LANGUAGE AND DECOLONISATION

An Interdisciplinary Approach

EDITED BY FINEX NDHLOVU
AND SABELO J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI

Routledge

LANGUAGE AND DECOLONISATION

Language and Decolonisation is the first collection to bring together views from across scholarly communities that are committed to the agenda of decolonising knowledge in language study. Edited by leading figures in the field, the chapters offer new insights on how 'decolonising' can be adopted as a methodology for charting the next steps in solving practical language-related problems in educational and related social policy areas. Divided into two sections, the book covers the coloniality of language, the materiality of culture and colonial scripts, the decolonisation imperative, multilingualism discourse and decolonisation, and decolonising languages in public discourse. With 20 chapters authored by experts from across the globe, this pioneering collection is an essential reference and resource for advanced students, scholars, and researchers of language and culture, sociolinguistics, decolonial studies, racial studies, and related areas.

Finex Ndhlovu is Associate Professor of Language in Society in the School of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences at the University of New England, Australia. Finex's latest major publication is *Pan-African Integration from Below: Language, Publics, Culture*.

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni is Professor/Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa and Vice-Dean of Research of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. His latest major publication is *Beyond the Coloniality of Internationalism: Reworlding the World from the Global South*.

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*To Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni for your generosity,
selfless commitment to mentoring early career scholars,
and for your searing contributions to the discourse on
decolonising and the decolonial project at planetary level.*

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CONTRIBUTORS

Ashraf Abdelhay works for the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (Qatar) as an Associate Professor in the programme of Linguistics and Arabic Lexicography. He holds a PhD in the field of sociolinguistics from the University of Edinburgh. He was an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies (University of Cambridge, UK) and a Postdoctoral Associate at Clare Hall College (University of Cambridge, UK). His current research interest is on decolonial linguistics and southern sociolinguistics. He has four co-edited books and several journal articles and chapters. He serves in the editorial boards of some leading journals in the field.

Mohammed Zahid Akter is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Wenzhou-Kean University, Wenzhou, Zhejiang, China. His research interests include typology, language documentation and revitalization, historical linguistics, and South Central Trans-Himalayan (Kuki-Chin Sino-Tibetan) languages.

Felix Banda is a senior professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of the Western Cape. His research interests are focused on the intersection of decolonial theory, translanguaging, and the discursive construction of identities in society and education. He also interested in urban and rural linguistic and cultural practices, linguistic landscapes, multimodal critical pedagogies, and the educational implications of the morpho-phonology of Bantu languages for transnational and Pan-African orthography reform and design. He has published books, book chapters, and journal articles in these areas in reputable peer-reviewed journals and book presses.

Glenys Collard is a Nyungar woman who has been working for and with the Nyungar people across Western Australia for over 35 years. She has contributed extensively to understanding history, language, and culture in Nyungar country and beyond. Glenys was the first to record the Nyungar language with elders Mr. Humphries and Mr. Bennell and has chaired multiple state-level and national committees. Glenys is a published author and has taught workshops to thousands of teachers and university students in Western Australia. Her publications have appeared in top international outlets, including *Journal of Sociolinguistics* and *Language Variation and Change*. She is a consultant to the Oxford English Dictionary and has worked extensively with industry partners, including the WA Department of Education and the Heart Foundation. She is currently working with Google in the production of inclusive technology for First Nations people.

Sithembinkosi Dube is Honorary Research Fellow in the Linguistics Department at Macquarie University and a Sessional Linguistics Lecturer at the University of New South Wales, Australia. She has a PhD in Linguistics (Macquarie University), an MSc in Clinical Linguistics (Potsdam University), and an MPhil and Hons in Linguistics (University of Zimbabwe). Dr Dube is also the Co-Founder of LangDentity, a hybrid language school that offers Ndebele and Shona lessons to Zimbabwean-Australians. Her social enterprise and academic work seek to empower and uplift young people to become great and proud citizens grounded in UBUNTU.

Valentina Gosetti (she/elle/lei) is originally from a small northern Italian town called Collio di Vobarno and now lives on the unceded lands of the Cammeraygal people. She is a speaker of Bresciano, a poetry translator, and Associate Professor in French at the University of New England in Australia. She authored *Aloysius Bertrand's "Gaspard de la Nuit:" Beyond the Prose Poem* (2016), co-edited *Still Loitering: Australian Essays in Honour of Ross Chambers* (2020), and co-edited/co-translated anthology *Donne: Poeti di Francia e oltre – dal Romanticismo a oggi* (2017). Valentina Gosetti is the recipient of a Discovery Early Career Researcher Award from the Australian Research Council for a project entitled 'Provincial Poets and the Making of a Nation' (DE200101206).

Prashneel Ravisan Goundar completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics at the University of New England, NSW, Australia. Prash's research interests are of interdisciplinary nature that sits across fields of Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistic and Educational Linguistics. He is the author of *Pursuing Divinity in Paradise* (2020), *In Simple Words* (2017), *Writing and Publishing in Fiji, and Narratives from Fijian Writers* (2018).

Goundar's latest book *English Language Mediated Settings and Educational Inequalities* with Routledge is due for publication in 2024. He serves on the Editorial Board of Language Teaching Research, English Language Teaching, and the *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*.

Arvind Iyengar is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of New England, Australia. His primary research interest lies in grapholinguistics, namely the study of writing systems, scripts and orthographies from typological and sociolinguistic perspectives.

Tomasz Kamusella is Reader in Modern History at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK. He specializes in the interdisciplinary study of language politics and nationalism in modern Central Europe. Kamusella's recent English-language publications include the monographs *Politics and the Slavic Languages* (2021), *Eurasian Empires as Blueprints for Ethiopia: From Ethnolinguistic Nation-State to Multiethnic Federation* (2021), *Ethnic Cleansing During the Cold War: The Forgotten 1989 Expulsion of Turks from Communist Bulgaria* (2018), and *The Un-Polish Poland, 1989 and the Illusion of Regained Historical Continuity* (2017). His latest work, *Words in Space and Time: A Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* (2021), is available online as an open-access publication.

