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THE FALLACY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: A THEORETICAL CRITIQUE OF
CRITICAL LANGUAGE POLICY

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Abstract

Given the prevalence of Critical language policy in the field of language policy and planning, this dissertation sets out to critically analyse both its foundations and implications through an examination of its grounding in the pursuit of social justice. This critical analysis will draw heavily on perspectives being developed in the newly emerging approach of Postcritical language policy. In an effort to properly account for the practical applications of the resulting theoretical arguments, this dissertation will assess Critical language policy in the context of Estonia which constitutes an ideal case study given the complex linguistic environment that has emerged partly as the result of Soviet occupation. Through the analysis described above, this dissertation sets out to argue that social justice and the approaches taken to pursue it, specifically linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization, are fundamentally flawed, ultimately concluding that these flaws provide substantial grounds on which to question Critical language policy as a whole. It will further establish that not only are there viable alternatives to Critical language policy, but also that a continued reliance on the faulty claims of Critical language policy may have dangerous consequences.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Though the field of language policy and planning was initially relegated to developing postcolonial nations, it now plays an active role in governments throughout the world. In many societies, neoclassical perceptions of language are still prominent with monolingualism and national languages reified as a means of establishing and maintaining unity (Tollefson 2006: 42). However, among language policy professionals and researchers, beliefs are guided largely by Critical language policy which questions reification of national languages, emphasizing more equitable linguistic environments (Tollefson 2006: 43). Critical language policy has now dominated the field of language policy and planning for over twenty years and its influences can be seen in vast numbers local, state and international regulations.

Given the prevalence of Critical language policy, this dissertation sets out to critically analyse both its foundations and implications with particular emphasis on its grounding in the pursuit of social justice. This particular approach is taken because Critical language policy holds at its centre a desire to reduce inequality and pursue social justice, (Tollefson 2006: 44) a foundation which informs Critical language policy research and recommendations but has gone largely unquestioned in the field. This dissertation's critical analysis will draw heavily on a newly emerging branch of Critical language policy which will later be separated from Critical language policy for more precise analysis and termed Postcritical language policy. Through such analysis, this dissertation sets out to argue that social justice and the approaches taken to pursue it, specifically linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization, are fundamentally flawed, ultimately concluding that these flaws provide substantial grounds on which to question Critical language policy as a whole. This argument, as well as a novel differentiation

between Critical and Postcritical language policy, will serve as the unique theoretical contributions of this dissertation.

The line of argumentation outlined above goes beyond a purely theoretical argument. Given the nature of language policy and planning, theoretical arguments have practical consequences as they serve to inform policy on local, state and international levels. In an effort to properly account for these practical applications, this dissertation will assess Critical language policy in the context of Estonia which constitutes an ideal case study given the complex linguistic environment that has emerged partly as the result of Soviet occupation. While Estonian language policy currently exhibits a strong neoclassical reification of the national language, were it to move beyond this to policies reflecting more currently accepted approaches to policy and planning, Critical language policy would be the natural choice given its overwhelming dominance in the field. As tensions over language are pervasive in Estonian society and politics, a thorough analysis of any framework that may be employed to inform or justify new policy merits critical analysis. As such, Estonia's linguistic situation provides not only an empirical context within which to examine the theoretical arguments being conducted but also a concrete justification as to why such theoretical analyses are necessary. The demonstration of Estonia's incompatibility with Critical language policy as well as the application of alternative approaches which are developing in the field will be unique contributions to Estonian language policy studies.

