Dossier

Beyond Slang: Unpacking the Self-Perception of Coloured Speech

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the self-perception of Kaaps, a language variety spoken predominantly by the Coloured ethnic group in Cape Town, South Africa. The research explores the reasons why speakers of Kaaps often describe their language as "slang." Through interviews with young Coloured individuals, the study delves into the historical and linguistic factors that contribute to this perception. The analysis examines the impact of apartheid ideology on the linguistic identity of Coloured speakers and the ways in which Kaaps has been marginalized and stigmatized. Additionally, the study compares Kaaps to standard Afrikaans, highlighting the unique linguistic features and cultural significance of the Kaaps variety. By understanding the self-perception of Kaaps, this research contributes to a broader understanding of language variation, linguistic identity, and the lasting effects of historical oppression.

KEYWORDS: *Afrikaans. Kaaps. Language Ideology. Apartheid. Coloured.*

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Introduction

The manner in which speakers describe a language can provide insight into their attitudes towards it, as well as those of other groups. This relationship has been the subject of investigation by sociologists, psychologists and sociolinguists. The latter represents the theoretical-methodological model that we utilise. In Cape Town, the variety of Afrikaans known as Kaaps (spoken predominantly by the Coloured ethnic group) has been described by its own users as "slang". The use of such a term is perceived as somewhat pejorative and stereotypical, particularly when considered in the context of a language variety that is considered "standard." This text initiates a brief discussion on this subject by defending the hypothesis that this classification is a reflection of the linguistic ideology preached by the South African government during the apartheid regime. This position has been addressed by van Niekerk (2021) and Macedo (2024) and is revisited here.

The text is structured as follows. We commence our discussion by introducing the Coloured ethnic group, which is the largest concentration of this group in South Africa and is located in Cape Town. Subsequently, the Kaaps language variety is analysed through a sociolinguistic lens. This article also considers the methodological and theoretical approaches employed in the study. Finally, the relationship between the designation of Kaaps as a slang term and apartheid ideology is discussed, as well as the debate regarding the relationship between naming Kaaps a slang and apartheid ideology.

The Coloured people of South Africa

The term Coloured[1] is a contested one. Politically, geographically and socially. The understanding, use and history of this term is unique to South Africa, however, we cannot ignore the comparison to the American definition of 'colored'. The 'u' in the South African spelling of this term, can be seen as representative of its reference to race and identity, highlighting the difference in understanding regarding what it means to identify as Coloured in South Africa in relation to the American context. Additionally, Dooms (2023a, p. 3) highlights that in the American lexicon, the word 'colored' was used 'to identify people of African descent' and a designation of them as 'inferior, unworthy and defective'. Moreover, she more poignantly notes that 'Being referred to as 'colored' was not a way of telling what you were but a reminder of what you were not – White (Dooms, 2023a, p.3). In contrast, Adhikari (2006) highlights that the South African understanding of the term 'coloured' is not in reference to 'black people in general', but rather:

alludes to a phenotypically diverse group of people' descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and a range of other people of African and Asian origin who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. (Adhikari, 2006, p. 144).

[1] We opted to use capital letters when referring to ethnic groups.

The historical construction of Coloured began from sometime in the 17th century to the beginning of the 19th century with "the Cape becoming known as a colonial slave society being African and Asian slaves from around the world, including Mozambique, Madagascar, Indonesia, India, and Ceylon and marked by the servitude of 'Khoesan' people" (Rassool, 2019, p. 3). Additionally, Rassool (2019, p. 4) notes that the emancipation of the Hottentots (also known as Hotnot, a derogatory term used by colonisers) did not 'greatly alter the material conditions' but saw the elimination of the legal category of Hottentot and of the division between the slaves and Khoe, leading to the latter being identified as "colo[u]red' (Dooling, 2007, p. 93-95; Worden, 1994). Thus, by the 19th century, 'coloured' and 'gekleurd' (of colour), like the early usage of Black as in 'free Black', was in reference to all people who were deemed not to be European or Native" (Rassool, 2019, p. 5). Moreover, an evolved definition of this term during the middle of the 20th century saw the term Coloured become locked into a more restricted meaning of a mixed, creole, mainly Afrikaans-speaking people (Rassool, 2019, p. 6), due to the Apartheid system.

In the Apartheid's aim to legislate their racial categorisation and segregation, Posel (2001, p. 85) highlights a key section of the Population Registration Act of 1950, which demonstrates the vague and arbitrary approach to race and identity, in South Africa, that changed the lives of many, with the impact still, in many ways, as visceral today as it was back then. Below are the 'defining' attributes of these constructed races, in which the Act states that:

> A native is a person who is in fact or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa. A white person is one who in appearance is, or who is generally accepted as, a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance [is] obviously a white person, [but] is generally accepted as a Coloured person. A Coloured person is a person who is not a white person nor a native. (South Africa, 1950).

