies to the Bible translated into Xhosa and Zulu – both of which, incidentally, were major missionary achievements of nineteenth century South Africa and – alongside philological works by colonial scholars like Wilhelm Bleek – crucial to the later internalisation of ‘ethnicity’ into the logic of colonial and apartheid governmentalities (Gilmour, 2006; Harries, 1988; see also Chapter 3).

But the reference to the English book here serves as more than a handy metaphor for cultural authority. It signifies the singularising logic of language, of writing, of the Word, where previously there had been only *the difference of speech*. It ‘intends’ an ethno-racial identity as the true enunciative subject of indigenous speech – language as both cultural belonging and political destiny. It inaugurates the moment where a hetero-linguistic domain is transformed into what Derrida (1998) calls the ‘monolingualism of the Other’. This indeed has been the story of language in southern Africa (as narrated earlier in this thesis), where first missionary activity and later, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, comparative philology, established language as *the* site for defining, through a process of ‘evolutionary recovery’, the range of ethnic, racial and national genealogies that was supposed to define the subcontinent – in relation to itself and in relation to Europe

and the broader network of Empire. ‘There is no mother tongue,’ writes Deleuze and Guattari (2004), ‘only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity. Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital’ (p. 8). In similar vein Pennycook and Makoni (2005) write of ‘the language effects of Christianity’; but Christian missionaries were soon followed, as I implied above, by their scientific heirs, philologists and ethnologists, who secularised and collectivised salvation by casting it not in terms of individual conversion to the Christian faith, but in terms of the bio-cultural fantasy of ethno-national belonging and destiny. We can thus speak of the language effects, not only of Christianity or even colonialism, but of European modernity more broadly. The scientific ‘discovery’ of language by comparative philology indeed positioned the language of the Other as a crucial dimension of European racial, cultural and national self-understanding.

Macleod and Bhatia (2008), in a recent introduction to ‘postcolonial psychology’, identify *linguistic imperialism* as an important component of colonialism – ‘in which indigenous languages are replaced by the languages of colonizers, thereby silencing the subaltern’ (p. 581; see also Macleod & Wilbraham, 2006). The many indigenous languages teetering on the brink of extinction attests to this being true, but I have argued in this thesis that the story of colonialism and language is more complex. It is not simply a story about the destruction and denigration of indigenous languages; of their endangerment and extinction. Colonialism not only destroyed but ‘invented’ indigenous languages, and processes of linguistic invention – through demarcation, the reduction of speech to writing and standardisation – proved crucial for the development of colonial subjectivity, rule, and resistance. The colonial invention of African languages took the form of the imposition of a distinctly homo-linguistic and, specifically, ‘*eurolinguistic*’ logic onto a hetero-linguistic environment: to echo Bhabha (2004), *even when speaking Xhosa or Zulu, the colonial subject was speaking English*; speaking, in other words, the language of the Other, and in the particular form of a monolingualism of the Other – Derrida (1998) again.

But, at the same time, and on accord of the same eurolinguistic logic, whenever the colonial subject spoke Xhosa or Zulu (or another colonially mediated indigenous language), he or she was being interpellated to an ethnic complex: one is never more

oneself – *for the Other* – than when one speaks this language of the Other, attributed to one as a ‘mother tongue’. Of course, this invention and imposition of language in Africa was not altogether different from the similar history of national language development in Europe: in both instances language was crucial in delimiting, as it were, the spatiotemporal coordinates of the political community. In this regard, the dominant discourse, however ‘derivative’ in Africa – to quote Chatterjee (1995) – was that of the nation. Yet it is exactly this congruence of political form, this reliance of the postcolonial state on the logic of nationalism, which produced a set of crucial language differences. The colonial subject came to stand in a different relation to language than the cultural citizen of the European nation-state. Colonialism invested indigenous languages with its contradictory desires of differentiation and inclusion in territorial dramas in which the role and status of native populations (and the native subject) were always contested. Much of this (as argued in Chapters 2 and 3) was kept in place in a postcolonial environment where nationalism reproduced privilege through patterns of class and ethnic closure, often cashing in on the accumulated linguistic capital of the postcolonial cultural elite.

