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The Violence of Monolingualism: The Effects of Coloniality in Language-in-Education Policy

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Abstract

An estimated 40% of the global population do not have access to education in a language they speak or understand (UNESCO 2016: 1). The causes of this are multi-faceted, however the role of colonialism in the emergence – and implementation – of exclusionary policies and practices cannot be overlooked. The spread of monolingual, Eurocentric language ideologies was a key aspect of colonial violence (Errington 2001) and was used as a tool of oppression and in the othering of colonised peoples (Rosa and Flores 2017). This conceptual paper proposes a theoretical framework for understanding consequences of colonialism and monolingual bias which we term the *violence of monolingualism.* We demonstrate how the violence of monolingualism is constituted of three interlinked forms of violence: epistemic, symbolic, and physical. To illustrate how these forms of violence manifest we draw on examples from two African contexts: Tanzania and South Africa. We highlight the ongoing effects of coloniality on contemporary language-in-education policies, with a focus on the connections between monolingual ideologies, monoglossic language policies and violence.

Keywords: violence, language policy, monolingualism, education, colonialism

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INTRODUCTION

Language was a key tool in the construction and maintenance of the colonial project. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986: 3) writes in *Decolonising the Mind*: "The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of spiritual subjugation." Language, colonial expansion and missionary linguists thus played a crucial role in enforcing the violence of colonialism (Errington 2001). The spread of monolingual, Eurocentric language ideologies was a key aspect of colonial violence (Errington 2001) and was used as a tool of oppression in the othering of colonised peoples (Rosa and Flores 2017). Spivak's perspectives on the hegemonic role of English in postcolonial contexts as an "enabling violation" (2008: 15) helps us to reflect on and understand how postcolonial African governments negotiated the privileges, rights and languages of learning as part of the decolonisation project. The neo-liberal logic was that "European provenance" and the "white man's burden" (Spivak 2008: 15) enabled not only possibilities to learn the hegemonic language but also enabled social mobility and access to international higher education and global markets, technology and knowledge. In reality, however colonialism and neo-liberalism were committed to the education of the middle class to the detriment of the interests and welfare of the poor and subaltern who still do not benefit from English as an enablement and continue to experience the exclusion of local languages as a violation and violence up to the present day.

This paper considers how colonial and imperialist histories continue to impact individuals' access and experience of education. The oppressive and violent nature of monolingualism has been well recognised by scholars (Skutnabb-Kangas 1996; Watson & Shapiro 2018; Mwanza & Bwalya 2019; Baranova & Kapitolina 2020; Niewiadomski 2022). We contribute a theoretical framework for understanding this violence through focusing on three distinct but interlinked forms of violence: epistemic violence (Chetty 2014), symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2001), and physical violence. We argue that the violence of monolingualism manifests and is imposed through these three overlapping and interconnected forms of violence.

Colonial language ideologies consisted of two main beliefs which sought to uphold the dominance of Eurocentric ways of being: 1) that monolingualism and monolingual language practices are the norm; and 2) that European standard languages and language practices are superior to others (see also Makoe & McKinney 2014; Kiramba 2018). This introduced a "monolingual bias" (Makalela 2016: 187) which colonisers used to categorise the linguistic situation in colonised spaces in terms of European conceptualisations of language as discrete, disembodied bounded entities (see also Sadiq 2023). However, in many contexts in the 'Global South'[1], "the Western enumeration of languages" does not accurately reflect "the sociolinguistic matrix of fluid multilingualism" (Makalela and Aparecido da Silva 2023: 2) or the "lived multilingual reality" (Reilly et al. 2022) of language users and communities.

