Linguicism
Critical Perspectives on Migration Society and Conviviality

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1   Introduction

When considering language relations within a migration society, it is important to recognize that the logic of communication cannot be adequately understood by restricting it solely to hegemonic languages, even when approached from a purely functional perspective on language. At the same time, the problem is more complex insofar as, first, language is part of state identity politics and migration management. Thus, real effective language regimes prevail regulating the field of what can be said and the modes of saying it. Second, the "interaction of the diverse" is characterized by complex processes of attribution (ascription) of identity and difference. In our contribution, we illuminate the following three moments from a critical racism and linguicism perspective: a) migration-societal multilingualism, b) migration-societal language hegemony, and c) migration-societal language attributions. With empirical observations and experiences from the context of schools, we ask which of these perspectives might be suitable for developing an idea of conviviality that is critically informed by racism.

2   Languages and Power[1]

"I didn't want others to notice that we speak Arabic at home," was the comment of a student after a lecture on the subject of including migrant languages lessons at the (with a few exceptions) German-language public school of one of the countries considered to be "German-speaking countries"[2]. She explained to the lecturer that she had been embarrassed to "be a migrant" and that she tried to hide signs of it, including her identification

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[1]   The explanations in this section go back in part to chapter 5 in "BA MA Migration Education" (Dirim/Mecheril 2010).

[2]   The term "German-speaking countries", which is often used in German, mainly refers to Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, although these countries are multilingual in different ways.

as a speaker of Arabic. It was only during a stay abroad that she had realized how speaking Arabic and German could actually be perceived as something valuable and precious. Based on her experiences, she was not sure how her attempts to address the issue of migration languages, with the inclusion of students who speak these languages, would be perceived in a school classroom. The proposals to this end seemed rather naïve to her. In this narrative of the student, the tension between the monolingualism of key institutions in migration societies, such as schools, and the migration-related multilingualism of the actors and subjects of the institutions, is expressed. It becomes clear that language in the context of teaching and schools, for example, is not a subject that can be adequately grasped solely regarding its, so to speak, communicative function. The language(s) used in a migration society are central to the discussion of migration-related societal structures. They serve as symbols of belonging and not belonging within the dominant national, ethnic, and cultural frameworks. The way of dealing with languages in a migration society, on both the level of communication and the symbolic level (belonging), affects the educational processes and thus the self-understandings of individuals.

Finally, the knowledge and experience of the student in the previous example points to the fact that language is not only a "technical" means of communication, but also a means of establishing and articulating social recognition. Who is authorized to speak when, how, to whom, about whom, and about what? Which languages and ways of speaking are considered legitimate (in the family, at school, in the youth center, and other places)? Who is considered a legitimate speaker of a language? Which languages and language variants have higher, or rather lower, prestige? Should pedagogical activities confirm or problematize this "hierarchy of prestige"? What possibilities are there for pedagogical tools that do not merely affirm the given linguistic orders of prestige? With the help of these questions, the social (power) dimensions of the topic "languages – speaking" come into view. Reflecting on this dimension allows for professional pedagogical action that is reflexive and critical about what is socially assumed.

The systematic and reflective consideration of language has been developed over time in (sub)disciplinary contexts, including philosophy, psychology, linguistics, sociology, and pedagogy. Although the diversity of uses and functions of language as well as its dynamics in social communities are addressed, especially in sociolinguistics, the dominant view of language and multilingualism, even in pedagogical settings, is often characterized by a certain rigidity. This rigidity is reminiscent of nineteenth-century structuralism, in which the main focus was on describing the systems of languages, and neither the dimension of language use nor the social dimension of language and speech were sufficiently taken into account.[3] Later, the concept of language as a fixed system became the foundation for various linguistic perspectives. Noam Chomsky (1965), for example, in his influential theory of language, defined the "ideal speaker-listener", who, according to his concept, exists in principle in all languages. According to his theory, the "ideal speaker-listener" masters his or her language "perfectly" and does not let himself or herself be irritated by any internal or external distractions in the production of his or her utterances. This ideal type was seen as a useful analytical tool to describe