Mutuota Kigotho lecturers in literacies and numeracies at the University of New England, New South Wales, Australia. His research is focused on literacy and school curriculum in developing countries in general and, more specifically, in Kenya, where he investigates the teaching of narrative composition. Mutuota concerns himself with issues related to how the Kenyan curriculum has been influenced by Britain, the former colonial master. In terms of cultural sensitivities, he calls for an informed response to the needs of Kenyan students in the postcolonial era. He argues that the school system needs to be reformed to suit Kenyan students and teachers.

Sinfree Makoni is Professor of African Studies and Applied Linguistics at Pennsylvania State University and holds multiple Professional appointments at different universities in South Africa. Recent books include *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics from the Global South* (with Alastair Pennycook) and *From Southern Theory to Decolonizing Sociolinguistics: Voices, Questions and Alternatives* (co-edited with Ana Deumert) Multilingual Matters (2023).

Kelvin Mambwe holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of the Western Cape. He has been teaching general linguistics at the University of

Zambia for fourteen years. Kelvin has contributed book chapters on general and Bantu linguistics and published several articles in onomastics, language, music, and other mediated discourses. He also has primary and secondary research interests in regional dialects of Zambian languages, emerging urban ways of communication, business names, nicknames in sports, language, and music.

Linda McIntosh is a PhD candidate at the University of New England, Australia. She is currently undertaking an autoethnographic research project on the language attitudes of 'monolingual' English speakers towards the language practices of migrants in the region of Australia in which she lives. She is also a TESOL teacher, teaching English to adult migrants, a large proportion of whom are migrants with refugee backgrounds. Her work as a TESOL teacher has inspired and driven much of her research project.

Rose Njoki Mutuota is a lecturer at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW, Australia. Her PhD research focused on inclusive instructional strategies in classrooms that are responsive to students' and teachers' cultural knowledge. Rose has extensive experience as a classroom teacher and Special Education teacher in both mainstream and special education settings in both Primary and High school settings, as well as in Intensive English Centres. Rose has extensive knowledge of decolonising the education curriculum and school resources. Rose has qualifications in Inclusive and Special Education, Teaching English and Literature, and TESOL.

Gabriel Nascimento is Professor of Linguistics, Language Education, and English language teaching at Federal University of Southern Bahia, Brazil. In 2019, he was a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, US. Gabriel holds an MD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Brasília and a PhD in Language studies from the University of São Paulo. He has authored and co-authored articles in refereed journals as well as book chapters and books. His recent major publication is a research monograph, *Linguistic racism* (2019).

Finex Ndhlovu is Associate Professor of Language in Society in the School of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences at the University of New England, Australia. His research interests sit at the cutting edge of contemporary linguistic and socio-cultural theories around language, identity, and sociality in relation to transnational African migrant and diaspora communities. Finex's latest major publication is *Pan-African Integration from Below: Language, Publics, Culture* (Mandela University Publishing, in press).

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni is Professor/Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa and Vice-Dean of Research of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. He has published extensively on decolonisation/decoloniality as a perspective which enables reworlding the world from global Africa and the global South in general. His latest major publication is *Beyond the Coloniality of Internationalism: Reworlding the World from the Global South* (CODESRIA Book Series, in press).

Edwin Chris Odhiambo is a doctoral candidate in Language and Society Studies at the University of New England. His passion lies at the intersection of language and politics, with a focus on the intricate dynamics of multilingualism, language planning and policy, and the agency of language-minoritized communities within governance. He is particularly dedicated to the pursuit of social justice issues and exploring epistemologies of the Global South.

Alastair Pennycook is Professor Emeritus at the University of Technology Sydney and Research Professor at the MultiLing Centre at the University of Oslo. His most recent books include *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics from the Global South* (with Sinfree Makoni) and *Language as Assemblage*.

Hamza R'boul is a research assistant professor in the Department of International Education at the Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong. His research interests include intercultural education, (higher) education in the Global South, decolonial endeavours in education, cultural politics of language teaching, and postcoloniality. His latest books include *Intercultural Communication Education and Research: Reenvisioning Fundamental Notions* (2023, with Dervin) and *Postcolonial Challenges to Theory and Practice in ELT and TESOL: Geopolitics of Knowledge and Epistemologies of the South* (2023).

Celeste Rodríguez Louro is Chair of the Linguistics Discipline and Director of the Language Lab at The University of Western Australia. She is also an Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow and a consultant to the Oxford English Dictionary. Celeste is also interested in decolonisation, standardisation, multilingualism, and sustainability. Her publications have appeared in top international outlets such as *Language, Journal of Sociolinguistics,* and *Language Variation and Change*. Celeste currently presents Language Lab, a segment which has featured on RTR FM 92.1 radio since early 2022, and one for which Celeste won a 2023 Talkley Award by the Australian Linguistic Society. Celeste has worked with multiple

industry partners, including the Heart Foundation and Catholic Education. She is currently collaborating with Google to produce inclusive Artificial Intelligence-powered technology for First Nations people.

Dima Rusho is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of Social Sciences, Monash University. Her research interests are at the intersection of language, law, and Indigenous cultures and knowledges. Her current research focuses on Indigenous language interpreting in the justice system, mainly in relation to the cultural and socio-political context of remote Indigenous communities in Australia's Northern Territory. Dima's other areas of research include critical sociolinguistics and decolonial approaches to interpreting and translation.

Cristine Severo is associate professor at Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil) and a CNPq national Fellow. She is interested in Southern perspectives of language and language policy and planning in decolonial contexts. Recent publications include: *Shades of Decolonial Voices in Linguistics* (Multilingual Matters, 2023), co-edited with Sinfree Makoni, Ashraf Abdelhay, Anna Kaiper-Marquez and Višnja Milojičić; *Cosmopolitics and Language* (Letraria; 2023), co-edited in Portuguese with Marcelo Buzato; *The Jesuits and the languages in the colonial relation between Brazil-Africa* (published in Portuguese, 2019), and the forthcoming volumes 1 and 2 on *Sociolinguistics of Protesting* (de Gruyter, forthcoming), co-edited with Ashraf Abdelhay and Sinfree Makoni.

Aaron Sigauke started his career as a high school teacher and later became a lecturer at the higher education level. Currently, Aaron lectures in Social Science Education in the School of Education at the University of New England. With a background in Sociology of Education and Civics and Citizenship Education, Aaron has conducted research and published in several journals and edited books. His areas of research interest include Young People, Citizenship Education and Social Justice; Education Policy; Social and Educational Inclusion; Adult Literacy; and Globalisation and Global Education.