Moreover, the main intention of this Act 'was to create a clear system of White supremacy by being clear about who the 'other' was (Dooms, 2023, p. 5). This classification of people used arbitrary criteria, such as hair type, skin color, facial features, home language, proficiency in Afrikaans, address, social status, employment, type of food and drink consumed, etc. to impose their segregated and purism ideals. The 'definition' practised and provided for a Coloured person an essentialised notion of race and identity and resulted in this community of people being seen as neither white nor native, but 'in the middle'. With this positioning reflecting 'the often-quoted struggle of those who self-identify as Coloured – as they are viewed as neither White nor Black and thus are seen as the segment of the population that is always 'in the middle'[2] (Van Niekerk, 2021). However, Crombie (2020) argues that the simplified conceptualizations of

[2] This association is highlighted by various scholars (Erasmus; Pieterse, 1999; Erasmus et al, 2001; Posel, 2001; Adhikari, 2004; Petrus; Isaacs-Martin, 2012; Nilsson, 2016; Rassool, 2019)

Coloureds (as a mixed-race group or in the middle) see this community and population encounter misrepresentation and prejudice. Moreover, many of these perspectives do not consider the diversity and different subcultures that make up the large group called Coloured. Moreover, Dooms and Chutel (2023, p. 14) explain that:

> The word 'Coloured' is loaded. To some it is a slur…to others it is a burden[3]. To others still, it is a unifier in a country where ethnic identities politics are beginning to replace the ideals of non-racialism and Black Consciousness that toppled apartheid.

[3] Due to past discrimination and the apartheid ideology that considered them inferior beings.

Furthermore, Dyers (2008) states that the mention and use of this term is still problematic because many understand it through the Apartheid ideology. Despite the contradictions, democratic South Africa still uses this term in their national census and in some government forms. Additionally, in terms of the complexity regarding this term and its reality, Dooms (2023a, p. 40-41) highlights that as an identity marker in South Africa, colouredness should always 'be understood in the context of both the country's race-based political structure and its unintended cultural consequences'. This means that:

> Being coloured has never simply been a matter of racial mixing. In terms of the age-old nature versus nurture debate, Colouredness is very definitely a matter of nurture over nature, characterised by relationships, geographies, language, fashion sensibilities and music. (Dooms 2023a, p. 40)

Thus, in moving away from the essentialized notion of this identity, we should see that:

> Colouredness was created by communities forced together to make their lives work which has had consequences for self-perception, worldviews and opportunities. Coloured identity is more than hair and complexion. It is more than an accident of biology. Colouredness is a culture this cannot be overstated. (Dooms, 2023a, p. 41)

Moreover, while it has become a culture, one of the key characteristics, used in categorisation process and what has become one of the most significant identifiers of colouredness, is the language of Afrikaans or Kaaps. Chutal (2023:89) expands on this by noting that while the Apartheid government first segregated people through ethnicity, defined by miscegenation and its opaque origins lost to a history of oppression, language became and is the easiest unifier (and marker) of and for 'Coloured South Africans, especially the Afrikaans language'. The reason being that because "most Coloured people spoke it, the segregationist bureaucrats reasoned, it was used as part of the rubric of classification." Thus, because of the strong link between colouredness and language as an identity marker and qualifier, let's explore this connection in relation to Kaaps.

Kaaps: one of the varieties of Afrikaans

The origins of Kaaps can be found in the 17th century (Hendricks, 2016). This language was created through various influences from other languages brought by the enslaved, Dutch[4] and locals (Khoi and San). Thus, Kaaps has predominantly become known as a geolect and sociolect used in the Cape and its surrounds (Carstens, 2003; Hendricks, 2016; Van de Rheede, 1985) with Creole Portuguese, Malay and English influences (Van Rensburg, 1989, p. 463; Van Rensburg, 1997, p. 10; Kotzé, 2001, p. 108; Hendricks, 2016, p. 9). Chutel (2023, p. 95) highlights that as a matter of survival, a new linguistic community was created, "the enslaved people of the Cape subverted the Dutch they were forced to speak and added their own words, still in use today: the 'baie' (a lot or much) in 'baie dankie', derived from Malay to mean 'thank you very much'; 'piesang' to describe an exotic new fruit, the banana: and 'piering', a saucer (a side plate)[5], also Malay".

Due to its birthplace being in Cape Town, it has many names to illustrate this, such as 'Kaapse Afrikaans', 'Kaaps' or 'Afrikaaps', with Kaaps in English meaning Cape. In terms of its geographic reach, Hendricks (2016, p. 11) notes that the places where Kaaps is most heard are: a) the center and suburbs of Cape Town, as well as the Cape Flats. These are the areas that Kaaps speakers live and work. Thus, according to Hendricks (2016), Kaaps is marked:

a. because it is not accepted in formal settings.
b. has intense influence of the English language.
c. prone to variation and relatively rapid change.

- Moreover, the name 'Kaaps' is currently predominantly used to refer to this language form in social and academic circles. Additionally, Dyers (2016, p. 64) notes in her definition that:

> Kaaps (also known as Cape Vernacular Afrikaans) is a regional and often highly stigmatized variety of Afrikaans, which is one of the official South African languages. It is acknowledged as the variety of Afrikaans most (…) used by the 'Coloured' people of the Western Cape, particularly in and around the City of Cape Town.

The diversity of Kaaps, as well as its origins, is particularly similar to that of Standard Afrikaans; however, due to racial and institutional representations, the latter is viewed as superior to the former (Cooper, 2018). Moreso Standard Afrikaans became the symbol and vehicle of the Apartheid system and thus became known and felt as the language of the oppressor (Giliomee, 2003a; Van der Waal, 2012; Van Heerden, 2016; Kriel, 2018) as well representative of the White Afrikaans identity. Additionally, this is echoed by Cooper (2018) who agrees with Le Cordeur (2016, p. 32) that the standardization of Afrikaans by the White community

[4] During the 16th century, the Dutch settlers came with a "Dutch only" rule yet could not control the 'kind´ of Dutch that was spoken. By the 19th century, the 'kind' of Dutch spoken was a creolized vernacular (Giliomee, 2003b, p. 53 cited in Kriel, 2018, p. 139), which evolved into what is known as Afrikaans.