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3   For an empirical study that considers the dimension of language use in church services, see Eugster-Schaetzle in this volume.

the grammar of a language. At the same time, however, it disregards variation within a language. Today's variation linguistics no longer even assumes that there is one standard language, but instead a standard variation. This is because within a standard language, how something should be expressed is not fixed once and for all and there are many ways of formulating a thought (Dannerer et al. 2021: 17–18). Moreover, Chomsky's view at the time did not consider that language production depends on the social circumstances in which individuals live and that they cannot always use language in the same way. Different contexts require different languages and language varieties. Language tends to be described normative-fictitiously in Chomsky's approach. The perspective of "language competence" that emerges from this view also promotes a perfectionist expectation for individuals, although it is not clear what perfection consists of in any concrete or detailed way. The everyday understanding of language, and also the understanding of language in many pedagogical debates, is shaped by Chomsky's idealistic construct, which is supported by state-sponsored attempts to standardize national languages. This perfection and norm orientation, directed at the external character of utterances, also has a particularly unfavorable effect on the understanding of individual bilingualism and multilingualism. This occurs because the perfection and norm orientation are directed at both or all languages spoken by a person and gives rise to the unrealistic claim that the languages must be mastered, not only equally well, but also very well. This is contrasted with the observation that there is often no need to know all languages at a high level, and there are very different possibilities of, for example, written language acquisition. Gogolin coined the term "lifeworld bilingualism" (Gogolin 1988), which expresses that languages are acquired differently depending on need and possibility.

Language represents a central way of encountering the world and an essential prerequisite for social, economic, and political participation. The individual actively appropriates language in daily interaction and expands his or her individual, social, and ultimately political capacity for action in the process of language appropriation. At the same time, language creates an orientation for the individual through collective and comprehensive connection to the past, present, and future of relevant social contexts.

Any study of the linguistic relations of a social space must consider that language is a means by which social distinctions are made. Language is a part of systematic distinctions, which include different languages and language variants. However, these languages and language variants occupy different positions and ranks in terms of prestige and recognition. All children, for example, acquire language(s) in a very similar way in the places where they grow up – initially through interactions with reference persons. However, the extent to which children – and later – adolescents and adults can make themselves heard in the wider social environments into which they enter depends on how far their understanding of language has developed, how differentiated their syntax is, and how broad their vocabulary is. The access children have to social contexts depends not only on their general language competence, and the relative degree of that competence, but is strongly impacted by whether the language (variant) in which they have competence, and the group associated with it, are recognized.

Pierre Bourdieu puts it this way:

> The linguistic competence that is sufficient to form sentences may be quite insufficient to form sentences that are listened to, sentences that can be recognized as receivable in all situations in which speaking takes place. Again, social acceptability is not limited to grammaticality. Speakers without legitimate linguistic competence are excluded or condemned to silence from social worlds in which this competence is presupposed. (Bourdieu 1983/2005: 60)

The written and oral use of language is a social practice that not only has something to do with the capacity to produce utterances that are considered semantically, grammatically and syntactically appropriate but is also tied to conditions of a differential system of the legitimacy of language use (this is roughly Bourdieu's critique of de Saussure's and Chomsky's linguistic theory). In the case of linguistic utterances, the question is whether they succeed or fail communicatively. This success, however, is not solely a question of "linguistic competence" in the Chomskyan sense, but also depends on social and micropolitical conditions. The language competence of Chomsky's idealized speaker must be supplemented by social preconditions, possibilities, and restrictions of concrete linguistic production situations and concrete speakers (in migration-social contexts).