Language policies[2] in many African contexts continue to promote monolingualism and European languages – creating artificial monolingual spaces while ignoring and erasing the multilingual reality of people and communities. This is an example of colonialingualism (Meighan 2022) which maintains the dominance of colonial knowledge systems, and colonial ways of languaging. Similarly, the term 'Kolonilingo-normativity' has been coined to describe the normalised expectation that indigenous people must be proficient in colonial languages in the former colonies in the Global South (Guzula & Tyler 2024).[3] In South Africa, Kolonilingo-normativity manifests in what McKinney (2017:80) terms Anglonormativity to illustrate the normalisation of English in society and education in former British colonies. This creates systems in which inequity is endemic since a large number of individuals are not able to access a wider range of systems and institutions due to linguistic barriers. Education represents a specific example of this and is a major global issue. Some 40% of the global population do not have access to education in a language they speak or understand (UNESCO 2016: 1). While the causes and consequences of this on a global level are multi-faceted, the emergence and

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implementation of this system on the African continent represents a colonial inheritance.

In this paper we discuss how the violence of monolingualism is perpetuated by three distinct but interlinked types of violence and highlight how this is perpetuated by the maintenance of monolingual language policies which were influenced by coloniality. We focus on epistemic violence (Chetty 2014), symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2001), and physical violence. Specifically, we examine the connections between monolingual ideologies, monoglossic language policies and violence. To illustrate these issues, we use examples from Tanzania and South Africa and explore language-in-education policy. We first discuss the educational and language-in-education context of each country and then define the three types of violence. We then move on to illustrate how language and violence are interlinked to manifest and impose the violence of monolingualism. Through this discussion, we demonstrate the severely damaging effects that monolingual approaches to education have on children as they experience threats of violence and actual violence in many forms. We show how coloniality manifests as punishment when children do not conform to monolingual norms in the context of formal education.

Country contexts: Tanzania and South Africa

In this section we briefly outline the linguistic and language policy context of Tanzania and South Africa. There are around 150 named languages in Tanzania (Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009: 3). Kiswahili and English are official languages in the country, with Kiswahili also being considered a national language. Kiswahili, English and other Tanzanian languages (hereafter referred to as community languages) are considered to be in a triglossic relationship in which Kiswahili, English and community languages are often used in different domains for different functions (Mapunda & Gibson 2022). In many instances, English and Kiswahili are considered to have higher prestige than the community languages. And within the education system, English and Kiswahili are the only languages which are permitted.

While Kiswahili is the national language and a language of wider communication (both in Tanzania and across much of East Africa), approximately 85% of Tanzanians use their community languages to communicate on a day-to-day basis (Mtavangu, 2002; Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009). This is particularly the case in rural areas. The current language-in-education policy in Tanzania states that Kiswahili is the medium of instruction for primary education in government schools, with English acting as the medium of instruction for secondary and tertiary education. As highlighted by Mapunda and Gibson (2022), debates around language-in-education policy tend to focus on the positions of Kiswahili and English, and do not typically consider the place that the other languages found in Tanzania – nor multilingualism itself – could assume. The fact that many students are forced to learn through languages which they are not familiar with has had detrimental effects on educational attainment and experiences overall (Mapunda 2013; Uwezo 2013; Mapunda & Gibson 2022). Discourses around the medium of instruction and the use of different languages in formal education in Tanzania continue. One study found that 25% of parents and teachers were in favour of the use of other local languages ('Behaviour Management in Tanzanian schools' project 2017-2021). However, 75% did not support the use of local languages (other than Swahili) at primary school or languages other than English at secondary school.

The education system in Tanzania allows for the use of physical violence against pupils. The Regulation Act (No. 24 of 2002) states that students should not get more than a maximum four strokes of corporal punishment, which should only be administered by the head of school or a teacher authorised by the head of school in writing. The punishment should also be recorded in a book (MoEVT 2010). The guidance for this corporal punishment, and the fact that this exists in an Act can be seen not only an ambivalence regarding the use of corporal punishment in formal education in Tanzania, but support for the use of corporal punishment in school – a physical violence that is condoned and regulated by law by the Government of

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Tanzania. Although Tanzania is recognised as having made significant progress in terms of improving access to education it still has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world, with numbers reported to be between 3.5 and 4.25 million (UNESCO 2018; ESDP 2018).

