



HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Language and History at School: Colonialism and Neocolonialism in Education Development in Africa

Celia Reddick
Fall 2 2022
2 credits

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October 19-December 7
10:30am-1:15pm
Gutman 305

September 30, 2022

COURSE DESCRIPTION

European powers began to colonize regions of Africa in the 15th century during the “Age of Discovery,” often using schooling and formal education to exert control over and ‘civilize’ peoples they perceived as inferior. The formal education systems they set up largely undermined traditional ways of knowing and sharing skills, and language was a central tool of colonial control as colonizers created education systems that imposed European languages and integrated these languages into institutions of power.

While formal European colonial control in Africa largely came to an end by the 1960s, former colonial powers of the Global North continue to exert influence over education systems in the formerly colonized Global South. Immediately following independence, this influence largely took the form of policies and practices forwarded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Today, some would argue that this power has been converted to ongoing influence in part through international education development, with INGOs, and bi-, and multi-lateral donors the engines of influence. There are growing efforts to tackle this persistent power imbalance through educational initiatives that take a more critical approach to education development, centering the experiences and leadership of local communities and education stakeholders.

In this course, students engage critically with the history of international education development and its connections to colonialism through the lens of language-in-education policies and practices. Language provides a particularly useful lens into the ways that school policies and practices exert control over children and families, intertwining local education systems with global systems of power. Students will be expected to complete three reflection memos about key themes from the course and connections to personal and professional engagement with education, respond to a partner's reflections, and submit a final project connected to a topic, organization, or context of particular interest.

LEARNING GOALS

Content Understanding

Students who enroll in this module will:

- Develop an understanding of the ways that knowledge was transmitted and children were raised and taught in pre-colonial African settings.
- Develop an understanding of the historical connections between colonialism and education in Africa, with a specific focus on language-in-education policies and practices.
- Develop an understanding of the ways that connections between colonialism and education have persisted over time despite formal independence, a phenomenon described as neocolonialism.
- Engage with key texts and ideas in postcolonial theory to understand power and inequality in education, with a particular focus on language.
- Explore opportunities to interrogate issues of power in language-in-education planning and policy, more explicitly centering local and transnational perspectives.

Skills Development

Students who enroll in this module will:

- Practice reflective practice, connecting the work of class to their personal and professional experiences.
- Practice synthesizing and applying key ideas through a final analytic memo or a final project.
- Practice exchanging ideas and analyzing texts with a community of peers
- Practice reading and learning across a variety of genres, including empirical research articles, reflective essays, and short videos

Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated based on the following:

Attendance and participation in class	40%
Reflection journals & responses	30%
Final project	30%
Total	100%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, STUDENT SUPPORT & LANGUAGE¹

In our course, we'll adhere to the overarching principles that guide HGSE as a community and which have been shared with you by our Dean Bridget Terry Long:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others;
- Honest and ethical preparation and submission of all academic work;
- Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community;
- Accountability for personal and professional behavior.

¹ I am grateful to Meira Levinson and Alysha Banerjee for this overview.

Impact Statement

In the discussion of politically complex and charged issues, interpersonal as well as intellectual discomfort may arise. It is necessary to engage in discussion of these issues in order to come to a comprehensive, critically conscious understanding of how prejudice and discrimination operate in our lives and the larger world around us. It is only by engaging in an open and honest discussion of inequity that we can learn how to build inclusive and socially just communities both on-campus and beyond. If you become particularly distressed about any discussion, please speak to Carola and/or Celia immediately, and/or take advantage of the services offered by HUHS. You are also always welcome to check in with Tracie Jones or Kevin Boehm in OSA, both of whom can connect you to additional support services.

Mandatory Reporting Statement

An essential aspect of the dialogue process is to cultivate a learning environment in which you feel comfortable sharing information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions and assignments. As your dialogue facilitators, one of our responsibilities is to help create this space and to keep the information shared in our classroom private to the greatest extent possible (“take the lessons, leave the stories”). However, as Instructors at HGSE, we also have mandatory reporting responsibility to disclose any information regarding incidents or suspicion of sexual misconduct, abuse, or a crime that may have occurred to the Office of Sexual Assault Prevention & Response. If you would like to speak to someone confidentially about something that has occurred, please contact (617) 495-9100. If you would like to review the full Harvard University police on Sexual Misconduct, please review it at <https://titleix.harvard.edu/policy>.

Academic Integrity

Academic work submitted for this course must be the work of the participant and any sources used in compiling must be accurately and thoroughly cited. Please, adhere to all expectations learned in the tutorial you already completed: [Using Evidence in Academic Writing](#).