Although Bourdieu dealt with conditions in France, and especially with language orders[4] on the level of socio-economic class relations, his diagnosis can very well be used to identify current language-related, migration-societal/racist inclusions and exclusions in the so-called German-speaking countries. For this reason, Bourdieu's cultural sociological perspective has served as an explanatory approach in numerous ethnographic studies of the use of language in schools in Germany, conducted around the turn of the last century (for an overview see Fürstenau/Niedrig 2011).

Concepts such as "monolingual habitus" (Gogolin 1994), "native speakerism" (Holliday 2015), or "(neo-)linguicism" (Dirim 2010) point to differential forms of inclusion and exclusion that refer to language regimes in migration-societies.

The term "monolingual habitus" was developed by Ingrid Gogolin (1994), drawing on Bourdieu's habitus theory, and refers to the fact that in the development of certain nation-states, one language was given priority over all others as the national language with which the nation, the "people", and the territory were symbolically unified. According to the results of a study by Gogolin (ibid), this approach gave rise to the habitualized notion among teachers that monolingualism was normal, whereas bilingualism and multilingualism were an aberration. According to Gogolin, the "monolingual habitus" leads to teachers encountering difficulties in dealing with multilingualism.

The term "native speakerism" is in some respects complementary to the term "monolingual habitus", since Holliday (2015) uses it to express the fact that only the variant of a language that is considered "native" is regarded as the correct one. This also complements Bourdieu's perspective, that in public contexts dialects are considered illegitimate

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4   The term "language orders" is inspired by Foucault (Foucault 1966) and means that language is a social differentiator with which people are assigned to groups in a symbolically hierarchical way and – depending on the ascribed position – is associated with both opportunities and restrictions.

and standard languages legitimate. Holliday shows that what matters is which variant of a standard language is spoken. Dirim et al. show in a study from Austria that even in the case of non-standard variants of a language in educational contexts, dialects considered "native" receive greater acceptance than migration-related pronunciations of the same terms (Knappik et al. 2013).

Another differentiation that occurs through language goes back to historical colonialism: Both in the colonial period and after, languages of the South were devalued by Western science as inadequate and so were their speakers. Today, both overt and more subtle forms of linguicism exist (Dirim 2010). The prohibition against speaking languages other than German in schoolyards can be understood as a form of overt linguicism, since speakers of other languages are prevented from choosing them as a means of communication and are devalued as subjects who (want to) speak these so-called illegitimate languages.

In situations where language is used as a distinguishing factor, as well as to discriminate against speakers of specific languages and speech patterns, the actual content of what is said often takes a secondary role: if languages other than German are not allowed to be spoken in a schoolyard, it is irrelevant what topics might be discussed in these languages. In terms of disadvantages regarding languages, the choice of a language or way of speaking is not relevant, instead the subject using these linguistic means is the actual target of discrimination or preference and not the "objected" language itself. We propose that linguicism occurs when a colonial reference is evident, such as methodologically colonial thinking about valuable and less valuable languages. "Methodologically colonial" means that ways of thinking about colonialism, i.e., the classification of people into hierarchized groups through the attribution of a language and the exclusion of the inferiorized group, are present (Rommelspacher 2011). Mutual devaluations of speakers of German dialects, for example, who criticize the other's individual dialect, could be understood as linguistic discrimination, but not as linguicism. The concept of linguicism reflects the coloniality of speech and languages.

3   Coloniality

The concept of coloniality understands colonialism as a phenomenon that is not limited in time and history but reflects "a relational relationship that is generated in a colonization situation [...], determines the nature and manner of the relationship between conquerors and conquered, extends beyond colonialism as a political order, and is primarily cognitive and cultural in nature." (Garbe 2013: 37) The operation of colonial continuities is revealed as a complex web of intertwined mechanisms, which Quijano (2016) also describes as the colonial matrix of power or coloniality of power. It finds expression in the intertwining of 1) privatization and exploitation of land and labor, 2) control of authority (viceroyalties, colonial states, military structure), 3) control of gender and sexuality (the Christian family, sexual and gendered values and behaviors), 4) control of subjectivity (the Christian faith, the secular idea of subject and citizenship) and control of cognition, and 5) control of nature and natural resources (Kastner/Waibel 2012: 142).