In South Africa, there are 12 official languages – Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and, the most recent addition, South African Sign Language. South Africa's first post-apartheid language-in-education policy (DoE 1997) was promulgated in 1997 and aimed to address and transform the unjust and colonial language attitudes and practices, and to upgrade the status of nine official African languages that were marginalised during apartheid. The new South African Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) consciously aligned itself with the pro-multilingualism ethos of the newly adopted democratic Constitution within a nation-building paradigm that also sought to accommodate cultural diversity, and to overcome the legacy of colonial violence. Seen within the broader negotiated settlement of the 1994 democratic dispensation under Nelson Mandela, the LiEP represented a compromise between contending political power blocs under the umbrella of 'additive multilingualism'. The compromise finds its clearest expression in the concession to the powerful pro-Afrikaans lobby (historically also supporters of the apartheid regime) to allow single-medium Afrikaans schools, viewed as an important marker of cultural identity.

Essential to this language policy for pedagogic purposes in South Africa is the concept of 'additive multilingualism', in which the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional languages (DoE 1997). With regards to the language(s) of learning and teaching (LoLT, formerly 'medium of instruction' in South Africa), the policy merely requires that this language (or languages) is an official language. The policy also indicates that parents have a degree of choice regarding the LoLT, however, in reality, this is not the case as almost no school in South Africa has any language as a medium of instruction other than English or Afrikaans. On paper, the apparent freedom of choice granted to learners in relation to the LoLT and language subjects is in keeping with the more recent voluntarist tradition of language-in-education policies. This also raises the status of the official African languages to that of English and Afrikaans. However, the reality is quite different. In a study that included observations of Grade 4 literacy lessons in disadvantaged Black schools, Chetty (2019: 246) noted that English is still dominant in the school system, and African languages are practically excluded as languages of teaching (apart from Grades 1 to 3). Although the post-1994 democratic dispensation promised transformation of the educational system, the change was mostly restricted to policies advocating for equality in educational provisioning. Within this post-apartheid understanding of literacy and educational policies undergirded by equity and justice, poor children are expected to benefit from acquiring enhanced cognitive skills, economic prosperity, successful navigation of the school system and eventual entrance into higher education.

Chetty (2019: 247) argues that the epistemic violence of language policies that view literacy as politically neutral, universal and granting benevolent effects to all must be disrupted. The social and economic issues of poverty and racism, integral factors in the lives of poor and mostly Black children, are not considered within the appropriate contexts of social or historical justice. The consequence of the history of apartheid that used education as a tool in the oppression of Black people is that poorer learners continue to perform worse academically (*Ibid*). In this way, the colonial monolingual violence continues through discriminatory and oppressive language policy and implementation.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) that was introduced in 2012 made provision for the equal use of all 12 languages in the schooling system and encourages learners to learn through their home language(s) particularly, although not limited to the foundation phase. The policy does not restrict the use of home language instruction up to Grade 3, but rather emphasises the use of home language in

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Grades 1 to 3 to reinforce the skills of reading, writing, and counting. However, in reality, English and Afrikaans continue to be the dominant languages in the education system for a range of reasons, including geographical spacialisation of advantaged schools in previously White, Coloured and Indian suburbs that lie outside the former townships and high density informal settlements where the majority of Black children reside; discriminatory policies of school governing bodies to keep Black children out of previously white schools and parents' choice for their children to attend English medium schools. As a result, the language of learning and teaching remains contentious in South Africa.

There is some optimism that this situation would change with the Department of Basic Education's Circular 18 of 2024 which promotes multilingualism as part of the introduction of Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE). The implementation of the MTbBE in Mathematics and Natural Sciences and Technology in

Grade 4 started in January 2025. Prior to the MTbBE, African languages served as the language of teaching and learning from Grade 1-3 with an abrupt switch to English as the language of teaching and learning in Grade 4. However, since 2025, there is no longer a switch but the use of African languages continues alongside the gradual introduction of English as a second medium. MTbBE encourages teachers to implement translanguaging across all grades and to alternate between languages in multi-lingual classrooms to ensure effective mediation of the learning content (DBE 2024). It is also heartening to note that MTbBE advocates for assessment to reflect the languages used for teaching and learning.