[5] Side plate is an added definition by the authors.

caused a serious rejection of the varieties of Afrikaans spoken by non-Whites. Moreover, the author states that the linguistic ideology of the apartheid years preached that the Afrikaans language should be kept 'pure' and free from the influences of the working class, which included the Coloureds.

Furthermore, Kriel (2006b, cited in Van der Waal, 2012, p. 452) highlights the character of Kaaps that moves away from this purism ideology and practice by stating that:

> Code-switching was also a standard practice in the Kaapse Afrikaans of the Coloured population where it had a function of expressing social belonging, based in membership in both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking social orders.

This practice of code-switching, as highlighted by Kriel (2006a), by this population allows these speakers to express social belonging to both English and Afrikaans and further highlights the positioning of colouredness as always intermediate, even through language practices. Thus, emphasising how race and language are interwoven and how this influences the perceived ethnolinguistic identity of speakers. Moreover, due to Kaaps and colouredness having its origins in the Cape, Kaaps has become predominantly viewed as the expression of colouredness and vice versa. Thus, it can be said that 'the dominant ethnolinguistic identity of colouredness is perceived by many as Kaaps' (van Niekerk, 2021, p. 29). This echoes Rosa's (2018) point of "looking like a language and sounding like a race" and highlights the perception, particularly in South Africa, that many times, one's language is predisposed or assumed based on one's body (race) and greatly influenced by one's cultural practice (i.e. being Coloured in Cape Town, it is automatically assumed that Kaaps is your ethnolinguistic identity, van Niekerk, 2021, p. 29).

Furthermore, Le Cordeur, quoting Willemse (2012), shows that Kaaps is probably the most stigmatized variety of Afrikaans in South Africa. Chutel (2023, p. 100-101) expands on this by highlighting that:

> Kaaps is an enduring unifier, the history of its people wrapped into the dropped syllables or extended vowels of its speakers. But it is not suiwer (pure) and has been dismissed as slang for decades. The manner in which Coloured people at the Cape and elsewhere speak has been mocked, [as well as] regarded as the tongue of the uneducated and uncultured.

And thus, through this paper we wish to discuss the perception of Kaaps being identified and known as slang by its own speakers. However, before we get to that discussion, let's look at some examples regarding the difference between Standard Afrikaans and Kaaps.

Kaaps is known for being fast paced, code switching to English, and, as Chutel (2023) mentions above, having dropped syllables and extended vowels when spoken, as we can see in the examples below (Chart 1):

It is also interesting to note the different meanings of 'shared'

words between Kaaps and Standard Afrikaans. Eg. "giving existing words 'new or extended meanings', e.g. '*gevaarlik* (dangerous) or *duidelik* (clear) with the meaning of good or nice" (Dyers, 2016, p. 65). An

Chart 1. Kaaps vs. Standard Afrikaans vs. English: a comparison.

Kaaps	Standard Afrikaans	English
Wat wil djy hê?	Wat will jy hê	What do you want?
Ek wietie	Ek weet nie	I don't know
Ek het uitgevinna	Ek het uitgevind	I found out
Kykiesa	Kyk hier	Look here
Kyk heer, hoor heer	kyk hier luister hier	Look here, listen here
Laat ons gou iets straight kry	Laat ons gou een ding regkry	Let us quickly get one thing straight
Awê/Aweh	Hallo	Hello

example of this in speech could be, in Afrikaans, 'dit it gevaarlik' (*that is dangerous*), however, in Kaaps, it would be, 'Djy is gevaarlik' (*you are cool*). Additionally, 'Maak dit duidelik', in Afrikaans means 'make it clear'. In Kaaps, the word can be used on its own, 'Duidelik', meaning 'good', so in a sentence, one could say 'duidelik my bru' meaning good/ cool my brother'. Another example, in terms of English, is the phrase, 'don't be junk', with junk, in Kaaps, meaning don't be 'boring' or 'unfair'.

Theoretical approaches

As we understand that the use of slangs is linked to the linguistic identity of speakers, we base ourselves on existing theories in this area. We searched for some of the main references on this subject and chose to agree on a broad and comprehensive view that would provide a sufficiently adequate theoretical basis for our proposed analysis. Specific considerations about slang were saved for the last section. As this is a sociolinguistic study, it is obvious that the relationship between culture, society and language will be the central part of all the analysis and discussion proposed. We think of this work as interdisciplinary (as is to be expected of linguistic science) due to the important dialog that the study of language has with other sources of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, among others. In the specific case of South Africa, other researchers have also used identity as an analytical level of language, such as Dyers (2000, 2004), Cooper (2018), Hendricks (2016), Le Cordeur (2016), van Niekerk (2021) and others.

Identity has been explored by other sciences in recent decades, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, among others (Block, 2006; Edwards, 2009, Hall, 1996, Jenkins, 2004). There is more than one way of conceiving identity; it can be studied from a social, individual, collective,

cultural and political perspective, among others. What these authors have in common is the understanding that identity is not something fixed or immutable.

Giddens (1991) states that reality is discontinuous (because it is not homogeneous), which reflects on the identity of individuals. The English author believes that the recent and profound technological revolutions we have experienced have had intense consequences for individuals' social lives: today, people face risks and uncertainties like never before. Not dissimilarly, Hall (1996) takes a socio-historical view that takes into account the constant and significant social changes we are experiencing. The sociologist uses the term 'identity crisis' and defines it as a broad process of changes in central social structures that shake the stable and fixed anchoring that the individual has.