The dissertation will proceed as follows. In Chapter 2, after a brief introduction to the history of language policy, arguments will be provided in support of dividing Critical language policy into two distinct categories (Critical language policy and Postcritical language policy). A brief overview of each category will then be provided in which basic theoretical foundations are summarised. This will be followed by an overview of the linguistic situation in Estonia. Next, in Chapter 3, the concept of social justice will be expanded upon before being examined by means of two approaches taken in its pursuit: linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization. Each of these approaches will be elaborated upon in greater detail as envisioned by Critical language policy. After said elaboration, crucial aspects of the two approaches will be assessed, with significant contributions from Postcritical language policy. Once each aspect has been

assessed, examples from Estonia's linguistic situation will be employed as means of empirical support for the theoretical arguments that have been made. Having established the flawed foundations of each approach which can be summarised as a reliance on oversimplified categories of languages and their speakers and a resulting tendency towards universal prescriptive solutions to injustice, an alternative will be provided that could offer a means of pursuing the goal of reducing human suffering and inequality without a reliance on the flawed foundations of Critical language policy. A critical analysis of social justice will then be followed by its application to Estonia before all preceding analyses are briefly summarised and discussed as they apply to social justice. Finally, this dissertation will conclude with a brief overview of the arguments and contributions that have been made before touching upon their limitations and potential for wider theoretical application.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Early Language Policy – Neoclassical Language Policy

Language policy and planning first came to prominence in the post-World War II era of rapid decolonization. From the 1960's the groundwork for the field was laid by language scholars who were recruited to help develop grammars, writing systems and dictionaries for local languages. Their work was aimed at solving perceived language 'problems' (Johnson and Ricento 2013: 7) of developing postcolonial nations and was viewed as beneficial to the modernization of the subject countries (Tollefson 2006: 42). The intent was to convert the emotional, value-laden questions of language and culture into problems of technical efficiency by removing them from their sociohistorical contexts (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 25). Language was viewed as a resource and therefore required careful, objective planning (Johnson and Ricento 2013: 8). As decolonization progressed, there was a perceived need to balance local desires for a local identity with the economic benefits of maintaining trade with the region's former colonizer (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 26). As indigenous languages were often viewed as 'primitive' (Johnson and Ricento 2013: 8), the result was typically the establishment of a linguistic hierarchy with the former colonial language firmly on top and local indigenous languages on the bottom (Johnson and Ricento 2013: 9).

James W. Tollefson (2006) refers to this early version of language policy as Neoclassical language policy. The Neoclassical approach to language policy sees its role as technical and apolitical (Tollefson 2006: 42). As such, the language policy researcher is seen as outside of the historical context. Their responsibility is to analyse the planning process without interfering. The resulting research is not aimed at judging equity or fairness, but

rather the effectiveness of existing policy in terms of national unity and economic development (Tollefson 1991: 28).

Another hallmark of the Neoclassical approach to language policy is the value it places on monolingualism (Tollefson 2006: 42). It views monolingual societies as ideal, or even necessary, for the attainment of the aforementioned national unity and economic development. Language policy's role, therefore, is to regulate language situations and solve language problems that are perceived to threaten such outcomes. The enforcement of monolingualism is promoted as beneficial to minorities, increasing their opportunities for success by granting them access to what is perceived as a more advantageous language for social and economic advancement (see Eastman 1983) (Tollefson 2006: 42). While strong opposition to this view arose particularly in the 1980's during a period of disillusionment with the field, it continued to dominate research in the field well into the 1990's (Tollefson 2006: 42; Tollefson 2002: ix).

2.2 Differentiating Critical Language Policy

A more critical approach to language policy, which gained strength in the 1990's, arose largely in opposition to early language policy's Neoclassical approach (Johnson and Ricento 2013: 11). Since then it has been elaborated on primarily by authors such as Allistar Pennycook and James W. Tollefson. While holding profoundly different views as to what constitutes language policy, both of these authors as well as others in the field have classified their wide-ranging views under the term "Critical language policy" citing the centrality within the work of a concern for human suffering as well as opposition to Neoclassical language policy (Tollefson 2006: 42; Pennycook 2006: 9). However, despite the shared aspects, the categorization of fundamentally different views under the same title has led to the use of the term "Critical language policy" in often contradictory manners.