As a step towards amending laws on school language policies that preserve the exclusive use of certain languages to the exclusion of mainly Black learners, the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act 32 of 2024 was signed into law in September 2024. A few Afrikaans-speaking communities and organisations voiced their rejection of the Act and viewed it as an attack on Afrikaans-medium schools, a threat to mother-tongue education and detrimental to language rights.

Significantly, one of the key reforms of the BELA Act is to regulate admission/ language policies by requiring School Governing Bodies to submit their school language policies to the head of the provincial department of education for approval (BELA 2024). The Act is an important transformative initiative as it prevails on school language policies to consider the language needs of the broader community in which a school is located, the best interests of children and the right to equality.

Epistemic, symbolic, and physical violence

The concept of epistemic violence in relation to the discourse of language injustice refers to the numerous ways that violence is exercised in the production, circulation and acknowledgement of excluded knowledge. This has also been labelled 'epistemic injustice' (see also Fricker 2007; Kerfoot & Bello-Nonjengele 2022). For example, violence can be perpetuated against certain subjects by denying them epistemic agency, exploiting their epistemic resources without their knowledge, and making them into objects. Blas Radi's (2019: 43) description of the system of unequal relationships in the process of knowledge production involves factors like de-qualifying and disapproving epistemic subjectivity; objectifying; nullifying epistemic autonomy, as well as a polarisation of intellectual labour; instrumentalisation; educational extractivism; misrepresentations; and colonial appropriation. Epistemic agency refers to the individual or group's power to reason, to engage with knowledge, to take deliberate actions based on their understanding of knowledge, and to be active, rather than passive, in relation to their beliefs. Epistemic violence has moral and political repercussions. Since it is a type of violence that is explicitly about knowledge, it also affects people's knowledge and the knowledge of the groups to which they belong.

Symbolic violence is 'a gentle violence, imperceptible, and invisible even to its victims' (Bourdieu 2001: 1). Symbolic violence is a non-physical violence through which the norms and

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ideologies of those in power are forced upon marginalised and oppressed groups, enabling the maintenance of an inequitable status quo. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) illustrate that schools and 'pedagogic action' are important systems for the maintenance of social inequities, and language can form a key part of this: "The way language is produced reflects and maintains social affiliation, i.e. privileged classes use language as a 'means of excluding the vulgar and thereby affirming their distinction'" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 117-118; Zaidan 2020: 87). Alexander (2003) argues that the languages used in production, exchange, and distribution become the languages of power - those who do not command these specific languages are automatically excluded from the economy and disempowered. Through the privileging of dominant languages and the exclusion of the linguistic practices of marginalised groups, language-in-education policies can exhibit symbolic violence and maintain and reinforce a linguistic situation in which some language practices are valued and dominant, while others are stigmatised.

When discussing physical violence, here we specifically mean corporal punishment in school contexts. We focus on physical violence in this paper, in part, because it is used to enforce rules and maintain expected 'standards' and policies in educational contexts. Language rules and language policies can be enforced through the use of physical violence when they are used as a tool to punish students who are not conforming to the language practices that are expected in the educational space (see also Anzaldua 1987). In doing so, physical violence can act as a tool to spread the language ideologies which have informed language-in-education policy.

There is substantial evidence of the harmful effects of corporal punishment on school children. Students in contexts which employ corporal punishment may perceive schools as unsafe places, and thus may also avoid coming to school or remain inhibited or reserved in their behaviour while at school. There is also some evidence that students who experience physical punishment are more likely to develop conditions of mental ill health or trauma (Vally 1998). Such experiences may be the direct result of corporal punishment and unsupportive learning environments where physical punishment is normalised (Gershoff 2002). Mayisela (2017) argues that the roots of physical punishment in educational contexts lie in the history of the colonial violence of slavery, and that this has in turn impacted how adults (teachers and parents) perceive children. These present-day forms of physical violence therefore have their roots both in the historical violence of colonialism, and in the neocolonial ways in which punishment is meted out in various contexts.