Paul Smith is a composer and Associate Professor in Music at the University of New England who specialises in writing opera and music for the toy piano. His music and operas have premiered in Singapore, the UK, Italy, the USA, and Armenia, in addition to festivals across Australia. He is co-director of the company Blush Opera and regularly collaborates with visual artists and theatre makers. His research focuses on politics of the voice and singing.

Christopher Stroud is Emeritus Professor at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa and Stockholm University, Sweden. He was founder and one-time Director of the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) at UWC. He has researched and taught in Sweden, Papua New Guinea, Mozambique, Singapore, and South Africa. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf) and co-edits with Quentin Williams the journal *Multilingual Margins: A Journal of Multilingualism from the Periphery* and a book series for Bloomsbury together with Kathleen Heugh and Piet van Avermaet entitled 'Multilingualism and Diversities in Education'.

Vera Williams Tetteh is Sociolinguist and Honorary Research Fellow in the Linguistics Department at Macquarie University, Australia. Her published research work centres around language use in society including migrants' language learning, education, and settlement; linguistic justice; and everyday intercultural communication. Vera is a Ghanaian-born Australian woman educator with a passion for positive representations and advocacy work within African migrant communities. She applies an – on, with and for – approach to her explorations of the lived experiences of African migrant families in Australia.

Joel Windle is Associate Professor at the Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion, University of South Australia, and an affiliated member of the postgraduate program in language studies at the Fluminense Federal University, Brazil. His research focuses on educational inequalities, literacy, and linguistic diversity. He is the author of *Making Sense of School Choice: Politics, Policies and Practice under Conditions of Cultural Diversity* (2015).

FOREWORD

I have worked and lived in Mozambique and South Africa for more than three decades, privileged witness to the promises and traumas of changing landscapes of post-independence/post-apartheid. Although rich with yet untapped enormous potential of humanity and resourcefulness, both countries face formidable challenges. Mozambique especially, nearly 50 years after independence, has a depressing scorecard when it comes to inequality and the failed hopes of a tired people: it occupies 180th place out of 189 countries on the UN index of Human Development, has a mere 84 doctors per million inhabitants, an average age expectancy of 60 years, an adult illiteracy rate of 45%, and 56.6% of the population live on less than 1.9 USD per day. In the face of these numbers, the Mozambican philosopher Severino Ngoenha (1993) asks, "What role can philosophy play in building better futures?". While acknowledging the undeniable importance of architects, engineers, doctors, and teachers for lives and livelihoods, Ngoenha argues a strong case for philosophy as a no lesser imperative. Philosophical deliberation can offer valuable input on the meaning of democratic schooling, the significance of urban architecture and public spaces for participatory democracy, and contribute to inclusive ethical registers in medical practice. These are all contributions that put the *human* center stage and lay the groundwork for greater freedom and transformation. Given the interdisciplinarity of Ngoenha's philosophical conversations, I suspect that he, like me, would also welcome the timely contribution of new interdisciplinary conversations on language and decolonization. It is in acts of 'language' (broadly conceived) that aspirations for democratic education, participatory democracy, and the pursuit of material and spiritual well-being can be

achieved. It is in language that liberatory and empowering encounters are managed, where registers of love, hope, and care may craft inclusive, open communities and where new genres of the human can be elaborated and enacted (Fanon, 2008; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Importantly, new interdisciplinary conversations on language and decolonization take an added urgency as language has for centuries been fine-honed to one of the most efficient technologies in the ever-upgraded arsenal of coloniality, a veritable death machine to oppress, ostracize, and dehumanize. Constructs and practices of language have gone hand in glove with the liberal-modernist-enlightenment thought of colonialism, enabling the coding of a politics of difference and identity into the minds and bodies of speakers and undergirding the carnivorous exploitation of people and expropriation of lands that have left the world at the brink of planetary catastrophe.

A particular imperative for conversations on language and decolonization is to address how to unseat Sylvia Wynter's MAN, the White Bourgeois Male, as the only pretender to the Human. MAN is an intolerant and ungenerous interlocutor whose *modus operandi* is to turn a deaf ear to the voices of different Others, to grudgingly grant them a modicum of (imperfect) humanity – if at all – while refusing relationality and constraining agency. Fanon (2008: 22, 84, 86, 87) describes in visceral detail the carnal effects of language as a technology of racialization in how it etches Blackness onto the body as a "racial epidermal schema''; cutting him off from the other and from the self as something existing only "through white eyes" ("my body was given back to me, sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning", an essence of a visible appearance") leading to a perception of self as divided. He calls such a condition *fissiparity*, creatively borrowing a medical term for "dissection under a microscope", to express a "breaking apart". Fanon was writing in the 1950s, but colonialism continues to 'break apart', surreptitiously burrowing itself ever deeper into our minds and bodies, and finding ever new ways to do this. Achille Mbembe talks today of a *techno-molecular* colonialism, one that promotes a predictive notion of the human as algorithmic data sets tailored to markets. Techno-molecular colonialism complements the labor of exploited and expropriated bodies with at-source extraction of our physiologies (diets, medical histories), genetic footprints (DNA Ancestry), tastes and habits (social media), spinning its web "underneath and beyond the skin", sucking up the enzymes that connect bodies to the world to spew back at us. In terms of Nancy Fraser's (2022) "cannibal capitalism", the market now has us literally consuming ourselves – at least our techno-molecular profiles as scripted in the algorithm.

The coloniality of language has kept good pace with techno-molecular colonialism, reproducing the same types of dehumanization and disempowerment through language as bolts and chains colonialism. To talk with a Bot

is to be disciplined to 'heel'; it's to walk the talk of the AI Master. Bots limit and determine what and how we can answer; they engage us as algorithmic predictions, deciding what 'voice' they want to hear, forcing us to stay on script, replacing our agency with algorithmic destiny. This is dialogue, set to strict rules of propositional sequence rather than the rhizomatic give and take of a conversation.