Writing Resources and Support

HGSE Writing Services offer resources NOT TO BE MISSED! You can find lots of resources on their website and you are encouraged to make individual appointments to get individualized support on your academic writing. You can get valuable help on your writing if you plan ahead!

<https://communicate.gse.harvard.edu/>

Accessibility and Accommodations

We are committed to creating a learning space where everyone can participate and engage as fully as possible. We strive to provide information and resources in multiple formats (text, visuals, audio, independent reflection, group reflection, etc.) to enable more access possibilities for every student in this module. We recognize that there are many reasons students may need to adjust their pace and/or method of learning, including but not limited to disability, temporary or ongoing personal life circumstances, unexpected emergencies, or other learning differences.

- If you have any access needs that we can better support by redesigning any aspect of this module, including the ways in which assignments are submitted for feedback, you are welcome and encouraged to reach out to us to let us know how we can better support you.

- Students with disabilities may choose to formally register with Student Support Services with KellyAnn Robinson, Associate Director of Student Support Services (Kellyann_robinson@gse.harvard.edu) as well for questions and support needs.
- You do not need to have a specific reason or diagnosis to talk to us about your access needs. Our goal is to support students in the way that makes the most sense for them at this point in time.

[Accessibility statement adapted from EQO11B and Lydia X.Z. Brown \(2020\).](#)

Student hours

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss the content of the class, the readings, the assignments, questions you may have, or anything else that is on your mind during our module. Please feel free to make an appointment with me!

To schedule student hours with Celia: <https://calendly.com/celiareddick>

WEEKLY TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

CLASS 1. (Wednesday October 19)

Pre-colonial child-rearing and knowledge transmission in Africa and its disruption through European colonialism

Overview:

Class 1 will provide an overview of the course and its aims. During this session, we will discuss what brought us to the course and our goals for our time together. We will then discuss the organization of pre-colonial African societies, including knowledge transmission and child-rearing practices. We will conclude by reflecting on the relevance of these strategies for education systems and efforts today.

Guiding Questions:

- Ideas of *communalism* are referenced throughout the readings for today. In what ways were the pre-colonial societies of Africa organized communally, with what implications for child-rearing and knowledge transmission?
- What elements of pre-colonial education systems stand out to you, and why?
- What aspect of the readings today feels resonant or conflictual with your own experiences, whether professional, personal, or academic? What questions are you left with?

Readings:

- Seroto, J. (2011). Indigenous education during the pre-colonial period in southern Africa. *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 10(1), 275-88.

- Makalela, L. (2018). Community elders' narrative accounts of ubuntu translanguaging: Learning and teaching in African education. *International Review of Education*, 64(6), 823-843.
- Reagan, T. G. (2000). 'A wise child is talked to in proverbs': Traditional African educational thought and practice (pp. 25-55) in *Non-western educational traditions: Alternate approaches to educational thought and practice* (2nd ed. ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rodney, W. (2018). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. La Vergne: Verso
 - Chapter 2, pages 35-55 (read up to "Some concrete examples")
 - Conclusion, pp. 82-84

Additional Resources:

- Moumouni, A. (1968). *Education in Africa*. London: Deutsch.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. (1990). *Kinship and marriage among the Nuer*. Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press.
- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. William Heinemann Ltd.

To prepare for class: Please bring an artifact to class that connects to your reasons for taking this class, or your linguistic story (as you choose to define it!)

CLASS 2. (Wednesday October 26)

Formal education as a tool and consequence of colonialism

Overview:

During Class 2, we will explore the relationship between formal education and colonialism, with a particular focus on language. In many places across Africa, colonial powers used education and the inclusion/exclusion of languages as a tool of domination and control, undermining indigenous cultures and traditions and creating enduring societal stratification.

Guiding Questions:

- How was formal education used as a tool of domination and control, and with what consequences for communities that were colonized?
- In what ways were the languages of people who were colonized affected by colonialism, and with what consequences for education and society today?

Readings:

- Albaugh, E. A. (2014). *State-building and multilingual education in Africa* (pp. 22-52). Cambridge University Press.
- Rodney, W. (2018). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. La Vergne: Verso,

- Begin at “Education for underdevelopment” and read to “Development by contradiction,” pp. 290-346.