Corporal punishment is banned in many countries as it is considered to violate human rights under Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, i.e. the right of the child to be protected from "all forms of physical or mental violence". Most recently, this has been recognised under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through the incorporation of targets 16.2, i.e. the elimination of "all forms of violence against children" and 4.a "providing safe, nonviolent learning environments". However, surveys carried out in Ghana and Nigeria indicate that between 71% and 98% of staff reported the use of physical punishment at their schools (Agbenyega, 2006; Egwunyenga, 2010; Ekanem & Edet, 2013; Mahmoud et al. 2011). Little is understood by educational stakeholders – specifically teachers and students – about the epistemic character of violence related to language, and many see this violence as a normal and necessary part of education.

We view these violences as interconnected. Physical violence can often be seen as that with the most immediate impact, but all violence is harmful – symbolic violence in which there is a spread of ideologies and practices which marginalise and oppress, as well as epistemic violence in which forms of knowledge are excluded and degraded while others dominate. The violence of monolingualism manifests and is spread through these three types of violence, which also reinforce one another. For example, the promotion of monolingual ideologies as the norm and most effective way of languaging, can lead to the use of physical violence to enforce monolingual practices, which can in turn contribute to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of forms of knowledge.

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The violence of monolingualism

In this section we highlight how the three types of violence discussed above are realised within approaches to language-in-education policy and how these then contribute to the violence of monolingualism. To do so, we engage with a range of examples from Tanzania and South Africa. The global decolonial turn has witnessed an entanglement of knowledge with violence. In this paper, we argue that language injustice, the marginalisation of local languages in favour of a lingua franca that is often a colonial legacy (particularly in postcolonial contexts), and language 'disappearance' are forms of epistemic violence (Fricker 2007; Kerfoof & Bello-Ninjengele 2022).

Brunner (2015) understands epistemic violence as a contribution to violent societal conditions that are rooted in knowledge itself: in its formation, shape, set-up, and effectiveness and that it is deeply embedded in our knowledge as well as in the ways in which we strive towards it. It is Garbe's (2013) notion of forced delegitimation that resonates best with the debate on language and epistemic violence, especially in post-independent African states that have legitimated languages like English, French and Portuguese as official languages concomitant with sanctioning and repressing local languages. There was also enforcement in schools, higher education, media and government of certain possibilities of knowing and languages that had value, and they were mostly in, of and through European languages. In countries such as Malawi and South Africa, English occupies a dominant role in almost every sphere of social, cultural and educational landscapes. This situation and enduring legacy have been described as Anglonormativity by McKinney (2017) specifically referring to the notion and expectation that everyone in these former British colonies will use and speak English. According to Galvan-Alvarez (2010), epistemic violence is exerted against or through knowledge – in our case language – and is a key element in any process of domination. He notes that:

> It is not only through the construction of exploitative economic links or the control of the politico-military apparatuses that domination is accomplished, but also and, I would argue, most importantly through the construction of epistemic frameworks that legitimise and enshrine those practices of domination. (Galvan-Alvarez 2010:11)

Many scholars dislike the term 'violence' because concepts such as knowledge and knowledge production are more often than not seen as altogether antithetical to direct and physical harm. We agree that the phenomenon of language injustice would not ordinarily be thought of as violence as the discourse is academic and according to Norman (1999: 353) it is too respectable and too genteel for the notion of violence. However, we maintain that the delegitimation, the erosion, exclusion and devaluing of language is a form of epistemic violence, and deserves to be seen for what it is.