However, the point of the above is that language in the postcolonial context cannot simply be approached as an ideological theme or an instrument of rule. The postcolonial subject is often caught in a (politically mediated) *existential contradiction* with regards to language, in which the mother tongue is experienced as a form that has been appropriated (and even invented) by colonial authority, but where the colonial languages themselves offer but limited refuge and habitation – and above all, continue to be used as instruments of racialisation and marginalisation. These ideas cannot be explored here; however, I mention them as a highly significant future research topic. The political phenomenology of ‘having a language’ in postcolonial Africa has been largely neglected in a research tradition (postcolonial studies or postcolonial theory) which privileges (at least with regards to issues of language and translation) the study of literary production and consumption and other elements of the cultural economy over the lived realities of postcolonial societies and subjectivities.

Optical illusions

Hook (2005b) recently expressed the concern that, besides the more emblematic theoretical resources which have informed critical social psychology (such as Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis and the preoccupation with textuality associated with post-structuralism), ‘one particular mode of critique remains notably absent, that of postcolonial theory’ (p. 475). This diagnosis is shared, and likewise lamented, by Macleod and Bhatia (2008), who state that an ‘overview’ of postcolonial theory in psychology is close to impossible, and that it in fact needs to be created from scratch:

Postcolonial psychology is not in its infancy, but rather an embryonic stage – that is, if we judge a sub-discipline by who is producing knowledge. Although there are a range of texts from which psychologists can draw and that speak to issues of interest to psychologists, there are currently few psychology scholars contributing to what is called postcolonial theory and research. (p. 576)

More pointedly, Macleod and Wilbraham (2006) recently took the influential critical psychologist Parker (e.g., 2002, 2005b) to task for what they perceive to be an unwarranted (and perhaps ethnocentric) neglect of postcolonial theory in his work. Their call for a ‘redeployment’ of Parker in line with a postcolonial agenda rests on the argument that Parker not only sidelines postcolonial theory in his work, but also thereby sidelines Third World issues; that his work, therefore, is not only limited and limiting with respects to the uniqueness of ‘our context’, but that it adds to the privileging of centrist over peripheral voices in critical psychology. They call his project ‘a circumscribed one. His partial mentions and elisions around colonialism and post-colonialism, and his lack of sustained engagement postcolonial theorists, mean that considerable analytical labour is required to ground Parker’s work with our local problematics’ (p. 33). They subsequently argue for the ‘inclusion of such stylistics into Parker’s analysis of discourses in critical psychology’ (p. 33).

According to Hook (2005b), the relative absence of postcolonial theory from critical psychology is especially conspicuous on account of the fact that postcolonial theory ‘is

explicitly psychological in both its concerns and its critical resources' (p. 475). This is places severe limitations on the critical social psychology of racism, which Hook refers to as 'the crowning problematic of the colonial and postcolonial condition' (p. 476). Unfortunately, however, *language* (also as it intersects with race and racism) has not been explicitly foregrounded in such initial approaches to develop a 'postcolonial psychology' in South Africa. Still, it represents a significant framework within which language, politics and subjectivity could be further explored: to illuminate the contradictions of the postcolonial language environment from the perspective of embodied and affective subjectivities, and to come to terms with the role language has played and continues to play in the 'psychic life of colonial power' (Hook, 2004b; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2005; see also Butler, 1997).

However, it is very likely that the development of a postcolonial 'optic' in South African psychology would privilege issues of race over those of language – if not indeed neglecting language altogether. In this regard, the use of the term 'optic' is deliberate. Philosophy and social theory remain enthralled by sight and the longstanding epistemological privileging of *the visual*. According to Gunew (2004), 'the register of the visible permeates much current theory but the aural dimension, including the category of voice and, for example, accent, has remained somewhat undertheorized' (p. 80). In the context of racism, especially, it is frequently *visual* distinctions, such as skin colour, hair texture and facial features, which are invoked to not only symbolise but also explain racial differences. Racism indeed frequently manifests as *visual* regimes, as traditions and embodied habits of seeing, and as centred on the meaning of visual differences. Racism targets the skin; it is paradigmatically about colour, and confers its identities in measures of *whiteness* and *blackness*. It is not surprising, then, that social theory should bestow so much attention on the visual register of engagement with Otherness. Sight and the meanings that are attached to the visible seem paramount.

It is also no wonder then that the iconic scene of racial subjectification in Fanon's (1967) *Black skin, white masks* (perhaps *the* central text in postcolonial theory) is a passage where he describes being forced to *see* himself through the the eyes – the gaze – of the white

Other; where racial difference materialises as real based on the overheard statements of a young white child to a mother:

‘Look! A Negro!’ It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.