New conversations on language and decolonization must ultimately be about re-humanization (Ramose, 2020; Mashazi and Oostendorp, 2024); to (re)capture our humanity, we need to recapture language. The Afro-Caribbean philosopher and writer Sylvia Wynter, engages Fanon's cry for "new language" for a "new man" in her plea for a new Science of the Word. This would be a science of the storied human, the *homo narrans*, a teller of stories, a genre of the human that is a hybrid mix of *bio* and *mythoi* – an interdisciplinary "rhythmic interplay between nature and narrative" (McKittrick et al., 2018: 867). It is an approach to the human offering an escape from Darwinian determinism and its racial conversations. Chilean neurobiologist Humberto Maturana and colleagues (e.g., Maturana Romesin and Verden-Zoller, 2009) offer one such alternative genre of the human, a *homo sapiens amans*. The 'loving' lineage of the Sapien is tightly tied to a concept of language as evolving out of and with 'love' as a condition of its emergence. As an integral part of our biology as loving and sharing hominids, we live in and co-exist and sustain ourselves and others through language (Bock and Stroud, 2021). Language for Maturana is fundamentally about co-ordination, a social-interactional performance of recognizing and engaging the other in acts of what he calls *language-ing*, that is, *consensual recursive coordinations of coordination* (rather than about *language* as symbolic communication). We co-evolve with language, or rather *conversation*, as part of our biosphere. For Maturana, conversation is a particular ontological category, a bipartite act, a *braiding* of emotionality and languaging. Conversations cluster into cultures. Maturana makes the point that if we want to change our world, we must change our conversations.

Three rich and overlapping contemporary cultures of conversations of relevance to language in rehumanization are postcolonialism, indigineity, and decolonality. Another conversation that engages each of the voices in points of productive convergence is *Linguistic Citizenship* (Stroud, 2001, 2023; Heugh et al., 2021). Born in the intellectual spaces of southern Africa, it sits at the confluence of these seams, engaging by necessity, the question of language and the human in-community in the daily urgencies of deeply unequal societies. As with many of the chapters in the present volume, Linguistic Citizenship emerged out of the practicalities and vulnerabilities of the linguistic everyday, grounded in people's dreams and hopes for a better life, those suffering the injustices of epistemic violence and

material scarcity, where language is at the very nexus of vulnerability in institutionalized public spheres that remain geared to coloniality (Chimbutane, 2011, 2018; Heugh, 2017, 2020; Stroud and Kerfoot, 2021; Williams and Stroud, 2013). Linguistic Citizenship comprises those alternative conversations that take place on the margins of the institutional, often in close synergies with other acts/movements seeking social and political justice. It is about how speakers address and recuperate the lost semiotics of historically marginalized linguistic agency and voices by using, practicing, performing, and thinking with and through language(s) (more broadly semiotic material) as both *targets* for change and simultaneously *mediums* for the transformation of self and others. In acts of linguistic citizenship, speakers craft new emergent political subjectivities of speaker-hood with the potential to create new constituencies of otherwise. In acts of Linguistic Citizenship, speakers attempt to bring languages into recognition on their own terms and in ways that may ultimately serve to transform historical structures of inequity by (re)establishing audibility of different voices and agencies together with the material means that sustain them. Linguistic citizenship entertains a Fanonian concept of language[1] (Mpendukana and Stroud, 2023) and embraces Maturana's call to develop "different conversations". Central is the recognition that to be human is to be in continual *emergence* and that *becoming other* requires an ethics of interlocution that engages 'voice' and recognizes others in co-constructed agency. This is a story of the human in terms of ethico-political *relationality*, one replacing the Darwinian human of cut-throat competition, hierarchy, male patriarchy, and autonomy (Maturana's *homo sapiens arrogans*; Wynter's MAN) with the loving and caring human (Maturana's *homo Sapiens amans*). In this, Linguistic Citizenship is a concept that "adds ideality to the world" by "opening up possibilities for utopian imaginaries" (Grosz, 2011: 79).

Linguistic Citizenship enters into conversation with postcolonialism by asking how we can think of language differently with the ruined seeds (Santos, 2018) sown despite liberal modernity. In so doing, it seeks to revive the promise of an equitable fellowship once brought to life in the post-independent struggles of Nehru, Cesaire, Senghor, Machel, Biko, Magoba, and more. It engages indigeneity as a (contested) *relational* engagement with the colonial encounter (cf. Stroud and Kerfoot, 2021). Here, it focuses on the dynamic thinking and actions of people whose daily engagements with the injustices of dispossession craft worlds of resistance in discourses of multiple and multilayered, co-existing temporalities in southern multilingualisms and registers of *logos*, *patos,* and *ethos* (Heugh, 2017). Linguistic Citizenship shares with decoloniality the ambition to go beyond straight jacketing by universal monologics in search of more pluriversal and counterhegemonic imaginaries of language and citizenship (Ndhlovu and Makalela, 2021).

The current volume is a timely and enticing collection that situates its approach to language in "the sociohistorical complexity of colonialities and regimes of dehumanization, racialization and subjugation" (Ndhlovu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, this volume). The rich case studies cover a variety of genres, from legal and educational policy texts to Aboriginal 'yarning'; from contexts as diverse as First Nations Australia to imperial Russia. These are truly interdisciplinary conversations that bring language into the quotidian concerns that have meaning in people's lives, bringing critical theory to bear on matters of the everyday, highlighting problems but also promising potential in rethought language. The question of what it would mean to decolonize "from within the belly of the empire" (Ndhlovu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, this volume) reminds us that decolonization needs to be a truly planetary endeavor (Ngoenha, 2007), one that, as the editors perspicuously underscore, engages "the imperatives of conviviality, interdependencies, collaboration, and co-creation" (Ndhlovu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, this volume) as the decolonizing Global Souths and Global Norths increasingly align.

Christopher Stroud, University of Western Cape, South Africa

Note

1 Fanon refers to the colonized subject as "reinventing his own language woven with rejected desires" (Fanon, 2008), and in a letter to his publisher, expresses a deep belief in the power of words to transform as opposed to language misrecognized as signification without body.