Spivak's feminist postcolonial understanding of epistemic violence is still the preeminent theoretical yardstick for interrogating and understanding this issue. Basing her argument on Michel Foucault's ideas around knowledge and power, Spivak argues:

> The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity. It is well known that Foucault locates epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of sanity at the end of the European eighteenth century. But what if that particular redefinition was only a part of the narrative of history in Europe as well as in the colonies? What if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine? (1988: 276)

We frame language and epistemic violence in this paper in line with the decolonial concept of a coloniality of power, knowledge, and being (Quijano 2007). Integral to the language debate is the power of the neo-colonial state to legitimate the official and dominant language, while knowledges of the general populace (who are mostly subaltern) are viewed negatively

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in terms of social capital and how the very being of the subaltern is dehumanised within colonial and postcolonial contexts. Spivak's notion of the subaltern as everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism, as occupying a space of difference, resonates with the South African context where the languages of the majority Black African population are marginalised and excluded in schools and higher education. The exclusion of knowledges of the 'other', continues to be a devastating impact of colonialism. In Africa, we witness the phenomena of language injustice and 'Kolonilingo-normativity' in countries with Eurocentric language policies where local or knowledge and languages are pushed aside in favour of Western ways of knowing.

In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak (1988) argues that epistemic violence refers to how marginalised groups are silenced. Spivak's concept of epistemic violence aligns with Gramsci's observations on how hegemonic ideology impedes the development of true experiential knowledge generated by subaltern classes' daily lives. In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), Gramsci argues that the workers' direct experience and their ideologically learned 'common sense' constitute a 'contradictory consciousness'. That is, the hegemonic ideology that refuses to acknowledge exploitation prevents them from learning from their observation of being exploited. This contradictory situation:

> […] influences moral conduct and the direction of will in a way that does not permit of any action, any decision or choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity. (Gramsci 1971: 333)

Spivak's use of Gramsci's 'contradictory consciousness' reasoning as an example of epistemic violence is a commentary on how colonial thinking makes it incredibly difficult for subaltern people to have authentic discourse and language. Due to their double cultural subservience (in terms of both race and class) to the ruling alliance of dominant local and colonising establishments and narratives, the subaltern cannot speak or be heard. As an illustration, in the South African context, the dominant local languages are English and Afrikaans and the colonising establishments (state, higher education, media) in this class-based society not only foreground the interests of the middle-classes and elite, but are also dominated by English, again reflecting the expectations conveyed and conferred by Anglonormativity.

Ethnolinguistic diversity is an important factor in considering the role of language in epistemic violence. In South Africa, there is a wide repertoire of African languages. The value of human diversity (linguistic, biological, political and cultural) is crucial during the current global context of social upheaval and large-scale migration and refugee crises due to violent conflict. In the African situation, and particularly the South African situation, we have witnessed an increase in xenophobic attacks, violence and prejudice against African nationals from other countries on the continent. A key factor for identifying foreigners may well be language and so-called accent, with evidence of a so-called 'accent test' used by the police to arrest foreign individuals from other African countries (Harris 2001).

In Tanzania, both corporal and non-corporal punishments are used in schools as a major means of disciplining and 'controlling' students' behaviour. This includes, for example, punishment for using other Tanzanian community languages and not Kiswahili in primary schools or Kiswahili rather than English at secondary school – a double 'switch' in language policy which requires learners to acquire Kiswahili on entry to primary school and English on entry to secondary school.

Despite the aforementioned stipulations, and attempts to 'regulate' the use of physical violence, many teachers in public schools do not adhere to these guidelines. Corporal punishment is therefore used and without the prior approval of the school headteacher or in excess of the maximum stipulated in the guidelines (Feinstein & Mwahombela 2010). However, more importantly, here we condone the use of caning or bullying – and indeed all forms of physical (and other) violence as methods for use in educational contexts. For many students, English is either their second or third language after their mother tongue community language and Kiswahili, and the use of physical (or otherwise) violence does

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not increase their chance of understanding material being taught or their success in exams.

