The Making of the New German Citizen: Language and Education through a Postcolonial Lens

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Introduction

> It [the interdict] remains facile and ambiguous to the extent that this limit was never set down, enacted either as an act of law – an official decree, a sentence – or like a physical, natural, or organic barrier. There was neither a natural frontier nor a juridical boundary. We had the choice, the formal right, to learn or not learn Arabic or Berber. Or Hebrew. It was not illegal, or a crime. […] The interdict worked therefore through other ways. More subtle, peaceful, silent, and liberal ways. It took other forms of revenge. (Derrida 1998, 32)

The beginning of this millennium has heralded a novelty in the history of the German nation-state: children born in Germany can acquire

German citizenship according to *ius soli,* the principle of territory. The erstwhile law known as the "Nationality Act" of 22 July 1913 [*Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*] had foreseen nationality primarily according to *ius sanguinis*, the principle of descent. The reform to the Nationality Act passed on 15 July 1999 [*Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*] extended the access of citizenship to children born in Germany whose parents had migrated from another country, if certain requirements were fulfilled (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2025a). Within five years of this historical amendment ushering in a long-awaited move towards inclusion of children and their potential political participation, adults too were addressed as prospective new citizens. Subsequently, the naturalisation programme superseded an older regulation of 1990 regarding foreigners [*Ausländergesetz*], and a new law, the "Act to Control and Restrict Immigration and to Regulate the Residence and Integration of EU Citizens and Foreigners", in short, the "Immigration Law" [*Zuwanderungsgesetz*], was enacted on 30 July 2004 (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2025b).

In spite of neither the state nor the populace ever wholeheartedly acknowledging – and on the contrary, wilfully denying and obfuscating the fact – that Germany was indeed a country of immigration, it had, in fact, been a much sought-after destination and the long-term domicile of labour, economic, academic, and refugee migrants as well as their families in the post-war era of the 20th century (Stokes 2022). This lived reality, however, was hardly reflected either in the discourse and manifestos of major political parties or in the reports and analysis of mainstream media and academicians. More importantly, the laws of the land did not mirror the experience on the ground. Therefore, the juridical amendments that took effect from the beginning of 2000 and 2005 respectively constitute a significant milestone. Both these changes brought Germany in step with many other countries in Western Europe such as Netherlands, France, Sweden, and Great Britain (Expert Council 2015). The introduction of proficiency in the "official state language" as

a new criterium was a commonality shared by many of these countries (Extra, Spotti and van Avermaet 2009, 8). German language proficiency thus became a benchmark for obtaining citizenship for adults in Germany, documented by citizenship tests (Byrne 2014; Stevenson and Schanze 2009).

This paper takes the juridical amendments towards an ostensibly inclusive citizenship in Germany at the turn of the century as its starting point and focuses on the role of language and education in the making of the new citizen. The shift from blood and descent, *ius sanguinis*, to soil and territory, *ius soli*, has actually meant a foregrounding of language as "*ius linguarum*" (Gramling 2009, 25). While it is well established that educational institutions in the 18th and 19th centuries were constitutive in nation-building processes bringing forth and establishing a standardisation of a "national language" as imparted in schools to multidialectal and multilingual pupils (Gogolin et al. 2023), educational institutions have played a pivotal yet ambivalent role in enabling and empowering whilst simultaneously othering and excluding its clientele. A critical view looks back at 100 years of compulsory schooling from 1919 onwards and notes that although "[t]he 'primary school common for all' was supposed to be a German, nationally, linguistically and socially inclusive school", in reality, it "resulted in the exclusion of children of foreign national origin and in the marginalization of children with non-German ethnic and linguistic affiliation" (Krüger-Potratz 2019, 383). The educational system in Germany continues to construct and bring forth the internal Other through its constant differentiation, comparison, selection, and segregation (Steinbach, Shure and Mecheril 2022). The hierarchisation in the 20th century was marked by unremittingly contrasting "German" with so-called "foreign" pupils – read as the children and grandchildren of erstwhile labour migrants and refugees who were most probably born and socialised in Germany. Nonetheless, the amendment to the law meant that many a pupil now was "German", as far as the citizenship was concerned. In an unreflective manner, or perhaps by sleight of hand, new terms like "background of migration" [*Migrationshintergrund*] and "hotspot schools"

[*Brennpunktschule*] were coined to find ways to continue distinguishing and discriminating, and more significantly, to find a scapegoat for Germany's mediocre performance in international evaluations like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which coincided with the progressive reforms in an environment altered by politics and policies (Hummrich 2023; Walgenbach 2014).