The human-differentiating logic of racism operating within colonialism takes place not only through the coding of physiognomic and social characteristics but also through people's language(s). At the beginning of the 20th century structural characteristics, which undergird the creation of linguistic-typological classifications, became the basis for the argumentation of the valuation of languages and – as a result – of their speakers. As Cyffer describes:

> These initially neutral designations were soon used, or rather misused, in order to attach linguistic developments and above all evaluations to them. According to this, the isolating languages would be primitive and the inflectional languages, especially if their nominal system additionally had a grammatical gender, would be at the highest level of development. The logical consequence is that the inflectional languages are master languages, which are consequently spoken by master people. To what then does German belong? To the highest level, of course, although the language also has isolating and agglutinative elements. (Cyffer 2011: 61, own translation)

Attempts were made to establish typologies to arbitrarily justify the superiority of Westerners, whose languages were considered superior. Even after the end of colonialism, scholars used this tradition of argumentation, e.g. to strengthen National Socialism through racism. Westermann (1941, in Cyffer 2011: 64–65) is one of the pioneers of documenting contradictory pronouncements about African languages. He points to

> profound differences stemming precisely from the primitive mental attitude of the people for whom these languages serve as the means of expression of their feeling, thinking, and will. A certain poverty and awkwardness in terms of spiritual life are contrasted with an often surprising richness in everything that relates to daily existence. Here there is often a wealth of expressions that is bewildering to the European, as well as of grammatical forms, but which is for the most part nothing other than primitiveness. (Westermann 1941, quoted in Cyffer 2011: 64, own translation)

The devaluations of these languages served to prove the inferiority of their speakers. In her analysis of interviews with young migrants from African countries in Hamburg, carried out in the 2010s, Heike Niedrig shows how colonial language classifications continue to have an effect today: "There is a consensus between the young people and the German educational institutions according to which African languages are not granted a place in the educational system." (Niedrig 2015: 74) Heike Niedrig's observation is based, among other things, on the fact that young people do not always mention their non-colonial African languages and, if they do, do not assign them the same value as colonial languages (ibid).

Scholarly critics of racism show that the colonial project of classifying people is not only applied to physiognomic features but above all to the category of culture. In this context, we speak of cultural racism or neo-racism (Balibar 1991), as it is assumed that this is a new phenomenon or a postcolonial application of the colonial scheme of thought. Cyffer's work shows that the category of language is also used as a marker of difference to

support making racist distinctions. Therefore, following Leiprecht (2001), one can speak of "language as a linguistic hiding place for race" or of neo-linguicism. Colonial North-South relations can also be seen in hierarchizations of "accents": Subjects who spoke German as a first language rated German audio samples of speakers with accents from different global languages, such that accents of Western and Northern languages were rated higher, while those with Southern accents were rated less favorably (Settinieri 2011). Pokitsch (2022) notes that young people in Austria position themselves hierarchically regarding the languages considered "their own", so it becomes apparent that languages are subtly and subjectively assigned different values of respectability and recognition by employing political and colonial tropes. Children and adolescents, one can speculate following these research results, "learn" through hegemonic discourses, which language is considered their language. German is usually not considered the language of people with a migration history, although Germans also have a wide variety of experiences with migration. Children and young people are taught that there is a "language of the heart" and that this must be the language of origin.

4   Conviviality, Language(s), and Power

Living together always means speaking together. And this speaking is structured by relations of power and domination, which, as outlined above, determine the value of language(s) in a differentiated way. Reflecting on the relationships mediated by natio-ethno-cultural patterns of language-related human differentiation can enable the recognition of language-related disadvantages and preferences for certain people. In addition, a subsequent reflection on the linguistic design of social spaces critical of discrimination can further the recognition of these patterns.