In secondary schools, where the medium of instruction is English, students are punished for using any language other than English. These punishments include for example being forced to wear heavy rings or pieces of wood around their necks with the words "KISWAHILI SPEAKER" written on them. This demonstrates a strong link between violence and the enforcing of monolingual ideologies. However, when in staff offices, teachers' conversations are regularly in Kiswahili, reflecting the multilingual reality of Tanzania and the central role played by Kiswahili as a lingua franca in the country.

The use and threat of physical violence have negative effects on learning, on student's experiences of education, and is a violation of their human rights. These practices also form part of a classroom environment which also leads to low levels of participation and engagement in Tanzanian classrooms (see also Mapunda & Gibson 2022; Mapunda et al. 2024), and the creation of 'hostile learning environments' (Kula et al. 2026). Students who receive corporal punishment show increased signs of dejection in their studies, poor performance in tests, and do not participate enthusiastically in the teaching and learning process (Roussow 2003). The use of corporal punishment also appears to influence children's attendance, with long periods of absenteeism possibly in turn leading to withdrawal from school (Morrel 2000).

In addition to the direct harm caused by physical violence, punishing students for speaking languages other than English enforces the underlying language ideology which maintains the dominance and superiority of English. It also mirrors the situation seen in South Africa with Anglonormativity, as well as creating artificial 'monolingual' spaces, both of which we argue are colonial legacies.

Concluding remarks

Epistemic, symbolic, and physical violence are all used as interconnected means of enforcing colonial, monolingual ideologies, ensuring the maintenance of an inequitable system in which some languages and knowledges are privileged, and others are marginalised and stigmatised. The violence of monolingualism is at the heart of this inequitable system. This has damaging effects on children's experiences of education, their abilities to engage effectively with their learning and to acquire knowledge within the school system. It also has damaging effects on their sense of self and their cultural and community identities. The current language policy model, and the violence through which it is enforced, teaches children – and teachers – to judge themselves and their language practices against a monolingual norm. We argue that monolingual language policies are harmful, and we argue that the ways in which they are enforced – through engaging with epistemic, symbolic, and physical violence – are also harmful. The possibilities of an otherwise are completely erased

We suggest this theoretical framework for understanding the violence of monolingualism. We believe that in order challenge these forms of violence, we must understand how it is manifests. To begin to take a decolonial approach to language-in-education policy, and to begin to reject the violence of monolingualism, we believe that we must all acknowledge that coloniality, monolingual ideologies, and violence are connected. In education systems around the world, European language and Western knowledge systems are given epistemic authority, and there is a widespread 'monolingual bias' which assumes monolingualism as the norm or superior way of languaging, and which adopts a conceptualisation of language which reflects languages as discrete, bounded systems which can be named and counted. The coloniality, and monolingual ideologies, present in education systems around the world are consequences of violence and serve to reinforce violence. We see that the ongoing enforcement of monolingual ideologies in schools in South Africa and Tanzania is a consequence of coloniality, which privileges monolingual ways of being, European languages, and Western epistemologies.

It is necessary to develop language-in-education policies and pedagogical approaches which are based around the lived multilingual reality (Reilly et al.

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2022) and socially realistic multilingualism (Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021), and which view all of the linguistic resources which students and teachers bring to the classroom as tools for learning. We believe than an "otherwise" is possible. This is a crucial step in producing more equitable language policy approaches and more equitable educational environments for all regardless of social, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.

ENDNOTES

1. We recognise that the terms and associated conceptualisations of 'Global North' and 'Global South' are contested, reflecting an artificial and reductionist dichotomy. However, we adopt the approach outlined by Chetty et al. (2024) and employ these terms to "reflect conceptualisations in our workplaces, as seen in funding schemes which explicitly require relationships between individuals and/or institutions in the North and South" (245).

2. We use Spolsky's (2004) definition of language policy as consisting of three interconnected components: language practices, languages ideologies, and language management.

3. The term is derived from the isiXhosa *koloni* 'colony' which is used to refer to the names of provinces such as *iNtshona- Koloni* i.e. the Western Cape, combined the term '*lingo*' to refer to language.

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