Jenkins (2004) takes a very practical approach to the subject of social identity, using the assumptions of sociology. The author reminds us that the word "identity" comes from the Latin word "identitas", which in turn has the root "idem", which means "the same" or "equal". As such, identity involves two other ideas: similarity and difference. From this lexical item came the verb to identify - which functions to: i) classify people and things and ii) establish associations between an individual and others.

With regard to the relationship between language and identity, Tabouret-Keller (1998) teaches us that the way subjects speak and their social identities are strongly connected; "the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable". The way they structure sentences, choose words and articulate sounds communicates a lot about who they are. By the way they speak and write, people reveal a lot about who they are, such as origin, age, education and in some cases ethnicity, sexual orientation, profession and so on. In her famous work written together with Robert B. Le Page (1985), she treated linguistic (and other) behavior as "Acts of Identity", which project us onto others, who may join this projection by "focusing" or reject it by "diffusion". People use language to signal who they are, who they want to be, and how they want to be perceived by others.

Since identity is not at all homogeneous, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (2011, 2013) proposes to use the term of "belonging" instead of "identity". She mentions the dynamics of multifaceted belongings we may have (which might be integrated into an identity). This opens our perception of "navigation" that might proceed – back and forth – from belonging together with a socially stigmatized community of (Kaaps, for instance) speakers to claiming membership or at least acceptance within well-established groups of speakers of a "hegemonic" variety by changing our variety or just the degree of (let's say English) standardised forms. On the other hand, this is by all means socially contested, speakers may feel inferiority of their speech (as "slang") and do not claim anything,

they may be rejected by the hegemonic community (as not speaking "pure" enough, let's say, English or Afrikaans).

The experience of being mocked or criticized for the way you speak your language is usually always very negative, because it is through language that people express their thoughts, ideas, emotions, in short, who they are. For Llamas and Watt (2010), language not only reflects who people are, but, in a way, directly defines them. Joseph (2010) states that the ways in which speakers use language not only reflects who they are but makes them who they are. The authors also draw attention to the fact that neither language nor identities are static, but are changing entities, experiencing constant renegotiations in response to the social and interactive context in which they are inserted. This point seems to agree with other authors such as Block (2006), Edwards (2009), Hall (1996) and Jenkins (2004).

However, it is essential to emphasize that not all linguistic elements and components of identities are mutable, there are parts that remain the same or take much longer to change, otherwise interactive human relationships would be too confusing and uncertain.

In this text, we advocate identity as a sociocultural phenomenon that is constructed and reconstructed through interaction between individuals. We agree with Bucholtz and Hall (1996) in presenting identity with a focus on social interaction, as we also believe that identity is formed in contact with other people. And we understand language in this process as a mirror that is capable of reflecting part of identity.

As an example, we can mention Ponso (2014, p. 162), who presents us with reflections on Mozambican languages and the social-ethnic. The author's study, which was carried out in Maputo (the capital), presents some very enlightening accounts of this relationship. In the aforementioned study, one of the informants expresses her indignation and frustration with a healer who used Portuguese in his religious sessions. A healer is expected to use Bantu languages and, according to the informant, the "spirits may not listen". The linguistic identity of a healer (at least when he is exercising this function) is directly related to the Bantu languages, otherwise his genuineness will be questioned if he uses a European language. This is just one case of how our linguistic/cultural identity can be questioned when we use a language (or variety of language) other than the one socially expected.

Methodology

With regard to methodological approaches, we used the interview technique to collect data. Ribeiro (2008) points out some advantages of the interview as a data collection technique: a) flexibility in its application; b) ease of adapting the protocol; c) it makes it possible to check and clarify

answers; d) high response rate and e) it can be used with people who cannot read. Hazen (2014, p. 9) and Milroy and Gordon (2003) suggest that interview questions should be carefully prepared in advance so that the results are more satisfactory. In our case, we prepared 9 questions that had been seen and approved by other linguistics researchers. Our interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we didn't limit ourselves to the prepared questions, and spontaneously asked other questions according to the natural progression of the conversation.

It's worth mentioning that some of our questions were inspired by the work of South African professor Dyers (2000). This work also dealt with linguistic-identity issues in South Africa, more specifically with the Xhosa ethnic group, and served as a model for what our interviews could look like.

Regarding the selection of participants, they necessarily had to identify themselves as Coloureds, since all our research is focused on this ethnic group. Other necessary requirements were to speak Afrikaans and English (since the interviews had to be in English), to have been born after 1994, the year Apartheid was officially ended, and, finally, to be residents of Cape Town. The interviewees were found with the help of Professor Amiena Peck from the University of Western Cape, who connected us with some of her students. Another strategy used was access to Facebook groups related to Coloured culture and identity. There we introduced ourselves and talked about our research; some people agreed to give us an interview. In total, there were 18 interviewees, 7 women and 11 men, aged between 20 and 28, most of whom were university students. In general, the participants were very open and cooperative when answering the questions.