This article investigates the link between language, education, and citizenship, taking its inspiration from selections of the writings of postcolonial (Derrida), anticolonial (Fanon), and decolonial (Grosfuguel) thinkers. The first section takes its cue from Ramón Grosfuguel's delineation of the four intellectual genocides in the quest for knowledge that brings forth exclusion within society creating the Other along axes of difference like gender, religion, and corporeality. Furthermore, it examines the imperative directed towards the colonised or the purportedly weaker in asymmetrical power relations to suit the needs, or rather, the nightmarish vision of the coloniser, or face dire consequences, lest they do not transform themselves. The second section is dedicated to unearthing the nuances and unspoken proscriptions that ensue regarding familial languages and their place, or contrariwise the lack of it, in educational spaces and curriculum. Here, Frantz Fanon's psychological analysis of internalising the gaze of the coloniser as "epidermalization" and Jacques Derrida's reflections on "interdiction" regarding languages in the educational system serve as guiding lights. The third and final section engages with the figure of the "native informant" as critiqued and recalibrated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and connects the ambivalent modifier "native" with deliberations about the native reader, the native speaker, and the native writer, thus seeking to map the canvas about language in its variations as inscription, (in)audibility, (il)legibility, and ultimately (il)legitimacy.

The internal Other or the exclusion within

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the culturally and racially encoded Othering/selfing could no longer be explicitly related to "race"

in Germany. Instead, assorted equivalents furthered the discourse in a coded fashion. These remained under the radar, yet comprehensible to all concerned without having to explicitly mention "race" (Alexopoulou 2021; Balibar 1991). Various axes of difference such as religion, ethnicity, language, and migration functioned as equivalents to the category of race. Racism, according to Karin Scherschel (2006), operates as a "flexible symbolic resource" and swiftly finds new avenues to discursively impose new orders and differentiations. In post-war Germany, otherwise marked by breaks, fissures, and volitional historical erasure, the "German language" functioned as an identificatory constant (Stukenbrock 2005) in the migration society. The "re-unification" of the two German nation-states in 1990 intensified the debate about German-ness and set the (discursive) ball rolling. "Language", besides shared history and other commonalities, functioned as a common ground in aiding the coalescence of the two German people – the former East Germany known as the German Democratic Republic and the former West Germany known as the Federal Republic of Germany – separated by different political systems for 40 years from 1949 to 1989. In the quest towards finding cohesions and interconnectedness within what was perceived and projected as "German", a churning ensued in the re-unified German polity, which manifested itself in two contradictory fashions.

On the one hand, the readiness for violence was palpable in the wake of the re-unification with fatal or near-fatal consequences through the 1990s. Marked by an openly rightward shift in the discourse and a silent acquiescence cloaked as helplessness among certain conservative political parties and law enforcement forces, the post-transition era, i.e., the period after the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the merging of both the German states into one nation, was rung in by widespread attacks on individuals, and on dwellings of labour migrants and asylum seekers as well as a systematic targeting of those perceived as weak, different, simply the other, and thereby, foreign. In fact, instead of reigning in the societal elements prone to violence and bringing them to book, fostering solidarity through comprehensive educational measures, raising general

awareness through systematic campaigns against violence and hate whilst simultaneously providing adequate security to (potential) targets of this mindless violence, the tables were turned. The laws of asylum in Germany were tightened and turned restrictive leading to a constitutional reform in 1993, known in common parlance as the "asylum compromise". Patrice Poutrus (2014, 115) highlights "the contradictions between a liberal constitutional law of political asylum and a restrictive institutional practice of migration policy", characterised allegedly by "a combination of democratic values and the traditional notion of national belonging in reunified Germany."