‘Look! A Negro!’ Absolutely. I was beginning to enjoy myself.

‘Look! A Negro!’ The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.

‘*Maman*, look, a Negro; I’m scared!’ Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question.

I couldn’t take it any longer, for I already knew there were legends, stories, history, and especially the historicity that Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema. In the train, it was a question of being aware of my body... (Fanon, 2008, pp. 91-92)

As Chipkin (2007) points out, what is ‘at stake for Fanon is the white gaze’ (p. 112); and what the white gaze sees, of course, is the fact of *blackness*:

[...][T]he black is created in and through his *skin*. The character of the black arises, in other words, because he is *black*. In a colonised society, the black is not simply black. He is black in the eyes of the white man. (p. 113, emphases in the original)

But the visual is not only the only register within which the idea of race becomes encoded (and *felt*) as a meaningful physical or embodied difference. Speech, likewise, becomes racialised, which means that the auditory register is at least *as relevant* as the visual in analyses of racial and other forms of differentiation and subjectification. Not just how others look, but how they *sound*, carries social meaning. In this regard, I would suggest a critical social psychology of language should follow Gunew (2004, p. 80) in her attempt to amplify the acoustic (and not just visual and discursive) dimensions through which differences are embodied: ‘In an attempt to uncouple the visible from the mechanism of

naturalized racism (as described above) I wanted to find a way to take into consideration another of the senses, *that of hearing*' (p. 80, emphasis added).

The neglect of the aural dimension, of *acoustics* in social theory, perhaps explains why so disproportionately little attention has been given the brilliant opening chapter in Fanon's (1967) *Black skin, white masks*, in which he analyses colonialism in relation to the politics and existential inhabiting of language. Fanon is keenly aware of the relevance in colonial contexts of *sounding different*; as well as of the felt senses of belonging and alienation which accompany speaking (another's) language – especially when, as Derrida (1998) makes clear, when the other's language *is the only language one has access to*.³

Black sound, white words

According to Hook (2005b), the central message of Fanon's writings is the insistence 'that the violence of the colonial encounter is absolutely unprecedented, that the colonial moment of epistemic, cultural, psychical and physical violence makes for a unique kind of historical trauma' (p. 479). Fanon clearly insists on this difference when he discusses the relationship of the colonised subject to the language of the coloniser:

It would seem, then, that the problem is this: in the Antilles, as in Brittany, there is a dialect and there is the French language. But this is false, for the Bretons do not consider themselves inferior to the French people. The Bretons have not been civilized by the white man. (Fanon, 1967, p. 21)

The opening chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1967), called 'The Negro and Language', remains a classic meditation on the specific – in the sense of specifying or species-fying – role language plays in the 'identity effects' of colonialism. Fanon is not concerned here with the colonial invention or fate of indigenous languages; although he of course registers that the colonial language (French in his case) installs itself *in place* of the indigenous tongue. Instead, he problematises the relationship of the colonised to the colonial language, and the role that this relationship plays in colonial subjugation and alienation. Language is not just another aspect of pre-colonial culture which is being

eroded or displaced. It is in fact a crucial dimension of the colonial encounter itself. For this reason he affords language *a privileged role* in his analysis of the colonial encounter – a role which it has not maintained in attempts to develop postcolonial psychologies:

I ascribe *a basic importance* to the phenomenon of language. That is why I find it necessary to begin with this subject, which should provide us with one of the elements in the coloured man's comprehension of the dimension of the other. For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. (Fanon, 1967, p. 13, emphasis added)

Although of course steeped in specifically French colonialism and its cultural politics, Fanon's account nevertheless captures something of the psychology of cultural and linguistic dispossession that demands to be generalised. According to Fanon he wants 'to demonstrate why the black Antillean, whoever he is, always has *to justify his stance in relation to language* [i.e., 'has always to face the problem of language' (Fanon, 1967)]. Going one step farther, we shall enlarge the scope of our description to include every colonized subject' (Fanon, 2008, emphasis added). The colonial language, therefore, does not only attain instrumental value. Its social capital, to invoke Bourdieu (1991), is that it confers *humanity itself* onto its subject-speakers. In Fanon's (1967) words: 'What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power' (p. 14). That is why he states as his central claim about language that 'the Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language' (p. 13). It is language, more than any other dimension of the colonial culture, which becomes associated with the desire to be white. It is in and through language that the 'white masks' of colonial culture are seen to become within reach, and in and through language that it remains is endlessly unattainable. Language confers humanity as a promise, but denies it through the most pernicious forms of symbolic violence, to refer once again to Bourdieu (1991). This is a violence that is felt; that is registered on the body. Fanon continues:

Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural

originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. In the French colonial army, and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, the black officers serve first of all as interpreters. They are used to convey the master's orders to their fellows, and they, too, enjoy a certain position and honour. (p. 14)

For Fanon, then, language is indeed the preeminent site for the encounter between the Black and the other, and for the formation of alienated, doubled, colonial subjectivity. Language is a central component of recognition – and thus also of the misrecognition of the colonial encounter. However, the Black who 'speaks White', so to speak, is still deprived of recognition: speaking the language of the master does not produce similarity and recognition, but the further calibration and reproduction of difference and inequality. Language, indeed, forms part of the 'arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment' (Fanon, 1967, p. 23). The colonial language order, and receding levels of mastery, gives cause to what Fanon strikingly refers to as 'the amputation of his being' (p. 17). Therefore, according to Gibson (2003), 'recognition, grounded in an awareness of similarity, is blocked. The slave who embraces the logos of the master can at best hope for only a pseudo-recognition – a White mask' (p. 30).

Fanon (1967) spoke about the 'disalienation of the black man' (p. 28), but unfortunately never really systematically commented on this would occur within the linguistic restructuring and reimagining of the postcolony and of postcolonial subjectivity. Despite his at times magnificent treatment of the failure of the postcolonial state in *The wretched of the earth* (Fanon, 1990), he did not spend time in that book reflecting on the linguistic disalienation, nor on the political future of language in a postcolonial world. In a sense, then, Fanon reminds us that language is a crucial component of the discussion of politics and subjectivity – included the 'crowning problematic of race' as Hook refers to – in the postcolonial society. He also reminds us that the theorisation and exploration language in these contexts remain incomplete.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I have attempted to suggest a number of alternative trajectories for the exploration of language, politics and subjectivity, especially in the context of postcolonial societies. I have critiqued the tendency in philosophy and social theory to dematerialise language, and have tried to foreground language as a corporeal dimension of embodied, affective subjectivities. The aim of this was not to find a safe haven for language (as an organic mode of individual and social existence) beyond the political. Instead, the task ahead is to come to terms more fully with how language and subjectivity are entangled with the political – not simply at the level of discourse and ideology, but at the level of the body and affects. Because there is no space for language beyond politics – ‘No water will ever cleanse the signifier of its imperial origin: the signifying master or “the master signifier”’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 225).

NOTES

¹For a different take on the problematic of the *individual voice* in language, see Johnstone (2000).

²For a discussion of the features of linguistic instrumentalism at the level of the state and language policies within the context of globalisation (rather than as a feature of linguistic subjectivity), see Wee (2003).

³For Derrida’s brilliant psychologically extremely relevant analysis of the contradictions of the mother tongue and language in colonial situations, Ahluwalia (2007); Bennington (2000); Bishop (2007); Maley (2001); Mandair (2007); Philips (2007), and Syrotinski (2007).

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APPENDIX A:

TRANSCRIPTION NOTATION

The transcription notation utilised in Chapter 6 is drawn from Wetherell and Potter (1992):

[Overlapping utterances
=	An utterance that follows another without any interval, but without overlapping
(.)	An untimed pause
bold	An emphasised word or phrase
...	An indication that material is omitted
[]	Researcher's comments within an extract

APPENDIX B:

Brief Curriculum Vitae

Desmond William Painter
(Student Number: 3485-769-9)

Desmond Painter is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. He studied at Stellenbosch University, completing his MA (Psychology) in 2000, after which he was employed by Rhodes University for six years. Since his return to Stellenbosch he has been teaching mainly in the areas of social psychology, critical psychology, and qualitative research methods. In recent years his research has focused on the conceptualisation of language in critical and social psychologies, and on discourses of language and language ideological debates in South Africa. He has published a number of articles and book chapters on these topics, and it also formed the basis of his doctoral thesis, *Tongue tied: The politics of language, subjectivity and social psychology in South Africa*. Alongside this he has also pursued an interest in the history (and political foundations) of psychology in South Africa. The result of this work has been a co-edited book (with Clifford van Ommen), *Interiors: A history of psychology in South Africa* (Unisa Press, 2008). He regularly writes critical and reflective essays and book reviews for the popular press.