Language policy on Afrikaans: brief comments

One of the key influences shaping the ideologies and attitudes towards Kaaps stems from the language policy on Afrikaans in schools and how the apartheid government strategically used education, the medium of instruction (MOI), and its language policies to enforce 'separate development' and institutionalize profound discrimination against the majority of the population (Stein, 2017, p. 209). Moreover, when the "the Bantu Education Department imposed on schools an instruction that English and Afrikaans would be the language of instruction at school", on an 50/50 basis (Stein, 2017, p. 211), it led to the Soweto Uprising[6] on 16 June 1976 where black students protested against 'the unjust imposition of Afrikaans-medium (next to English-medium) instruction' (Alexander, 2003, p. 8) and that their 'home languages were being undermined'(Stein, 2017, p. 211). However, because of this significant and historical day, "there is now express constitutional recognition of that right" (Stein, 2017, p. 211)

As a result, the South African constitution, Section 29(2) seeks to protect the right to receive basic education in the language of one's choice, meaning that:

[6] Twenty thousand learners protested against this decree and were met with violence from the police. Hundreds of young South Africans lost their lives fighting for recognition of their home languages, and the right to receive a quality basic education in those languages (Stein, 2017, p. 211)

> Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account:
>
> a. equity
>
> b. practicability
>
> c. the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.[7] (South Africa, 1996).

More specifically, in our democratic context, from the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) standpoint, this means that "that learners may select any one of the official languages of South Africa, which, as per Section 6(1) of the Constitution, are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Section 6 of the Constitution sets out specific measures to promote the official languages of South Africa, against the background of the historically diminished use and status of our indigenous languages" (Stein, 2017, p. 209). Additionally, the aim and introduction of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) in 1997 sought to "promote the use of previously marginalised African languages in different domains, including education.", and is supportive of 'additive bilingualism'[8] and which seems teaching and learning, in the first three years taking place in their mother tongue, before switching to instruction in English (Makoe; McKinney, 2014).

As noted by Mkhize and Balfour (2017), while the majority of people in South Africa speak languages other than English and Afrikaans, English—and to a lesser extent Afrikaans—continue to dominate official public and formal domains. They further state that the hegemonic use of these two languages restricts additive multilingualism as promoted in the Constitution, educational, language and legal policies in South Africa.

It is key to note that, while South Africa is a vibrant multilingual society, English and (Standard) Afrikaans is the dominant and default pairing when it comes to the medium of instruction at every level of education (even though we have 11/12 official languages). Additionally, due to the context of this paper, it is pertinent to suggest that because standard Afrikaans holds part of this status in providing access to education and learning in school, any languages outside of it (in this case, Kaaps) is held in lower regard. An example of this being that Kaaps is seen as the languages of the uneducated because the current language policy, does not acknowledge it as (one of) the home languages of its students. Barnes (2004, cited by Mkhize and Balfour, 2017, p. 134), highlights that:

> The education system in South Africa has not offered sustained learning as well as acquisition opportunities for the majority of the population in more than one language throughout schooling. In part this problem

[7] Highlighted by Stein (2017, p. 209)

[8] The introduction of different languages as part of the school curriculum is referred to in government policies as 'additive multilingualism'. This means that learner's skills in his or her home language are developed and strengthened, and other languages are introduced into the curriculum once this occurs. This is so that the learner will be able to consolidate his or her language and other skills in their home language and then easily acquire skills in other languages. Thus, many education experts support this approach (Stein, 2017)

occurs in school because teachers are trained for instruction in English or Afrikaans.

Furthermore, Quan, Fambasayi & Ferreira (2024) highlight that the Constitution does acknowledge the historically exclusionary practices of apartheid in 'prioritising English and Afrikaans as preferred languages' for teaching and learning, and some efforts to 'ensure linguistic diversity in the country' has seen the policy of the National Education Department having students being taught in their home language from grade 1 – 3. However, they note that the linguistic diversity is not sustained when the language of teaching and learning switches to English from grade 4. This is further emphasized by Makoe and McKinney (2014, p. 664) who states that it is through formal schooling, that learners are 'socialised (and ultimately assimilated) into monoglot ideologies' and which influences the 'discourses of and about language, as well as day-to-day practices'. This means that it is through formal schooling that languages ideologies and attitudes are passed on and influence how we interact with languages in our daily lives.

Moreover, it can be said that "through constant re-enactment of institutional behaviours and practices over time, English becomes 'normalised' and 'naturalised' (Foucault, 1980 Quan; Fambasayi; Ferreira, 2024). And through these institutional behaviours and practices, Afrikaans has become the superior to its 'other varieties' and the template/foundational premise for the correct of speaking this language despite all of its other varieties (i.e. Kaaps) and the large community of speakers of the latter.

Makoe and McKinney (2014, p. 664), in their paper, look at the influence of English and Afrikaans being the dominant and paired languages of teaching and learning on Zulu[9]. In analysing one of their participants extracts, what stood out for them was how Zulu, the home language of most of the learners in that context, are positioned. While we have predominantly discussed that English and Afrikaans are the dominant languages used and stated in South Africa's language policy, Zulu is third on that list in terms of dominance. However, Makoe and McKinney (2014, p. 664) highlight that the constructions of the participants using a 'a little bit of Zulu' and 'Zulu a third language of choice' showcases that "Zulu is not as valued a resource as English, or even Afrikaans". Hence, the dominant perception of English as the language of power and Afrikaans as the second best ultimately influences the position of Zulu at a disadvantage and one without power." Makoe and McKinney (2014, p. 664). Additionally, they add that even though Zulu officially holds the status as being "a third language of preference…Zulu that is taught is mainly oral, and very basic communication, including practices like greetings because unlike English and Afrikaans, there is no required formal assessment for Zulu." Thus, while it might seem redundant to be discussing this construct of Zulu in the context of our