On the other hand, the very same re-unification brought about a shift in the political regime stoking debates about the need to actively address and include alien residents who had a secure and (near) permanent residence status in Germany. Tomas Hammar (1990, 13f.) explains that "[a] new status group has emerged, and members of this status group are not regular and plain foreign citizens anymore, but also not naturalised citizens of the receiving country" whom he called "denizens". The debates circled around providing political participation to longtime residents with the possibility of voting rights which only citizenship as status would ensure. The coalition comprising the Social Democrats and Alliance 90/The Greens came to power in 1998 and was at the helm for two terms till 2005. The Red-Green coalition, as it was also known, translated the progressive discussions and demands into the aforementioned laws. The "Nationality Act" and the "Immigration Law" encompassed children and then adults into the fold of the German citizenry respectively.

Apart from fulfilling certain criteria such as the length of residency in Germany, the ability to provide financially for oneself etc, the shift in the 21st century was marked by "German language proficiency" being introduced as a benchmark for obtaining citizenship for adults. David Gramling (2009) christens this novelty *ius linguarum*, the right or principle of language. Citizenship tests, thus, came into being (Fortier 2022). The

tests were a work-in-progress in the initial years and involved a German language test, both written and oral, as well as multiple-choice questions about the history and political life in Germany, taught in so-called orientation courses. Centres of German language teaching and testing, funded by the state, were established and, due to the robust demand, several more sprang up quickly throughout the country, leading to a comprehensive network of actors. German language teaching for adult migrants under the rubric "German as Second Language" [*Deutsch als Zweitsprache*] was systematised for the first time in the first decade of the 21st century (Ahrenholz et al. 2012), although the language German had been taught as a foreign language to children and adults worldwide for many decades in the 20th century. The privileged construct of "German as first language" remains unmarked by the dominant society and in need of deconstruction in terms of its power, whereas constructions such as "German as second language" or "German as foreign language" are riddled with classisms and linguicisms. "Language" and, in a broader sense, "belonging" have ever since been an arena of contention and discursive interest with tugs, shifts, and re-framings of who is German, and more importantly who is not, with myriad attempts at inclusion and exclusion along various axes of differentiation. On the heels of this progressive and inclusive transformation arose questions about the meaning of shared and non-shared guilt, experience, and memory (Rothberg and Yildiz 2011), reversing and relativising the sense of "belonging" now within the chimerical reach of the "new Germans".

A reading sensitive to the colonial past and its continuities in the contemporary society is not only cognisant of the colonial beginnings that have been rendered invisible but also aware of other continuities that might predate the formation of the nation-state. Configurations from different historical times and geographical locations demonstrate the manner in which the "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2000, 533) and the coloniality of knowledge form, structure, and impinge upon our thinking in an all-pervasive manner. Mechanisms of invisibilising operate through language, while concurrently "language" itself proves to be an invaluable "hiding place" (Dirim 2016, 202) and a perfect

diversion for the continuance of racialised societal structuring. Two different but connected moments serve as an illustration as to how the internal Other is created and faces either extermination or is subjected to the constant demand to reform and transform itself.

In *The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities*, Ramón Grosfuguel (2013) engages with the consequences of four genocides for global structures of knowledge. Building upon the writings of the decolonial thinker and philosopher Enrique Dussel and his questioning of the Cartesian logic, the essay describes the creation of the internal Other and illustrates the process of Othering as an intellectual genocide. In this case, the Other possesses knowledge which is of value and relevance. A discrediting of the knowledge, the knowledge production, and producers of this knowledge is achieved through insidious acts of violence which Grosfuguel terms "epistemicides", "against Jewish and Muslim origin population in the conquest of Al-Andalus, against indigenous people in the conquest of the Americas, against Africans kidnapped and enslaved in the Americas and against women burned alive, accused of being witches in Europe" (Grosfuguel 2013, 73). The time frame he chooses for this illustration is the long 16th century, a concept attributed to the French historian, Ferdinand Braudel, with a timespan of 200 years starting from 1450. This reading of Othering and violent extermination or exploitation predates the formation of the nation-state, yet the pattern of creating hierarchies and the model of Othering demonstrated in these four intellectual genocides continue in ever newer and novel configurations.