Additional resources:

- Carnoy, M. (1974). Education and Traditional Colonialism: India and West Africa (pp. 78-143) in *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, New York: D. McKay.
- Weber, E. (1976). *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France* (pp. 303-338). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

CLASS 3. (Wednesday November 2)

Conceptualizations of language: From process to bounded object

Overview:

Colonialism meant a shift in the way that language was conceptualized, a phenomenon we will explore in Class 3. In a tying together of languages to nation states and systems of power, *linguaging* as a communicative practice, achieved through diverse linguistic resources, was replaced with a colonial conceptualization of the achievement of *language*, a stable, bounded, and standardized object which some had, others did not, and school could teach.

Guiding Questions:

- How did conceptualizations of language shift through the imposition of colonial borders?
- How did these new conceptualizations impact schooling?
- Where do we see this history in approaches to language education today?

Readings:

- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- García, Flores, N., Seltzer, K., Wei, L., Otheguy, R., & Rosa, J. (2021). Rejecting abyssal thinking in the language and education of racialized bilinguals: A manifesto. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 18(3), 203–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2021.1935957>
- Mignolo, W. (2012). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

CLASS 4. (Wednesday November 16 **note no class on Nov. 9!)

Postcolonial theory: perspectives to analyze colonial and neocolonial practices connected to language and education

Overview:

During Class 4, we will explore the term *postcolonial* and engage with two works that discuss the relationship between language, education, and colonialism.

Guiding Questions:

- How are power and language connected, according to these authors?
- Where do the authors' arguments resonate with one another? Are there differences you see as well?
- In what ways do these arguments feel relevant to your own experiences, personal, professional, or otherwise? What questions are you left with?

Readings:

- Fanon, F. (1967). The Negro and Language (pp. 17-40) in *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- wa Thiong'o, N. (1986). The language of African literature (pp. 4-20, 27-30) in *Decolonising the Mind: The politics of language in African literature*. London: James Currey.

Additional resources:

- Achebe, C. (1975). *Morning yet on creation day: Essays* (Studies in African literature). London: Heinemann Educational.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum.
http://puente2014.pbworks.com/w/file/87465079/freire_banking_concept.pdf

CLASS 5. (Wednesday November 23)

Neocolonialism: Money and power in international education development

Overview:

One of the primary ways that former colonial powers continue to exert power and influence over countries in Africa and throughout the Global South is through funding for educational reform and development. Today we will explore key economic interventions and approaches to funding in international education development.

Guiding Questions:

- In what ways does funding in international education development reinforce power imbalances? In what ways can it disrupt them?
- What guidance can we glean from these readings about strategies to undermine coercive power dynamics in international education development?

Readings:

- Reimers, F. (1994). Education and structural adjustment in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 14(2), 119-129.
- Klees, S. (2008). A quarter century of neoliberal thinking in education: misleading analyses and failed policies. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 6:4, 311-348, DOI: 10.1080/14767720802506672
- Menashy, F. (2019). Power Dynamics in a Multistakeholder Fund: The Case of the Global Partnership for Education (pp. 61-80) in *International Aid to Education: Power Dynamics in an Era of Partnership*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Additional resources:

- Albaugh, E. A. (2014). *State-building and multilingual education in Africa* (pp. 53-79). Cambridge University Press.
- Noss, A. (1991). Education and adjustment: A review of the literature. *Policy Research Working Papers Series 701*, The World Bank.
- Reimers, F. (1991). The impact of economic stabilization and adjustment on education in Latin America. *Comparative Education Review*, 35, 319-353.

CLASS 6. (Wednesday November 30)

Contemporary challenges in language-in-education policy and practice in formerly colonized African countries

Overview:

During Class 6, we will focus on education systems in formerly colonized countries, and the challenges related to language-in-education in many education systems today. In particular, we will explore implications of language-in-education for peace, social mobility and economic opportunity, and for teaching and learning.

Guiding Questions:

- What factors shape language-in-education policies in settings affected by conflict and colonialism? What challenges and opportunities emerge in the implementation of these policies?
- What can we learn from the examples of Botswana, South Africa, and Uganda about how contemporary language-in-education choices are informed by the past?

Readings:

- Reddick, & Chopra, V. (2021). *Language considerations in refugee education: languages for opportunity, connection, and roots*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2021.1983588>

- Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2004). The language policy / language economics interface and mother-tongue education in post-apartheid South Africa. *Language Problems & Language Planning*, 28(2), 131-146. doi:10.1075/lplp.28.2.03kam
- Altinyelken, Moorcroft, & Van Der Draai. (2014). The dilemmas and complexities of implementing language-in-education policies: Perspectives from urban and rural contexts in Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36(C), 90-99.