[9] Zulu is a Bantu language, meaning that it is indigenous to South African and spoken by more than nine million people mainly in South Africa, especially in the Zululand area of KwaZulu/Natal province (Britannica, 2024)

paper, we feel that this example demonstrates the exact same context and experience that Kaaps speakers encounter and find themselves in. The only difference is that Kaaps might feel even further removed because its status is much lower down the ladder and one could say, in the Western Cape, that while it might in reality hold third place in this province, in relation to the country and its language policy, its holds 13th place or is not even considered. This could be due to the fact that more often than not Kaaps is seen as part of Afrikaans in terms of national and local policy (i.e. when census is taken, Afrikaans is meant to cover all of its varieties) and because Kaaps is not considered a (separate) language at these levels, but rather as slang, despite its large community of speakers.

Discussion

In 2019, at the outset of our research, we conducted an online pre-test that included a semi-structured interview. The primary aim of this pre-test was to evaluate the suitability of the questions for the overarching research objectives. We interviewed eight South Africans whose profiles matched those described in the preceding section. During this preliminary phase, it became evident that a significant number of participants referred to the Kaaps variety using the term "slang." This observation was particularly striking, leading us to incorporate a specific question into the on-site questionnaire in Cape Town: "In my initial interviews, most participants indicated that Afrikaans spoken by the Coloured community is characterized by the extensive use of slang. In your opinion, why did they choose to describe it in this way? What makes these 'slangs' so representative?"

This question was designed to provide a platform for young Coloured individuals to express their views on whether Kaaps is perceived as slang. If all languages are capable of generating slang, what drives the classification of a particular language variety as "slang"? What factors contribute to this identification?

Our intention is not to offer exhaustive or definitive answers to these complex questions. The responses are likely influenced by a range of political, social, and linguistic factors. Our aim here is to explore the connection between the labeling of Kaaps as "slang" and the impact of apartheid on the linguistic identity of these speakers, a connection that has been explored by scholars such as van Niekerk (2021). To further this exploration, we propose to reflect on the concepts of slang and the linguistic ideology embedded in apartheid.

Let's begin with some brief considerations about slang. We believe that this reflection is important in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic phenomenon being addressed. Eble (1996, p. 11) defines slang as follows:

> Slang is an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness

within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large. The existence of vocabulary of this sort within a language is possibly as old as language itself, for slang seems to be part of any language used in ordinary interaction by a community large enough and diverse enough to have identifiable subgroups.

There are three points in this definition that need to be highlighted. Firstly, the relationship between the use of slang and social identity. As we discussed in the theory section, all the linguistic forms we use relate to the way we project ourselves socially. Secondly, the slang is part, at least apparently, of all languages. This relates to the question posed in this paper: "why label a language a slang if all languages can create them?". Finally, the expression "identifiable subgroups" draws our attention to the fact that certain linguistic constructions are specific to certain social groups.

Izmaylova, Zamaletdinova, Zholshayeva (2017) present a series of considerations on the subject of slang which we can use in our discussion. The authors remind us that slang is generally related to spontaneity, informality and the creation of new expressions. They also add that such expressions can be born in a particular social group and have two outcomes: they can remain in that group or spread throughout society. The second situation is not uncommon, as slangs develop and quickly penetrate people's speech. Nowadays, with the existence of the internet and other technologies, the spread of expressions can be easily facilitated. In addition, the authors remind us that the emergence of slang can be linked to historical, social and cultural causes and reflects the moment a social group is going through.

Zhou and Fan (2013) define slang as an informal style of speech that can be presented as a single word, as expressions or entire sentences. Slangs are used outside of conventional (or standard) contexts and, according to the authors, slang is a type of speech variety and its characteristics can be identified both at the phonetic and lexical level and at the morphological and syntactic level. Some of these expressions have their origins in cultural subgroups of a society and, in some cases, over the years, their meaning may change and they may even lose their slang status. In addition, Zhou and Fan (2013) teach us that criteria such as gender, age and profession are important when choosing and using slang. For example, each generation creates its own slang, which reflects the linguistic and communicative needs of its time, as well as establishing solidarity between its members. The generational factor may explain why the slangs used between grandchildren and grandparents are so different and may even be incomprehensible.

Slangs reflect a very common characteristic of natural languages: creativity. In morphological terms, for example, speakers play with the use of suffixes and prefixes and transform two words into one, sometimes with the intention of creating humor, sometimes out of a need to name new things, beings or emotions.

At this point in the discussion, we consider it important to provide the reader with other examples of how Kaaps differs from the so-called Standard Afrikaans or, in the words of the interviewees, examples of slangs. Speakers of Kaaps say "kô saam" instead of "kom saam" (come with). In this particular case, we notice a change at the phonetic level which is reflected in the spelling. The Kaaps sentence "ek smaak jou" means "I like you"; in other varieties of Afrikaans the verb "smaak" means "taste". In "dala what you must", saying by Coloureds, we have that "dala" means "do", so "do what you must".

Another example is "halo jy, lyn", the word "lyn" is "line", however in Kaaps, it can also mean "go". There are also other phrases, such as "kom ons gaita' (gaita has Portuguese roots and means harmonica), but in Kaaps, 'gaita' means 'leave', so translated into English means "let us go". Lastly, a phrase where each word can stand on its own and is well- known as part of the Kaaps repertoire is "Nai jys kwaai mybru" meaning "No you are cool my brother". It is also interesting to note that 'kwaai' in Afrikaans, if you replace the 'i' with a 'd', it becomes 'kwaad', meaning angry, however, in Kaaps, it is 'kwaai' meaning cool.