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1

INTRODUCTION

Reframing the Struggle for New Decolonial Futures

Finex Ndhlovu and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

Setting the Scene

The foundational issue in colonialism has been the struggle over ownership of the planet Earth and whose nomos governs humanity. This means that the colonialists/imperialists were pushed by the will to power and the quest to conquer and establish mastery over the planet Earth and all that inhabited and constituted it. This is why the unfolding of modern colonialism driven by Europeans resulted in the establishment of a transcendental model of power that is called coloniality. Carl Schmitt (2003: 42) termed the rise to planetary dominance of Europe from the fifteenth century onward the "second nomos of the earth". Inevitably, this colonial/imperialist intention and push for planetary dominance provoked resistance and struggles that were and are collectively constitutive of decolonisation/decoloniality. This decolonisation/decoloniality has been fundamentally against what James M. Blaut (1993: 181) termed the "colonizer's model of the world", which put Europe at the centre of the world and peripherised the rest. This is why one finds such scholars as Ibekwe Chinweizu (1975: 221) writing about how Europe divided humanity on the planet Earth into "the West and the rest of us". Therefore, the central imperative of decolonisation/decoloniality has been to resist the colonial/imperialist paradigm of difference and to lay the foundation for a new logic of the Earth as a shared home of everyone – inclusive of humans and non-humans (other selves).

Inevitably, the decolonisation/decoloniality struggles initiated and advanced by those who have been pushed to the periphery, the dominated, and the exploited have to embrace diverse grammars of liberation

and multiple formations. As a struggle, it had to be driven and propelled through various 'turns'. With specific reference to the field of languages as a terrain of struggles over linguistic rights and against the coloniality of language, some such 'turns' that have received differing levels of uptake include "social, somatic, sensory, ecological, performative, discursive, spatial, material, ontological, practice-based turns" (Morgan et al., 2019: viii). 'Translanguaging' (García & Kleyn, 2016) and 'metrolingualism' (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015) are among the latest additions to the long list of contemporary turns in the field. Since colonialism/coloniality left no aspect of modern life not subjected to its transcendental model of power, the diverse languages of the peoples were not spared the hammer of subjection. Languages not only became hierarchised, but others suffered what Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2009: 7–9) termed "linguicides" and yet others experienced "linguifam".

However, if there is a domain in which colonialism failed in its mission, it was in the language domain. Linguicides only became a reality when they were backgrounded by genocides. Where genocides failed, linguicides failed, too. Only linguifam, that is, peripherisation and pushing out of official communication, the indigenous languages succeeded. It is, therefore, not surprising that in pursuit of linguistic liberation, a crucial foundational premise shared by these turns is the call for unbounding language from its position as an object of study and situating it in the sociohistorical complexity of colonialities and regimes of dehumanisation, racialisation, and subjugation. As the study of language and society continues to evolve, current scholarship is increasingly drawing on approaches that stress the importance of thinking otherwise, learning to unlearn, and theorising from the Southern and Indigenous standpoints to decentre the overbearing hegemony of colonial models and approaches.

A more contemporary turn of particular importance to the field is the 'decolonial turn'. This is a summary term for those formerly marginalised, culturally-specific understandings of knowledge and the associated discourses on knowledge production. The 'decolonial turn' seeks not only a change in the contents of conversation but also a change in the limits and conditions of conversations (Mignolo, 2000) about languages, cultural identities, and regimes of knowledge. It is "an-other thought" that seeks to inaugurate "an-other logic", "an-other language", and "an-other thinking" (Mignolo, 2011: 56) through interrogating hegemonic epistemologies, such as those inherited from the colonial view of the world.

The argument is that mainstream understandings of languages and cultures that have prevailed for a long time are attached to a set of unpromising associations with language as an enumerable object (as opposed to language as a process or medium of cognition). Such understandings of languages

and cultures are sustained by flawed and misleading commonsense assumptions: that the things we call languages and cultures today are of a natural kind; that they have always been there. Yet, as critical social science scholars have long argued, languages and cultures are social constructs that sustain the dominant ideologies of the time. For this reason, some scholars have gone as far as characterising languages and cultures as invented categories that need to be disinvented (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007); and as semiotic artefacts of colonial archives of knowledge that betray coloniality of language (Ndhlovu, 2020) and coloniality of culture (Quijano, 2000).

This book advances a compelling need to re-think, for example, the supposed universal relevance of established approaches to the study of language and society. We need to re-examine mainstream discourses, praxes, and applications of language to fully understand how languages are regarded differently in various contexts and timespans. Alternative approaches and methodologies that open a promising avenue for re-evaluating colonial ideologies of language must address at least the following five questions: What role did the Euro-modernist colonial order of the world play in inventing current mainstream ideologies of language and cultures? What would the ongoing global push for decolonisation look like when seen through the lens of critical sociolinguistic approaches? Might it be possible to develop new vocabularies and new grammars to advance counter-narratives, counter-imaginaries, and counter-hegemonic strategies we can use to push back the frontiers of colonial matrices of power that underpin dominant ideologies of languages and cultures? How might the precolonial and Indigenous archives of knowledge contribute to the co-creation of an alternative anti-colonial and anti-conventional body of thought on languages and cultures? And how might we operationalise 'decolonising' as a methodology and approach in our field?

This collection of chapters addresses these and related questions to canvass new directions in the study of language and decolonisation. Through stressing the interdisciplinary and unifying potential of insights from diverse cultural and knowledge traditions, the volume contributes new points of method, theory, and interpretation. The book is a timely and relevant intervention that fosters interdisciplinary dialogues aimed at unsettling the global coloniality of language and concomitant discourses around different mutations of domination, control, and the exercising of power over colonised human populations and their mental universes. The collection is organised into two parts with seventeen main chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. Part One lays out and explicates theories, concepts, and debates that are taken up in Part Two, which focuses on critical reflections, empirical studies, and applications. The contributions (i) adopt a historical approach to global coloniality that dates to at least the last 500 years; and (ii) utilise

'decolonising' as a methodology and approach to their analyses. Combined and individually, all chapters search for fruitful pathways for exploring the next steps in decolonising language and associated meta-discourses as well as their application in diverse social, political, and educational contexts.

Concepts, Theories, Debates

Part One consists of seven chapters that introduce, trouble, and elaborate key concepts upon which decolonising projects are predicated. In the following paragraphs, we present a selection of some such key concepts that are seeded throughout the seven chapters. In Chapter 2, Alastair Pennycook and Sinfree Makoni disrupt commonsense understandings of 'Global Souths' (in the plural). They clarify that this concept is not straightforward and that it must not be conflated with the geographical south – land south of the equator. Rather, 'Global Souths' is a geopolitical idea that excludes regions of relative wealth in the geographical south and includes Indigenous and disenfranchised regions and people of the geographical north. In their analysis, Alastair Pennycook and Sinfree Makoni echo their previous work on this concept (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020) and the views of other decolonial theorists such as Ndhlovu & Makalela (2021); Léglise (2019); Connell (2014); Comaroff & Comaroff (2011); De Sousa Santos (2011). According to De Sousa Santos (2011: 39), the Global South is "a metaphor for human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on the global level, as well as for the resistance that seeks to overcome or minimize such suffering".