Additional resources:

- Piper, B., Zuilkowski, S., & Ong'ele, S. (2016). Implementing mother tongue instruction in the real world: Results from a medium-scale randomized controlled trial in Kenya. *Comparative Education Review*, 60(4), 776-807.
- Moulton, J. (2002). *Education reforms in sub-Saharan Africa: Paradigm lost?* (Contributions to the study of education; no. 82). Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Boyle, H. (2019). Registered Medersas in Mali: Effectively Integrating Islamic and Western Educational Epistemologies in Practice. *Comparative Education Review*, 63(2), 145-165.

CLASS 7. (Wednesday December 7)

Re-centering power in international education development through language-in-education policies and practices

Overview:

During Class 7, we will consider the ways that rethinking language-in-education programs and practices in formerly colonized settings in Africa and the African diaspora can re-center power in international education development. Additionally, we will consider our own paths in the field of international education development and key issues to keep in mind as we pursue next steps.

Guiding Questions:

- How do language-in-education approaches provide opportunities and spaces for re-centering power in education development?
- How can our reflections on issues of power and colonialism shape our own next steps?

Readings:

- Brock-Utne, B. (2016). The ubuntu paradigm in curriculum work, language of instruction and assessment. *International Review of Education*, 62(1), 29-44.

- Benson, C. (2020). An innovative ‘simultaneous’ bilingual approach in Senegal: Promoting interlinguistic transfer while contributing to policy change. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1-18.
- Deroly, N. (2019). Haiti’s education system is broken...by design. *Bright Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://brighthemag.com/haitis-education-system-is-broken-by-design-children-poverty-equity-1b97982f8a> [short article]

And watch: [Nedgine Paul Deroly on Empowering Haiti through Education](#)

- Sailors, M., Makalela, L., Hoffman, J., & Frey, N. (2010). Opportunity Matters: The Ithuba Writing Project in South African Schools. *Voices From the Middle*, 18(1), 8-16.
- Abiria, D. M., Early, M., & Kendrick, M. (2013). Plurilingual pedagogical practices in a policy-constrained context: A northern Uganda case study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 567-590. doi:10.1002/tesq.119

Additional resources:

- Piper, B. (2016). International Education Is a Broken Field: Can "Ubuntu" Education Bring Solutions? *International Review of Education* 62 (1):101-111.
- Brissett, N. O. (2020). Teaching like a subaltern: Postcoloniality, Positionality, and Pedagogy in International Development and Education. *Comparative Education Review*, 64 (4).
- Fraser, N. (2007). Reframing justice in a globalized world. In D. Held & A. Kaya (Eds.), *Global Inequality* (pp. 252-272). United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

Analytic Memo and Reflection Memo are due at 11:59pm EST on December 17 in the Canvas assignment folder. Extra credit assignment (outlined below) due at 11:59pm EST on December 17 as well.

Final Project

You may create a final project of your choosing, tying together the main ideas of the course. This final project must be accompanied by a short reflective memo that integrates at least two texts from the course.

If you prefer, you may also write an analytic memo of no more than 1,000 words (not including references), integrating at least two texts from the Required Reading lists and two extra texts (they can be from the ‘additional resources’ lists or texts you identify yourself). You may choose a topic of your choice, or address the following prompts:

Do you agree or disagree with the statement and why?

- Education is intimately intertwined with a society's economic and social organization, as the history of colonialism in X country/community shows us. (Please identify a location to write about).
- Although international education development remains mired in unequal power dynamics, there are spaces for hope. (Please identify an organization/initiative/geographic location/policy to write about).
- When designing an educational policy or program, the issue of language-in-education must be considered carefully, as this has relevance for much more than student/teacher communication and academic learning. (Please identify a community/country/policy/intervention to discuss).
- Your own prompt that focuses on issues of language, history, and education.
 - Please indicate a region/organization/community you have chosen to focus on, if relevant (does not have to be within Africa).

Reflection Journals

You will be asked to write a short reflection journal in response to 3/7 classes, and to respond to a partner's journals as well. Please sign up for the weeks you plan to write a reflection [here](#).

Extra Credit

You may choose to watch *Colours of the Alphabet* in full and respond to the following prompts in 500 words:

- What conflicts do the teacher and families in this film confront? How do they navigate these conflicts?
- How does this movie change or reinforce your thinking about language and education?
- The film is intended as an advocacy tool for multilingual education. In your opinion, does it succeed in that goal? Why or why not?