As we know, all linguistic choices (related to interactional movements) are not random or accidental. This means that by choosing certain "slang", i. e. a substandard variety, individuals are affirming their belonging to a social group. If a certain person really wants to be part of a group, speaking as the group speaks will facilitate this reception. It can even be seen as a tool of social resistance, confronting norms established by the government. It is vital to mention that slangs can facilitate and empower the communication of minoritized and marginalized groups by bringing a sense of belonging and solidarity. By using slangs, some groups can create barriers that separate or exclude people who are not part of the group, reinforcing the insider/outsider relationship.

> Typically there's certain areas in Cape Town that is known for Coloured people. So as soon as you throw in some slang, they'll automatically assume that you're from that place, even though you've never stayed there or you don't even have family there, but they'll say oh you from there because they know that is associated with that and then they box you in. (Informant 6 M).

Having said that, let's move on to reflect on the linguistic ideology imposed by the apartheid policy in order to better understand our hypothesis that the influence of this system has affected the linguistic identity of Kaaps speakers. A linguistic ideology can be explained as a set of beliefs that people in a particular community have about certain languages. According to Woolard (2020), the focus of a linguistic ideology is on the language itself, unlike other ideologies that are codified through language. On the other hand, the author also warns us that these ideologies are circumvented by morality and politics and not necessarily by elements internal to language. Language itself has no power, but those

who use it do (Kadt, 1996). This point needs to be emphasised in our context since we argue that Kaaps has been stereotyped in South Africa not for essentially linguistic reasons, but because it comes from a group of speakers with low economic and social power who have always been subjugated to White supremacy in the apartheid times. The very fact that Kaaps is considered a variety of Afrikaans is already a consequence of the language ideology present in the country in question. The adjectives given to certain words, expressions and pronunciations, such as proper or wrong, also reflect how varieties are valued in a society. Languages, in this sense, reflect and reinforce social structures. As Kadt (1996, p. 184) states, "language is never neutral".

The ideals that a society claims to have about a language, however, are not static. Ideology can change along with society. In South Africa's own history, according to Webb and Kriel (2000), Afrikaans was related to a group of uneducated workers, its status was considered low and not even the Church wanted to translate the Bible into this language. From 1902 the process of recognising Afrikaans began, and it started being taught in schools and used in churches. With the beginning of apartheid in 1948, Afrikaans became the language of government and enjoyed great social prestige, even receiving a monument in Paarl, near Cape Town.

> An ironic aspect of the Afrikaans language movement(s) was that the language was so totally appropriated by its white Speakers: what was initially a language of the nonelite, the working class, black people, brown people, and uneducated white people, came to be regarded as the "exclusive" property of the white "elite" (despite, of course, the fact that more than half of its speakers were not white). (Webb; Kriel, 2000, p. 22).

We argue that the fact that the Coloureds call their own language a slang type is one of the direct consequences of the apartheid ideology concerning languages. According to van Niekerk (2021, p. 22) "apartheid ideologies are not only limited to race, but strongly affect the way we view language in this country, and how the languages that we speak are used to position us". It is correct to say that languages and language varieties in South Africa are strongly related to ethnicity. According to apartheid propaganda, anything not produced, made or created by the White community was seen as inferior (the Whites positioned themselves centrally). We also defend the position that these discriminatory doctrines have even penetrated the way the Coloureds describe their own speech. Let's remember that education was one of the instruments that White supremacy used to maintain its hold on power, since all ethnic groups received inferior education to Whites (such as less investment and a differentiated curriculum). Standardisation of Afrikaans and its teaching in school was the way to impose the hegemonic variety of Afrikaans, the "suiwer taal" (the pure language), as the exclusive property of the White elite.

The existence of such an ideology can also be seen in the way Kaaps-speaking Coloureds perceive their own linguistic practices. According to Macedo (2024) many of these speakers feel insecure or even embarrassed to use their variety of Afrikaans when interacting with Whites, which was expressed by some of the young people interviewed. It is not uncommon for groups with less social power to make such designations about their languages as a way of coping with the system in place in their societies or as a way of assimilating into the dominant culture. Although Whites' attitudes towards Kaaps were not the focus of our study, we heard from interviewees that Blacks are more open and accepting of Kaaps than Whites. We also heard some accounts of the discrimination that South African Whites have shown towards Coloureds, as we can see in the following excerpt:

Like every time I spoke my language Afrikaans people assume the worst of us. (Informant 5 M).

On the other hand, Kaaps speakers born after the end of apartheid are able to recognise that their way of speaking is unique and is responsible for differentiating and setting Coloured speech apart from other ethnic groups in Cape Town, as can be seen in the following two interview fragments:

> I think it's they used this slang as a way to differentiate from standard Afrikaans to make it their own language and to make it look like a language that represents who they are as a people. Because the Coloured language is very colourful and if you notice that and it's a very much a representation of who we are as a Coloured community (…) Standard Afrikaans is very much, there's a very linear perspective to it. It's, it's very plain and dull and rigid, where's the Kaaps like, which is very much part of the Coloured community is flavourful and it's, you know, all over the place. So I feel like the use of slang gives them that differentiation and gives them that power that they want or that sense of ownership for the language, because you know. Because during the apartheid, the people, the people of the Coloured community were displaced and they were taken out of their homes, out of their communities and, and their sense of ownership and power was taken away from them. And then they were putting these Township places or the flat, if you will. And they were just expected to love there and expected to find new purpose there. So in having this language, I feel that they are taking back hat sense of ownership and their sense of pride in the language that was meant to, you know. (Informant 12 F).