Noting that the epistemicide against women has not received sufficient attention in the history and violent thwarting of knowledge production in the dominant patriarchal framework of reception, Grosfuguel highlights the persecution and execution of women as "witches". Witch-hunting, witch-trials, and burning those deemed as witches at the stake was rampant in medieval times on the verge of Renaissance. He contrasts the nature of this violence with other genocides where

products of knowledge, viz. books, were burnt, whereas in the case of women their bodies were the repository of knowledge:

> Contrary to the epistemicide against Indigenous people and Muslims where thousands of books were burned, in the case of the genocide/epistemicide against Indo-European women there were no books to burn because the transmission of knowledge was done from generation to generation through oral tradition. The "books" were the women's bodies and, thus, similar to the Andalusian and Indigenous "books" their bodies were burned alive. (Grosfuguel 2013, 86)

The misogyny and sexism manifested here is similar to the racism (Bojadžijev, Celikates and Mecheril 2025) in its unparalleled justification and implementation of violence insofar as the bodies of the Otherised are zeroed upon and (near) fatally targeted. Karen Fields and Barbara Fields (2012, 18) introduce the term "racecraft", analogous to witchcraft, and demonstrate how both these terms, in equal measure, make the implausible seem plausible: Just like law makers and theologians across various empires in Europe invested their self-styled intellectual prowess in establishing how and why witchcraft was real, and in accordance with the readings of the scriptures, the rationale of colonial and slave trade as well as the subject of various academic disciplines was the self-evident nature of race, the racial superiority of some, and as its complementarity, the inferiority of the internal Other. They conclude that "racecraft originates not in nature but in human action and imagination; it can exist in no other way. The action and imagining are collective yet individual, day-to-day yet historical, and consequential even though nested in mundane routine" (Fields and Fields 2012, 18f.).

The second moment is the imperative to the Otherised to change and transform themselves or face violence and dire consequences. Viewed generically, language itself, can be violent. If "language and violence are co-constitutive" (Posselt 2011, 124), and if various forms of violence –

epistemic, discursive, symbolic – can be exercised through language, then we are entrusted with the task of relentlessly exposing language-related violence. Grosfuguel's observations underscore the evidence of the potential threat of violence on multiple levels that has spanned half a millennium with this dictum:

> During the last 520 years of the "European/Euro-North-American capitalist/patriarchal modern/colonial world-system" we went from "convert to Christianity or I'll kill you" in the 16th century, to "civilize or I'll kill you" in the 18th and 19th centuries, to "develop or I'll kill you" in the 20th century, and more recently, the "democratize or I'll kill you" at the beginning of the 21st century. (Grosfuguel 2012, 98)

If this threat and its continual evocation in the German-speaking context are considered, the parallels with the commandment to speak the national language are obvious: "Speak German or I'll expel you, I'll deport you, I will not accept you, I will not recognise you, I will not tolerate you, I will not suffer you" (Natarajan 2023). One could even add that the "sub-humanism" and necropolitics witnessed on Europe's frontiers and waters over the past decade are further evidences of this cruelty (Teo 2020).

The Tension between Familiarity and Strangeness

This section takes up excerpts from the writings of Frantz Fanon and Jacques Derrida and looks at the situation in Germany regarding the legitimacy and illegitimacy of languages. The guiding concept is "interdiction" as expounded in *The Monolingualism of the Other*, and particularly how the unspoken prohibition works in the educational system leading to the presence and audibility of select languages like English and French, which carrying prestige, and are thereby legitimate, and simultaneously how certain languages are rendered as outcasts and even inaudible, irrespective of their lifeworld presence in society.

We begin by taking a closer look at Frantz Fanon's musings and what that could mean for the German context.

> However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Before beginning the case, I have to say certain things. The analysis that I am undertaking is psychological. In spite of this it is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: —primarily, economic; —subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization —of this inferiority. (Fanon 2008, 4)

The above example is from the colonial times, albeit of the 1950s, and thus much closer to our times. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon expounds how the colonised view themselves through the eyes of the coloniser. He elaborates the way in which this hegemonic normative order of producing and reproducing, "manufacturing" as it were, superiority and inferiority, is established, inevitably accepted, and inexorably internalised. The ordering of a colonial society in terms of race guarantees a racial hierarchisation, in phylogenetic terms as black and white, in economic terms of exploiter and exploited, and in terms of social class and station. The so-called gap – one could say "différance" in Derrida's terminology – can never be bridged, yet the racialised person has no other alternative than to try (and fail) to be or become white.

