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Afterword

Language weaponization and its harm

This edited volume examines how an individual's fundamental human rights are violated and how they are deprived of education, well-being, life, and social opportunities based on their use of language and communicative practices (Dovchin, 2020). Integrating these various social and linguistic justice perspectives breaks new ground in applied linguistics by fully disclosing the sociolinguistic realities by acknowledging ongoing, often profoundly entrenched, local socio-political constraints (Tupas, 2015). It is almost impossible to develop a thorough analysis of people's apparent linguistic choices without acknowledging how ongoing communication is always associated with the dehumanization of others. That is, according to the editors of this volume, the multilayered dehumanization processes by assigning labels to groups, solidifying a culture that these groups are *something* (i.e., not human) rather than someone (i.e., *human*), and, consequently, causing physical and psychological harm by disrupting those groups of people who are dehumanized (Bryan & Pentón Herrera, in this volume).

The central ethos of this book is to apply the concept of *language weaponization* or the *weaponization of language*—to investigate the practices and processes in which linguistic resources in any form may have the potential to inflict harm on others (Bryan & Gerald, 2020; Pascale, 2019; Rafael, 2016). The main ethos of the term *language weaponisation* covers most recent studies in applied linguistics embedded within frameworks such as 'raciolinguistics' (Rosa & Flores, 2017), 'linguistic racism' (Dovchin, 2020 (Wang & Dovchin, 2022)), 'unequal Englishes' (Tupas, 2015), 'linguicism' (Uekusa, 2019), 'linguistic incompetence' (Canagarajah, 2022), 'translingual discrimination' (Dovchin, 2022), 'linguistic microaggressions' (Piller, 2016), 'accentism' (Dryden & Dovchin, 2021), 'linguistic citizenship' (Williams, Deumert, & Milani, 2022) and so on. The concept of *language weaponization* integrates the ever-growing scholarship on linguistic injustice and inequality while specifically unpacking the term '*harm*,' which is of crucial importance, as it highlights how minoritized language users' language, identity, and cultures are negatively affected by dominant ideologies and practices that standardize and normalize injustice in their given contexts. *Language weaponization* addresses injustice not only based on minoritized language users' specific linguistic and communicative repertoires that are (il) legitimized by the popular language ideologies but also adds intensity to the

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110799521-012>

knowledge of psychological well-being and vulnerabilities seeded within the individuals and communities (Tankosić et al., 2021). People's quality of life, including their mental and physical health, is harmed by the negative impacts of *language weaponization*, as the minoritized language users tend to develop foreign language anxiety (Dryden, et al., 2021), linguistic inferiority complexes (Dovchin, 2020), depression and suicidal thoughts (Piller, 2016). *Language weaponization*, therefore, reminds us of Pennycook's argument on language – language is a discursive social act (Pennycook, 2007), which is continuously 'dis-invented and reconstituted' (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), as it may (re)invent and de(construct) the linguistic ideologies of native speakerism, prestige, and prominence from the lens of the ruling authorities, who lead the narratives (Dovchin, 2022).

The different contributors to this volume articulate in their respective chapters various external and internal factors that (re)invent and (de)construct the ideologies and practices of the *linguistic weaponization* of communities that they have investigated. The attention is drawn to a fundamental aspect of *language weaponization*: that which applies in our daily interactions with each other, the exchange of ideas and points of view certainly involves *linguistic weaponization*, notwithstanding that of idiolects. There is certainly harm that constrains how the interaction and communication develop. *Language weaponization* has been operationalized in terms of the intersectionality of the socio-economic, racial, ethnic, gendered, linguistic, cultural, and political marginalization based explicitly on the systematic exclusion of minoritized language users from fully participating in society (Deumert et al., 2021). Many minoritized language users' experience *language weaponization* in the varied local contexts stamped with the systematic marginalization, precarity, and reduced emotional well-being conditions (Dovchin et al., forthcoming).

One of the most dominant paradigms in current language studies of globalization – the standard language norm or 'linguistic purity,' which tends to reinforce the idea of native speakerism, seems to be the center of this book. Linguistic purity sees 'monolingualism as norm' and 'one country equals one language' (Kelly-Holmes, 2010, p. 489). It has been noted throughout this book that this ideology of standard language norm, and like any norm, is socially and discursively constructed and is created by dominant institutions who exercise their power over those who do not use them 'properly.' The idea of this 'proper language' is often connected to traditionalist and purist ideas emerging from guarding one's national language and identity against foreign contaminations (Descourtis, in this volume; Dovchin, 2018). These language ideologies seem to reinforce the idea of *language weaponization* as they systematically marginalize the linguistic and communicative practices of minoritized people while giving an ideal picture of a

particular society and of the language that mainstream society (Bryan & Pentón Herrera, in this volume).