> I think that language is sort of part of how you can identify or make your-self unique; I think people try to put, people will try and make the language unique in such a way they start playing around with certain things with the language as I was just thinking about us yet. So we'll just make things up that don't make sense, but it will be become part, you know, vocabulary. And I mean if it starts to appeal to more than one person, that's how it starts, like rude. So I don't know where this one word came from, "awe[10]". (Informant 6 M).

While we cannot ignore the influence that the Apartheid has had on speakers of colour and their languages. Due to the branding of Afrikaans as pure, correct and appropriate, perhaps particularly

[10] Awe" is a greeting (hello!) widely used by Coloureds in Cape Town.

enforced through its standardization, Kaaps is simply an example of many other languages/varieties demonstrating what people do outside the standardized guidelines in order to create their own agency and voice.

The oppression of others, through language, saw that acknowledging the rich mix of many cultures into the creation and sustainability of this language would be destroying the purist and appropriate perception of standardized languages. This is interesting because while a language viewed as slang and used by speakers can be seen as creating agency, voice and community for a large number of speakers, the influence of its use in certain contexts does show the impact of the linguistic ideology brought forth by Apartheid. The aspect of slang as informal does bring with it negative connotations, such as, when spoken, its speakers being perceived as rough and uneducated, which is something Kaaps speakers deal with daily and also means that they do not use in it formal or professional settings because of it.

It also important to note that when many of these Kaaps speakers identified it as slang, they are using it to separate themselves and highlight the difference between its speakers, its community, practices and ideologies. However, this is also used to demonstrate their belonging and understanding of their linguistic community. It as the participant above states 'slang gives them that differentiation and gives them that power that they want or that sense of ownership for the language' – it gives them ownership because it allows them to create their own rules, own understanding and own sense of belonging. This might be because the Apartheid system enforced their essentialising ideologies and teachings through the Afrikaans language, whereas with Kaaps, through its informal and multicultural structure, it might feel more organic, less imposed and judgemental and more like home, familiar, when spoken amongst themselves.

Thus, while we cannot disregard the negative connotations and impact of Apartheid in its speakers identifying their language as slang. It does show a complex and ambivalent phenomenon that demonstrates how speakers are aware of the linguistic ideologies surrounding their language, but still choosing to identify as speakers of this language because of what it represents and what is allows them to do – that is, not only to agentively express themselves but to belong.

Closing remarks

This text explores why young Coloureds born after 1994 use the term *"slang"* to refer to **Kaaps**, the primary variety of Afrikaans spoken by non-Whites in Cape Town. One potential explanation for this linguistic phenomenon is the linguistic ideology of apartheid. During the apartheid era, the government invested heavily in promoting the values, culture, and language of the White population while simultaneously denigrating everything associated with non-white communities. Although apartheid officially ended in 1994, its legacy continues to manifest in South African

society, influencing how different varieties of Afrikaans are perceived and valued.

This text provides an introduction to the Coloured ethnic group and the Kaaps variety of Afrikaans, offering context to readers who may be unfamiliar with the South African sociolinguistic landscape. It details the methodological practices employed in the research, including the qualitative techniques and fieldwork conducted in Cape Town. Additionally, it addresses the concept of *slang* within scientific literature and examines the influence of linguistic ideology.

The objective of this text extends beyond merely describing a sociolinguistic phenomenon in Cape Town; it aims to initiate a broader discussion on the valorization of languages perceived as inferior due to ideologies rooted in the preservation of privileges and rights for a select few. The usage of the term *slang* to describe Kaaps reflects underlying attitudes that are influenced by historical and social factors related to apartheid, which promoted the values and language of the white population while marginalizing others.

While the text presents one possible explanation for the association between *slang* and the linguistic varieties of communities with low socioeconomic status, it acknowledges that other factors may also contribute to this phenomenon. The intention is to stimulate further investigation into the complex relationships between language, identity, and social power.

We hope that this text will serve as a catalyst for future research, encouraging scholars to explore additional avenues of inquiry within the rich and diverse field of sociolinguistics. With its extensive bibliography and theoretical frameworks, sociolinguistics provides a robust foundation for examining these issues in greater depth.

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Além do Slang: Desvendando a autopercepção do falar Coloured

RESUMO:

Este estudo investiga a autopercepção do Kaaps, uma variedade linguística falada predominantemente pelo grupo étnico Coloured na Cidade do Cabo, África do Sul. A pesquisa explora as razões pelas quais os falantes de Kaaps frequentemente descrevem sua língua como "slang". Através de entrevistas com jovens Coloured, o estudo investiga os fatores históricos e linguísticos que contribuem para essa percepção. A análise examina o impacto da ideologia do apartheid na identidade linguística dos falantes de Coloured e as maneiras como o Kaaps foi marginalizado e estigmatizado. Além disso, o estudo compara o Kaaps com o Afrikaans padrão, destacando as características linguísticas únicas e a importância cultural da variedade Kaaps. Ao compreender a autopercepção do Kaaps, esta pesquisa contribui para uma compreensão mais ampla da variação linguística, identidade linguística e os efeitos duradouros da opressão histórica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Afrikaans. Kaaps. ideologia linguística. Apartheid. Coloured.*