It must be assumed that there cannot be a space free of domination and, thus, hierarchically structured relations cannot "simply" be abolished by understanding language as a feature of difference. Nevertheless, we assume that the recognition of one's position in the social space is possible through a critical (self-)reflection on linguicism. This can involve examining the extent to which linguistic relations are reproduced through one's actions.

We assume that this reflection on the communicative space of negotiating conviviality is more likely to succeed if, among other things, two concerns are addressed: a) post-communitarian solidarity as orientation and b) sensitivity to linguistic violence.

4.1 Post-Communitarian Solidarity as Orientation [5]

Albert Scherr (2013) describes solidarity as an emancipatory political concept with five defining features. First, when a group-egoistic decay is already underway, solidarity claims to "stand up for common interests through forms of collective action" (ibid:

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5   The following comments are revisions of passages found in a previously published paper (Mecheril/Füllekruss 2023), although some of the comments there, in turn, go back to a paper published in 2014 (Mecheril 2014).

264), which second, represents a "union of those (…) who are subject to relations of domination and inequality." (ibid) Third, according to Scherr (ibid: 265), solidarity is characterized by "a universalistic perspective: it is then about more than the pursuit of group-egoistic interests but about an understanding of respective interests that is linked to ideas of a more just shaping of social conditions for all." (ibid) Fourth, according to Scherr (ibid: 265–266), solidarity is characterized by voluntary action rather than coercion. Fifth, it is important to

> incorporate the postmodern critique of universalist justifications of power and domination into the concept of solidarity. That is, solidarity can no longer be based on a conclusive consensus about the right shape of society or the good life, but instead must recognize the 'universal right to be different' as 'the only universality that is not a subject of negotiation' (Bauman 1992: 312; quoted from Scherr 2013: 265, own translation)

Lucie Billmann and Josef Held (2013: 15), following Stuart Hall, point out that the "neoliberal culture" brings about an increase in forms of pluralization and, concomitantly, individualization. On the one hand this leads to a dissolution of forms of solidary action, but on the other hand it also brings about new forms of solidarity. Globalization can be understood both as individualization and as an "opportunity for solidarity", or even a chance to "bring about new forms of solidary action" (Marvakis 2005: 163; quoted from Billmann/Held 2013: 16).

"Solidarity requires", writes Monika Mokre, "new translations of what we have in common – and at the same time, this 'we' that is addressed here can only emerge through translation, which in turn requires solidarity. (…) But verifying the suitability of such a notion of solidarity and putting it into practice requires concretization, which in turn requires continuous reflection and especially self-reflection." (2021: 206)

The understanding of solidarity, which is significant for our topic, refers to the social relations of commitment to another, which can be foreign, but with which the individual stands in a concrete context within a shared form of life. This shared life is formed, not inconsequentially, by ecological, economic, cultural-epistemic, and aesthetic attributes, but also toxic and viral communication structures, which exist within global structures of reference. Solidarity exists in reference to others, and only becomes solidarity when there is action or a readiness to act. In "a socio-economically fragmented and socio-culturally pluralized society", it is by no means obvious who should or can join forces with whom in solidarity because identifications with others are "in principle selectable and terminable" (Scherr 2013: 267). Köck suggests solidarity as a way of dealing with the domination of "normative-correct German" in higher education. He shows that when the university does not offer support for international students in acquiring academic language skills in German, students with German language ability considered "native" end up in the role of "helping" these students in group work etc., and thus end up in a superior role (Köck 2015). Accordingly, a concept of solidarity is needed to reflect on this role and reduce hierarchization (ibid). Beyond the concrete language spoken or the form of language used, this also brings to the fore the role of creating pedagogical spaces where it is possible to use different languages and forms of language in the learning process and

where it is not assumed that certain languages and forms of language will be used. Variations of this practice have been observed in Toronto schools where students are allowed to express themselves in the language they wish to use or are free to use this language during class. What students say is made accessible to all through joint translation work (Löser 2010). Furthermore, these spaces are characterized by the fact that essentializing group- and origin-related attributes – especially related to the notion of the preference given to languages considered as first languages – are abandoned in favor of a subject orientation. Language-based solidarity in an environment characterized by globalization distances itself from the assumed primacy of the native speaker and seeks ways of encouraging linguistic expression that is not linked to notions of a native speaker ideology. In concrete terms, solidarity in language can mean, for example, that members of the dominant group learn to express themselves in different ways in the majority language in order to be understood.