Nevertheless, as many scholars note in this edited volume, this standardization of language does not necessarily reflect the sociolinguistic reality of that particular society. This is a problem because ‘such a mythically homogeneous community depends in part on the exclusion or suppression of populations and characteristics which do not fit into its ideal self-definition’ (Doran, 2004, p.93). As Busch (2010, p. 193) acknowledges, ‘Homogenisation in language use is much more difficult to implement today, under the conditions of globalization, where communication and media flows have become more diverse and multi-directional than in previous times, when communication was organized around a national public sphere.’ In fact, it is unlikely that every human being speaks purely any particular language (Pennycook, 2007). There are too many variations, dialects, accents, vernaculars, and creoles in any language, and to reduce this language to just ‘standard language’ seems over the top and unrealistic. The reality of any language is very different as language is in constant relocalization, reformation, evolution, and many linguistic variations coexist in any society (Tankosić & Dovchin, 2022).

The chapters in this book further reveal that there is often a disconnect between privilege and harm as the discourses and languages allowed in communities occur when mainstream society allows that particular discourse to dehumanize or exoticize minority groups. In particular, pedagogical and educational contexts may often articulate policies and/or practices, privileging the linguistic purity, native speakerism, and monolingualism of the ruling class (Fang & Dovchin, 2022). In many cases, marginalizing the diverse linguistic repertoires of minoritized language users such as Indigenous Peoples and migrants’ heritage languages seems to occur worldwide in multiple educational contexts (Bryan & Pentón Herrera, in this volume; Tankosić et al., 2022). *Language weaponization* causes unequal power relationships in educational contexts between ideologies and practices such as so-called native or non-native, first or second language teachers or students, shifting the central role that language plays in the enduring relevance of race/racism, stereotypes & (over) generalizations, institutional/interpersonal discrimination in the lives of racialized or ethnic minorities in the highly diverse transnational host societies of the twenty-first century, and what it means to speak or communicate as students or teachers with diverse identities (Steele et al., 2022).

The contributions to this volume show the various ways in which the notion of *language weaponization* provokes us better understand the manifold aspects of linguistic injustice in educational contexts, from Bangladesh to Taiwan, to Puerto Rico, to Botswana, and Spanish-speaking immigrants in the USA, from autoethnographic, ethnographic and critical discourse analysis perspectives. The discussions on how various implicit and explicit factors to *language weaponization* may

influence the behaviors of teachers, educators, students, and learners, and what effects these adaptations of language users exert on the structures, practices, and ideologies of the relevant languages are thought-provoking. The edited volume further reveals how certain educational institutions promote Anglo-normative practices by weaponizing the native-speaker English mode (Saleh, in this volume), and teachers and students in that particular context are negatively affected by the linguistic, cultural, and ideological dimensions of weaponization (Wu et al., in this volume). *Language weaponization* further perpetuates the rural/urban divide, racial disparity, and, ultimately, socio-economic inequality (Wu et al., in this volume). The identities and positionalities of English as second language learners have become more attuned to the oppressive effects of the power of English (Tupas, 2015).

How can such harm be overcome? Contributors in this volume collectively note that the socio-political voices of minoritized language users and language learners are inadequate. This lack of voice renders them invisible in policy-making processes. It is essential that while *language weaponization* is an outcome of structures, order, and policies in the ruling society, it could also act as a potent catalyst for resistance to challenge the dominant policies of language ideologies and practices of which *language weaponization* is symptomatic (Bryan et al., in this volume). Contributors suggest multifaceted recommendations to improve linguistic and cultural inclusivity (Saleh, in this volume; Chebanne & Monaka, in this volume), gain a complete understanding of why the policy has the effects it does, and, in particular, the dynamics within global English learning in the particular historical, social and cultural contexts (Ates & Brooks, in this volume; Descourtis in this volume), and to treat students and educators of color as cultural and linguistic assets in the pedagogical contexts – as ‘an ethic of love’ (Vega, in this volume).

The harmful impacts of *language weaponization* are particularly noteworthy, as they are influenced by colonial politics (Deumert et al., 2021). This is a thought-provoking edited volume that calls for actions to turn our attention to volatile conditions that are profoundly affected by the legacy of the colony. Therefore, I ask applied linguists to pay more attention to *language weaponization* because the ethics of applied linguistics is one of the social justices.

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