This act of "internalization" that Fanon vividly and pictorially describes as "epidermalization", an act that gets "under the skin", as it were, and becomes inseparable from the colonised, can be applied to language too, albeit in the opposite direction. In the case of language, it operates as an "externalisation", a pushing away, and distancing. Familial languages are

externalised, made (to seem) alien, rendered incomprehensible, and even deemed foreign to one's being. The estrangement is complete in deeming – or rather affectively and corporeally realising – the language of the home to feel alien, sound foreign, and woefully yet truly therefore, incomprehensible. This can be observed both regarding German dialects which were once widely spoken and understood in North Germany as well as immigrant familial languages. This externalisation and bodily distancing can be theorised as involuntary embarrassment, public muting, and rejection of familial tongues in their estrangement as "foreign languagisation" [*Fremdsprachisierung*], a neologism, of course (Natarajan 2023, 501). Children who have grown up hearing their familial languages express an auditory incomprehension once they step into the German migration society. They internalise the inferiority of the otherised language and take on the mantel of the "monolingual habitus" (Gogolin 1994), even without any explicit instruction to this effect. Moreover, the life-world examples of this linguistic estrangement bear a generational stigma as the speech of (grand)parents and, conceptually, of backwardness, outdatedness, and old-fashionedness. This pertains to dialects like Low German (Bonfiglio 2010) as well as immigrant languages like Turkish or Arabic (Dirim 2010, 2016) that are rendered inaccessible or incomprehensible to younger migrantised persons. One needs to foreground the axis of "social class" at play in the case of regional varieties of German and immigrant family languages whereby access to multidialectal and multilingual landscapes is sanctioned in the name of a nation-state that imagines itself to be monoglossic.

> [The] ideology of a monoglot and monologic standard has provided a charter not only for homogenizing national policies of language standardization and the regulation of public discourse, but also for theoretical frameworks that normalize and often essentialize one society-one culture-one language conceptions of the relationships among language, culture, and society. […] the writings of both Locke and

> Herder […] played key roles in validating this equation as both a philosophical charter and a political principle. (Bauman and Briggs 2000, 202)

Through a close reading of the works of the political philosophers John Locke and Johann Gottfried Herder, the linguistic anthropologists Richard Bauman and Charles Brigg (2000) delineate how social inequalities are legitimised and privileged positions naturalised by way of language. The standardisation of language in a nation-state entails exclusion as a corollary and a given. Despite varied contexts and different languages being involved, English in the case of Locke and German in the case of Herder, the commonality is the privileging of the nation-state (in the making) and the homogenising and standardising of "national" languages.

> After WWII, Germany could not look backward to tradition and had to reinvent itself within the international political economy of the Anglophone pax americana. Language then became a surrogate theater for the struggle to establish ownership of the German identity. (Bonfiglio 2010, 4)

In his monograph *Mother Tongues and Nations* Thomas Paul Bonfiglio (2010, 4) paints the linguistic landscape of North Germany after the Second World War where active usage of dialects was prevalent as a time "when the Low German dialects of the north, which are currently highly marginalized, were still actively spoken. At that time, the linguistic insecurity of code switching from dialect into standard occurred in all regions." Tracing the pushback and decline to the uncertainty and logic of the post-war period, Bonfiglio (2010, 4) surmises that "[i]t seems that one is confronted here with a postwar problematic matrix of national, linguistic, and cultural identity."