4.2 Sensitivity to Linguistic Violence[6]

The prevailing social pattern of de-thematizing racism and linguicism makes racism a benefit for people who are privileged under the conditions of racist distinctions (i.e., the racially non-discreditable). This privilege is often difficult to grasp due to people's entanglement in their circumstances. Karabulut (2022) shows with analyses of interviews with teachers and principals in NRW/Germany that racism does take place in schools, but that it is taboo to discuss it in the teaching community, especially among teachers with leadership positions. Karabulut attributes this taboo to the self-image of Germans as no longer racist after the end of National Socialism. It is to be inferred that such taboos also have an impact on other educational spaces and contribute to the inability to acknowledge the reality of communicative structures of discrimination and the experiences of discrimination of others. One way of dealing with the questioning of one's privileged position through racially discriminatory requirements is to ignore these requirements. Maintaining one's privileged position can be supported by trivializing, relativizing, or rejecting the reality of racial distinctions-including by challenging the experience of those who are racially discredited. Mecheril, Çiçek, and Heinemann (2023) thus argue for an "increase in sensitivity" – in the course of which it becomes more natural to recognize, communicate, and change the complex reality of being impacted by racist violence. This practice can be described as racism-critical aesthetics of speaking. This speech claims validity for the speech between the racially discreditable and the non-discreditable, the conversation between the discreditable and the discreditable, and between the non-discreditable and the non-discreditable, and has a knowledge-based, and at the same time, moral starting point. With knowledge of the vulnerability that the 'other' experiences through indirect or direct racist messages, contained in one's own speech and the speech of others, it is about a morally motivated rejection of violence that is (also) exercised through language. This moral outcome, that racist violence should not (also) manifest through and in language, grounds speech within the framework of racism-critical aesthetics.

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6   This section goes back to another article text (Heinemann/Cicek/Mecheril 2023).

There is always a tribalistic potential for violence inherent in the significant, justified, and necessary rejection and outlawing of the violence of racist speech. This potential unfolds especially when the rejection of racist speech is rather self-centered, for instance in the form of the narcissism of the discriminated. In the narcissism of the discriminated (and the narcissism of those allied with them), a kind of insatiable desire to emphasize one's discriminatory status and thus – paradoxically – to be confirmed in it, supersedes the goal of identifying social conditions of racist differentiation and exposing them to criticism. This requires assigning the status of "discriminators" to others and preserving them in this status, not dismissing them: The attribution of the perpetrator corresponds to self-victimization. It is not about the extension of this narcissistic sensitivity. The critical aesthetics of speech are associated with the goal of exploring how self-understandings and behaviors of individuals, groups, and institutions, especially in the context of racial valorization or devaluation, are mediated by racism. This exploration focuses on the ways, conditions, and consequences of such mediation. Among other things, it is a matter of creating conditions for the development of a general sensitivity and ability to address the question of how one's structure of perception or interpretation, one's language, reinforces racist distinctions.

When applied to the context of linguicism, the aesthetics of speaking within the framework of critical racism analysis must be anchored in the understanding that the various values attributed to languages, both formally and informally, are also influenced by colonial traditions. This requires acknowledging and critiquing the exclusion, marginalization, and rejection of individuals based on the languages they speak, particularly those considered "theirs". It also entails scrutinizing spaces that reject forms of communication beyond those deemed "natural" and legitimate, often characterized by "native speakerism" (Holliday 2015). Conviviality needs linguistic critique.

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