As Isabelle Léglise (2019) advises, such a definition of the Global Souths captures a phenomenon that exists both in the North and in countries of the South. This means instead of following a discourse that might seem to suggest the world is split into two geographical zones, the Global South is to be understood as a metaphorical and epistemological concept (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020) that refers to experiences or conditions of colonial exploitation, exclusion, epistemological extraversion (Hountonji, 1997), and marginalisation that are common to diverse societies at the global scale. These clarifications advance the project of decolonising by prompting us to think deeply about the discourse of universalism, or what Ndhlovu (2023) calls the "coloniality of universalism", a term that describes how Euro-modernist imperial forces colonised the idea of the "universal" and used it to conquer the knowledges, cultures, and languages of everyone else around the world. Through colonialism, the very essence of what it means to be human and to know was reduced to a parochial construct of Euro-modernity. It is this colonised idea of universalism and that of Global Souths which must be redeemed. As Pennycook and Makoni suggest (this volume), a redeemed

concept of Global Souths must be the rallying point from which diverse networks of local academic and non-academic communities fighting for social, educational, and cognitive justice converge to exchange ideas, experiences, and strategies for charting common global futures (Ndhlovu, 2023: 3).

Felix Banda and Kelvin Mambwe (Chapter Three) propose repurposing translanguaging as an analytical lens for disrupting and levelling linguistic hierarchies of power that are embedded in language policies. Although translanguaging was pioneered in contexts that are epistemologically Northern, it has all the hallmarks of a progressive and liberatory perspective that is aligned with the agendas of decolonising. With its call to look at language not as a bounded entity but as speakers' repertoires, translanguaging is consistent with the anti-foundational and anti-conventional stance of social science scholarship that advances the decolonial perspective. Banda and Mambwe (this volume) suggest further elaboration of the decolonial perspective to disavow the formalised one-language epistemic system and vertical structuring of languages where imperial languages such as English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese occupy the top tiers of the hierarchy with languages of former colonial outposts consigned to the bottom.

Another key concept introduced in Part One is that of 'linguistic' encirclement. In Chapter Four, Finex Ndhlovu and Edwin Chris Odhiambo take up, broaden, and repurpose the concept of 'linguistic encirclement' that Ngugi wa Thiong'o pioneered in the 1980s. Wa Thiong'o (1986) introduced this concept to describe how Africans were colonised and territorialised through the deployment of European languages in ways that invented balkanised African identities based on colonial heritages. The consequence was imposed and alien nomenclature such as Francophone Africa, Anglophone Africa, Lusophone Africa, all being identifications and definitions informed by imposed languages. Ndhlovu and Odhiambo extend the critique of linguistic encirclement, making it one of the key decolonial grammars for speaking about invented categories of languages that have an encircling effect on identity imaginings, educational policies, and other social policy agendas. They argue that invented language and identity categories continue to advance the Euro-modernist cognitive empire by consigning people into enclaves and hierarchies of humanity that would enhance colonial exploitation, domination, and control.

Encirclement affects people's praxes, their agency, their thinking, their independence, their autonomy, their creativity, and their ontology (Ndhlovu & Odhiambo, this volume). There is no action that encircled individuals and groups can take, which is on their own terms unless, of course, they manage to subvert the system through exercising epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011). Epistemic disobedience entails doing at least the following two things simultaneously: (i) troubling normative (colonial)

traditions of knowing and de-linking from them; and (ii) embracing other ways of knowing and being that (re)introduce alternative languages, grammars, vocabularies, memories, economies, and social organisations that accord with diverse ontological subjectivities (Mignolo, 2011: 63). For Ndhlovu and Odhiambo (this volume), the posture of epistemic disobedience is necessary because it urges us to shift the focus from languages of the state (that have an encircling effect) to the languages of the people (that liberate and empower).

In Chapter Five, Zahid Akter and Arvind Iyengar introduce the concept of niche languages to shed light on the quintessential colonial approach to viewing linguistic diversity as a beast to be tamed and its present-day manifestation in postcolonial avatars. Akter and Arvind (this volume) suggest that locally-grounded language use and maintenance are best achieved when languages find their respective niches in the ecology and co-exist in mutual harmony, with different languages being used in specific domains in a complementary manner. Such an approach both dovetails with precolonial plurilingual traditions of the Global South and has the potential to liberate Indigenous communities from the implicit pressures of expanding their domains of language use while simultaneously inventing a standardised written form. In introducing the concept of niche languages, Akter and Iyengar seek to expose the problematic aspects of colonial approaches to linguistic diversity, along with their evident and not-so-evident impacts. They point to the limitations and blind spots of what are otherwise well-intentioned attempts to replace a colonial language with an indigenous one as the 'national' or 'official' language. Such efforts at decolonising language policies and practices inadvertently perpetuate the colonial tactic of promoting one language – and its affiliated sociopolitical group – at the expense of others.

The last set of concepts that promises to enrich the discourse and praxis of decolonising languages comes from Chapter Eight, authored by Finex Ndhlovu. In this chapter, Ndhlovu yokes together the three concepts of global coloniality, trickster discourse, and habitus and suggests that these can be used as a framework for decolonising language testing regimes in contemporary Western societies. He posits that although language proficiency tests are, to a degree, useful in informing measurement and assessment in a range of social and educational contexts, they do have a dark side that betrays the hallmarks of coloniality of power and trickster discourse. Drawing on the earlier work of Banazak & Ceja (2010), Ndhlovu says global coloniality refers to a pattern of comprehensive and deep-reaching power spread throughout the world. It is about how, even when the formal process of colonisation has ended, there remains a form of power, which produces, uses, and legitimises differences between societies and forms of

knowledge. Ndhlovu uses the metaphor of the complex mythological character of the trickster that appears in folk stories among most Indigenous communities around the world (the spider, the hare, the coyote, the raven) to characterise subtleties of language testing regimes. When coupled with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the proverbial character of the trickster generates a nuanced explanatory paradigm for unpacking the complex mechanisms of global coloniality. Global coloniality is the trickster hidden behind language tests (the habitus). Therefore, trickster discourse can help us illuminate the ways in which language and citizenship tests have historically been used as convenient technology by central authorities to exercise power and control over non-desired individuals and groups alike.