Language in a contemporary migration society as the language of the Other, or in fact in the plural, as the languages of the Other, is

associated with multilingualism. The ability to speak and have access to many languages is linked to the Other in a nation-state which sees itself as monolingual despite the factual reality of multilingualism. The Other in this case is ascribed the status of a migrant and thus migrantised, a purported Outsider as opposed to the alleged Established, to borrow from the insights of Elias and Scotson, irrespective of whether the persons concerned have themselves migrated or hail from a family where members have immigrated to Germany at some point of time. The internal Other, it follows, is multilingual. In *The Monolingualism of the Other* Jacques Derrida prefaces the narrative about his schooling in French Algeria, his location as a Jewish Franco-Maghrebian, and his access to various languages within the education system with an elaboration on "interdiction", the unspoken but all-pervasive proscription:

> The interdict […] was of a kind at once *exceptional* and *fundamental*. It was engulfing [*déferlant*]. When access to a language is forbidden, nothing – no gesture, no act – is forbidden. One forbids access to speech [*au dire*], that is all, a certain kind of speech. But that is precisely the fundamental interdiction, the absolute interdiction, the interdiction of diction and speech. The interdiction of which I speak, the interdiction from which I tell, tell myself, and tell it to myself, is then not simply one interdiction among others. (Derrida 1998, 32)

If we wish to trace the language policies prevalent in an erstwhile colonial context and present-day Germany, one can ascertain many parallels. It is a matter of interest that a chosen few languages such as English, French, Latin, and Spanish have found their way into the school curriculum as foreign languages and are, in fact, part of a canonical order, and many other languages cannot even make it to the school courtyard without raking up a controversy. Jacques Derrida illustrates his

schooling and the languages that were part of his curriculum in French Algeria as follows:

> [T]he study of Arabic was restricted to the school, but as an alien language, a strange kind of alien language as the language of the other, but then of course, and this is the strange and troubling part, the other as the nearest neighbor. *Unheimlich*. For me, it was the neighbor's language. The *optional* study of Arabic remained, of course. We knew it was allowed, which meant anything but encouraged. The authority of National Education […] proposed it for the same reason, at the same time, and in the same form as the study of any foreign language in all the French lycees of Algeria. Arabic, an optional foreign language in Algeria! As if we were being told – and that, in the end, is what we were being told: "Let's see, Latin is required for everyone in sixth grade, of course, not to speak of French, but do you, in addition, want to learn English, or Arabic, or Spanish, or German?" It seems that Berber was never included (Derrida 1998, 37f.).

Derrida's *The Monolingualism of the Other* has been a source of inspiration to many a debate regarding the meaning and relevance accorded to language, the significance of monolingualism, the futility in the attempt to "own" a language, and the perennial question: To whom does a language belong?

The Janus-faced "native"

In *The Critique of Postcolonial Reason* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) delineates, deconstructs, and "tracks" four spheres – Philosophy, Literature, History, and Culture – with the help of the figure of the "native informant" which is subverted and accorded the power to judge, analyse, categorise, and critique. At the outset of her book, Spivak clarifies:

> I shall docket the encrypting of the name of the "native informant" as the name of Man—a name that carries the inaugurating affect of being human. […] I borrow the term from ethnography, of course. In that discipline, the native informant, although denied autobiography as it is understood in the Northwestern European tradition (codename "West"), is taken with utmost seriousness. He (and occasionally she) is a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe. (Spivak 1999, 5f.)

The exploration of foreign territories and their violent appropriation in the disastrous mixture of curiosity and confiscation is part of the history of global colonisation. This violent act was rationalised on the basis of multiple narratives repeatedly proclaimed and disseminated as an act of civilisation. Consequently, those who suffered also adopted some of the narratives, were at times either unable to resist them or could only adapt them selectively and inadequately. The pursuit of scientists, representatives from the realm of colonies, in the name of ethnology, anthropology, and later ethnography, also followed a pattern: the scientist – read as white and male – explores the world foreign to him, classifies and systematises this world in its richness yet purported limitations using the taxonomic criteria available to him. For this, however, he needs an insider from this world to be explored, who provides him with the necessary information, acts as a bridge, and serves as a "translator". He needs an informant, a local, a so-called "native" informant who can also act as a gatekeeper. This native informant, who is so capable of making observations about their own world, communicating them comprehensibly, distinguishing the important from the less important, is nevertheless – according to the interpretation of the European or Anglo-American scientist – neither capable nor authorised, supposedly without the gift and ability of the coloniser, to arrive at scientific knowledge, pass it on adequately to the world, and gain recognition for it. "Native" informant is therefore a

double-edged sword, because being a native in a colonised country does provide access to information, but probably blocks the right to taxonomy and knowledge through collecting, organising, and systematising, at least according to colonial logic. In the feminist book Spivak cautions that she is operating with the concept of "foreclosure" and that her engagement produces "the native informant(s) as a site of unlisted traces" (Spivak 1999, 6).