Critical Reflections, Empirical Studies, Applications

Three cross-cutting themes and lines of argument are explored across ten chapters in Part Two. The first theme is critical reflections on decolonising languages from Indigenous perspectives. Two chapters, one by Glenys Collard and Celeste Rodríguez Louro (Chapter Twelve) and the other by Dima Rusho (Chapter Thirteen), draw attention to the importance of centering Indigenous perspectives on language in our theories and praxes. With a critical eye on storytelling as methodology, Collard and Louro (this volume) posit that to Indigenous and First Nations people, academic research is historically intertwined with other forms of colonialism and injustice. Drawing on their work with the *Nyungar boodjar* Aboriginal communities of Southwest Western Australia, they describe a cross-cultural research model that allowed them to document varieties of Aboriginal English. Collard and Louro's research is the first to document sociolinguistic aspects of Aboriginal English yarning – a First Nations cultural form of storytelling and conversation – which they used to capture the voices of those rarely featured in sociolinguistic research. The First Nations-led fieldwork not only made it possible to document previously marginalised voices for sociolinguistic research into storytelling. The recordings also allowed the authors to understand the importance of storytelling for speakers of Aboriginal English, specifically, its role as a culturally appropriate means to convey information and share knowledge. Based on this analysis, Collard and Louro suggest that the process of decolonising linguistics practice must entail hearing decolonial stories of First Nations peoples to develop new design methods that honour different ways of being and doing in the world. They introduce aspects of a participatory model that allowed them to re-think the discipline of linguistics as a more inclusive and socially just enterprise. To move closer towards decolonisation, they propose a decolonising enterprise that rests on (i) the need to hear the voices of those rarely featured in linguistic research; and

(ii) sharing knowledge in the creation of collaborative projects that engage First Nations communities meaningfully and sustainably.

Dima Rusho takes up (further) the theme of centering Indigenous and First Nations perspectives in language interpreting in Australian legal settings. Her point of departure is the recognition that Indigenous language interpreting in Australia has always taken place within a colonial context. She explores how enduring colonial relations of power contribute to the discretionary use of interpreters in institutional contexts. Specifically, Rusho's chapter examines the unequal distribution of power in the justice system that places the decision to engage interpreters predominantly in the hands of those in positions of power, such as judicial officers, police, and legal professionals, often leaving Indigenous language speakers without much-needed interpreting assistance. Applying a 'coloniality of language' lens demonstrates the ways in which how colonial ideologies continue to shape attitudes towards Indigenous languages and impact speakers' linguistic needs that are rarely addressed in legal, institutional contexts. Rusho's contribution arrives at three conclusions with significant implications for decolonising language practice in legal contexts: (i) that anti-colonial approaches must involve creating the opportunities for Indigenous leadership to incorporate Indigenous languages and knowledges into novel and reimagined frameworks of justice; (ii) that it is only by engaging in transformative efforts that we can finally begin to redress historical and ongoing language-based injustices; and (iii) that a recalibration and reorientation of power dynamics in the justice system and the genuine empowerment of First Nations language speakers and interpreters are required if we are to successfully right the ongoing wrongs of colonialism and social injustices in legal contexts.

The second theme explored in Part Two is the application of decolonial concepts to inform social and educational policies where language is implicated. Chapter Nine (Rose Njoki Mutuota and Mutuota Kigotho); Chapter Ten (Prashneel Ravisan Goundar); and Chapter Eleven (Hamza R'boul) draw attention to imperatives of decolonising in the context of language policies and language and literacy education. Drawing on the example of Kenya, Mutuota and Kigotho suggest that decolonising languages and literacies education must start with liberating one's mind (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). They point out that in Kenya, strategies have been put in place by activists and proponents of change to decolonise the language and literacy practices of individuals and communities. The Kamirithu Community Theatre is one such example. The group has staged plays written and directed in the Gĩkũyũ language. Another example has been an increase in local music artists who perform at parties, clubs, and family gatherings using a wide range of local language repertoires and literacies to challenge and unsettle

the normative colonial canon. The decolonised literacies that Mutuota and Kigotho discuss go beyond language and include community assets such as a community's interconnectedness/relationships; the use of the circle and semi-circle in community meetings and schools, the use of storytelling, riddles, songs, and proverbs to transmit knowledge.

Exploring the same theme of decolonising the canon in language education policy, Prashneel Ravishan Goundar takes us to the South Pacific. Goundar provides an in-depth analysis of the negative consequences of colonisation in the education systems of South Pacific nations, which he says must be decolonised. He shows how, in the South Pacific countries, the most common forms of educational inequalities concern the curriculum, lack of resources, language of instruction, and shortage of teachers. Goundar also brings to light the impact of poor infrastructure and the gap between urban and rural schools as some of the key contributors to educational inequalities. Drawing on the previous body of literature and data from ethnographic studies conducted in Fiji, Goundar's chapter puts forward suggestions for pushing back the frontiers of colonially inherited educational inequalities in the South Pacific. These include reassessing the quality and relevance of curriculum materials, the need for contextualised and relevant Pacific curricula, and looking at the validity and reliability of assessments.

Chapter Eleven, authored by Hamza R'boul, extends the arguments advanced by Goundar by taking us to Morocco. R'boul unpacks language planning and policies in Morocco as a Southern space that has been grappling with its postcolonial positionality and epistemic dependency on French (the ex-colonial code). He argues that some peripheries are making use of the coloniality of language by advancing English as a decolonial option to undo the lingering legacies of colonial languages such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. That is, some peripheries are replacing linguistic colonialism with linguistic coloniality. To illustrate this point, R'boul draws on the coloniality of language as an analytical lens for reading new meanings into Morocco's language policy conundrums. The chapter joins the critical body of literature that is developing alternative epistemologies into the sociopolitical and sociolinguistic intricacies of English in the peripheries, reflecting the exigency of nuanced knowledges in accounting for multilingualisms, postcolonial malaises and vulnerabilities to colonial workings. The chapter examines the coloniality of language and its overarching implications into the peripheries' epistemological positionalities as they are reflected in the Morocco's language planning and policies. R'boul posits that the political instrumentalisation of language betrays the Moroccan state's failures to signal a true (post)colony as it sustains supposedly 'liberal' and 'progressive' language policies that enforce English to earn acceptance from the

dominant and hegemonic Anglosphere of the world. The analysis of Morocco's language policies illustrates concepts of trickster habitus, coloniality of language, and global coloniality canvassed in Part One of this collection as an analytical lens for canvassing alternative futures.