The ambivalent and Janus-faced nature of the modifier "native" is at play when looking closely at the collocations "native informant", "native reader" (Anderson 1990), "native speaker", and "native writer" (Bonfiglio 2010). As far as language and "native speakers" are concerned, depending on the prestige and dominance of the language, as in the case of so-called world languages, the claim to being a native speaker is reserved for certain types of persons (in the sense of perceived and ascribed phylogenesis, for example) and excluded, or at least, made difficult and controversial for others, regardless of their actual competence in the language. From a historical perspective, however, it must be added that second language learners are neither worse off per se nor were they fundamentally devalued. Think of the scholars of the Middle Ages who, without exception, learnt the language Latin as a second language, because Latin was nobody's first language, but the ability to acquire and produce texts in the second language was and is not held against them. "The fact that the language of instruction for all university students was Latin meant that the standard scholarly language was no one's first language. All were second language learners" (Bonfiglio 2010, 23).

The emergence of German as a language, and subsequently as a native or first language, can be traced back to the period of Bible translation and the invention of book printing, which coincides with both the Reformation and colonisation. This therefore represents an important milestone in the development of the triad of book printing, language

consolidation, and nation-state formation (Anderson 1991). The printing press and the consolidation of several varieties into "individual languages" that were understandable in ever larger linguistic areas, rapidly standardised and profitable for early capitalist book printing led to the emergence of "native speakers", and with a steady increase in literacy to "native readers" (Anderson 1991, 71). Even though we are probably familiar with the term "native speaker" in everyday language with an emphasis on the skill of speaking and implicit naturalness, Bonfiglio (2010, 8) draws our attention to "native writer" as the actual authority, on the one hand with a focus on the skill of writing and on the other with an awareness of the process of acquisition and the duration of learning this cultural technique.

Conclusion: Colonial Moorings and Postcolonial Continuities

This paper offers a reading of the relevance of language in citizenship practices as *ius linguarum* through a postcolonial lens. Benedict Anderson (1991, 7) illustrates the constitutive logic of the functional and normative safeguarding of particular social entities such as the nation-state and elucidates how the nation is imagined as "*limited*", "*sovereign*", and "*a community*" whereby "even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind." The inherent logic is that the nation-state constantly produces Others. However, the line of demarcation is not drawn only between those perceived as external or internal to the nation-state. In migration societies, the problem of dealing with internal Others becomes particularly virulent. A cursory glance at the history of Germany will immediately reveal the far-reaching and lethal consequences of Othering as witnessed in Porajmos, i.e., the Roma Holocaust, and the Holocaust (Benz 2020). Anti-gypsyism and anti-Semitism are instances of the discursive construction of the *internal* Other in the territories that became the German nation-state in 1871,

which then came to a head in Post-First World War Germany with fatal, real-life consequences of ultimate destruction. In the German nation-state, which the philosopher Helmuth Plessner has called "a late nation" as it came into being much after the English, American and French nation-states, "belonging" was traditionally linked to ethnic Germanness [*Volksdeutschtum*]. This belief manifested itself in myths of language and (racial) superiority. While it was possible to become a French, British or American citizen in the 20th century, this was not the case in the nation-state of Germany. This has changed in the 21st century. "Language" is currently the panacea, and the most significant axis of differentiation.

One can identify two simultaneous movements here: withholding recognition and imputing inability to the (internal) Other – be it the native informant, the colonised or the prospective new citizen – whilst the addressee can react by acquiescing, resisting the ascription partly or wholly or even subverting the silencing through myriad ambiguous acts (Ní Mhurchú, Natarajan and Kleinschmidt 2022). Educational institutions play an incontrovertibly powerful role in the moulding and forming – the "making" as it were – of a citizen, continually wielding power and exercising control over whose voice is heard and which languages find their way into educational space including the school yard. The "interdiction" is omnipresent.

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