The third theme is in the form of a question: What might decolonising from the centre – that is, from within the belly of the empire – look like? A selection of three chapters in Part Two addresses this question. Together, the three chapters that explore this theme illustrate complexities surrounding the concepts of Global Souths and Global Norths that Alastair Pennycook and Sinfree Makoni problematise in Part One. The first is by Paul Smith, who draws on the multilingual tradition of opera, theories of authorship and performance, and the embodiment of knowledge in song to shed light on ongoing modes of decolonisation in opera. Case studies include two 2022/2023 productions by New Zealand's national opera company, NZ Opera: *Ihitai'Avei'a – Star Navigator* (2023) by Célestine Hitiura Vaite, Tim Finn, and Tom McLeod, and Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762) titled *(m)Orpheus*. A key question addressed is in what ways do these productions depart from the coloniality of European opera, and what framework is needed to address this question?

Smith spotlights the colonising force of opera that is counterbalanced by its decolonising potential, which is more abstract. The chapter weighs into this conundrum by focusing on the writing and conception of new works that are First Nations-led, ones that lean on opera's neutrality as a medium for attempting to decolonise from within the centre of an empire. Additionally, the community of diverse singers that do not necessarily create new works but bring new understandings to *pre-existing* opera is considered. The chapter by Smith shows that there exists an uncomfortable tension and an unresolved cadence between whether opera returns to and points towards a Eurocentric tradition or if the positive potential of singing redirects and restructures systems of meaning and history in real-time. How static/robust is opera in relation to decolonisation? Arguing for the promotion of a new perspective on opera does not negate other perspectives on the way that it might affirm coloniality (Smith, this volume). Both the opera and scholar communities wrestle with the shape and content of works and the way that they resonate with contemporary audiences, and, as Smith adds, it is only from sharp insights that have pointed out the colonial fabric of opera that communities can seek new models and practices that disrupt, unsettle, and challenge the overbearing hegemony of the imperial centre.

In Chapter Sixteen, Valentina Gosetti extends Smith's arguments by weighing into the question of post-revolutionary 'glottophobia' and the bill against 'accent discrimination' in France. Gosetti explores the strong nexus between language purity and national identity in the modern nation-state of

France as well as the recent tortuous journey to embrace linguistic diversity and promote language justice. She provides a detailed account and analysis of France's 2022 entry for the hugely popular international Eurovision that featured a song in Breton entitled "Fulenn" [Sparkle]. The song was performed by Alvan, an electronic music artist, in collaboration with Ahez, a vocal trio formed by singers Marine, Stereen, and Stereen. The artists, all from Brittany, decided to represent France by singing a song in Breton, their own language. This seemingly uncontentious choice sparked a heated controversy on social media, with some people on Twitter blaming this "backward" linguistic choice as the chief culprit for a disappointing twenty-fourth placement in the competition, "by choosing a song in a regional *patois* that no one understands". Those who defended the band's choice of language said Breton is not a mere *patois* but a *proper language* in its own right. As Gosetti (this volume) argues, this apparently trivial example is symptomatic of centuries of linguistic discrimination in France, the linguicism on which the "*République une et indivisible*" had been founded – or what French linguist Philippe Blanchet (2019) has termed "*glottophobie*". Blanchet's concept of glottophobia continues to be quoted since it was introduced in a 2019 bill at the Assemblé Nationale. France's lower parliament chamber, aimed at banning all discrimination based on regional accents, argued that this must be considered equal to other forms of discrimination like racism and sexism. By charting France's history of language oppression and "internal colonialism", from the French Revolution's efforts through to present times, Gosetti's chapter draws attention to the contradictions and conundrums of attempting to decolonise Global Souths from within.

In discussing the invisibility of Russian imperialism, Tomasz Kamusella (Chapter Seventeen) adds a unique and interesting perspective to the question of what decolonising from within the belly of the empire might look like. Kamusella argues that Russian imperialism and the existence of Russia's colonies have been stringently denied for the past three centuries in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and now in the Russian Federation. At the same time, the Russian language and culture have been consistently employed for colonising the subject peoples to replace their precolonial languages and cultures. In turn, abroad, teaching Russian as a single nation's language and promoting Russian literature within Russian studies have effectively blinded the West and all the world to the past and the current mechanisms of Russian imperialism.

Coming against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Kamusella's chapter is a timely intervention that reminds us of the subtleties of coloniality in the former Soviet Union region and Eastern Europe in general. He spotlights the West's myopia, or even delusion, about Russian imperialism from two perspectives. First, the discussion focuses on

the present-day Russian government's observed practice of (ab)using the Russian language and culture for neo-imperial ends. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine did away with any illusions in the West about whether Russia is a colonial empire or not. Politicians and journalists are now actively commenting on the neo-imperial nature of Russia's governance and politics. But, the discourse has not percolated into Western academia yet. Second, Kamusella probes into the persistent lack of methodological reflection on the Cold War discipline of Russian studies. He says this situation helps to continue and 'justify' the disciplinary dominance of the Russian language and culture in the research on the post-Soviet space and especially the Slavophone postcommunist countries from the former Soviet bloc. The significance of Kamusella's contribution rests on the possible methodological postures for decolonising inside the belly of the colonial empire.

To conclude, the point of greater significance in this collection of chapters is one about how decolonising must be conceived as a planetary project, one that is understandably inspired by the travails of the Global Souths while simultaneously seeking to rehabilitate the Global Norths. This might come across as a contradiction of sorts, but it is not. The crucial point is one about ontologies of incompleteness and interconnections (Nyamnjoh, 2017, 2020). Global Souths and Global Norths exist relationally. Neither of them can meaningfully exist without the other. This effectively means that decolonising Global Souths is *ipso facto* engaging in a project that must be committed to decolonising Global Norths. Such imperatives of conviviality, interdependences, collaboration, and co-creation inform the lines of argument advanced in this collection of chapters.

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