By en large, Tollefson discusses Critical language policy in terms heavily influenced by critical theory and (neo) Marxism which he cite as defining factors of the term "critical" in Critical language policy (Tollefson 2006: 43). While not making the distinction explicit, such views are often in line with what Pennycook (2001) criticizes as

‘mainstream’ (p. 62) critical applied linguistics.¹ Again, while rarely making the distinction explicit, Pennycook espouses a view of Critical language policy informed primarily by postmodernism. This influence is made most evident through application of the principles he outlined in the chapter *Postmodernism in Language Policy* in Ricento’s *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method* to the views he advocates later in his book *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction*. The problem that arises as a result of these varying influences is that postmodernism is directly critical of many of the fundamental categories and tenants of critical theory. Thus, though sharing a “critical” approach to language policy and planning, “Critical language policy” is used by different authors to argue dramatically different points informed by often incompatible theories.

In an effort to be as explicit as possible about the aspects of Critical language policy being assessed, this dissertation will henceforth separate the “critical” approaches to language policy into two categories: one informed by critical theory and (neo) Marxism and the other informed by postmodernism. Such a distinction is essential for further analysis in order to avoid arguing contradictory points under the same title which would serve to obscure the arguments at hand. Thus, this dissertation will refer to Critical language policy in order to indicate language policy theory informed by critical theory and (neo) Marxism. Postcritical language policy will serve as the referent for policy informed by postmodernism, a label chosen in order to acknowledge both its critical stance and progression beyond the universalist understandings of Critical language policy. Establishing this distinction between the two approaches will allow for a more critical analysis and comparison of their implications, assumptions and recommendations.

Despite the utility of the newly established distinction, it would be an oversimplification to view the new categories as uniform and without internal debate or overlap. Though Tollefson and Pennycook tend to lean towards opposite influences, it is not accurate to treat the two categories as specifically associated with each author. For example, while primarily influenced by critical theory, Tollefson (2006) mentions governmentality, a

¹ Note: While Pennycook does not directly focus primarily on language policy in his book *A Critical Approach to Critical Applied Linguistics*, as language policy and planning are most often considered a subfield of applied linguistics, the majority of his claims and analyses apply directly to the field being discussed in this dissertation.

distinctly postmodern approach, as one offering ‘great promise for extending research beyond static concepts of the state towards more dynamic theories’ (p. 50) in the development of language policy. Similarly, while Pennycook is most often highly critical of approaches informed by critical theory, at times he does incorporate such views. Thus, authors do not often fall clearly into one category or the other. Rather, their work may be heavily influenced by one theory while borrowing from the other. As this dissertation is an analysis of theory, such borrowing will not pose difficulty because theorists are referred to in terms of their contribution to the approach under discussion.

Having now established a distinction between Critical language policy and Postcritical language policy, each will now be outlined for further clarification.

2.3 Critical Language Policy

The first of the two critical approaches to language policy to develop, Critical language policy (CLP) has been primarily developed by Tollefson and Luke, McHoul, and Mey (though the latter authors are not language policy specialists, their work is frequently cited as fundamental to the field and definition of Critical language policy. While Tollefson may not explicitly identify as a CLP theorist, his work routinely refers to, demonstrates and elaborates upon the approach. As previously mentioned, this approach has heavily dominated the field of language policy research since the 1990’s, thus necessitating the analysis provided in this dissertation.

Critical language policy is starkly opposed to the positivist objectivity clung to by the Neoclassical approach, instead viewing researchers as existing and acting within the context of the language situation. Critical language policy aims to contribute to the development of policy that reduces inequality for the attainment of social justice (Tollefson 2006: 43). Such an aim is directly in line with critical theory which ‘springs from an assumption that we live in a world of pain... and that theory has a crucial role to play in the process [of alleviating such pain]’ (Poster 1989:3)².

² As cited in (Pennycook 2009: 6)

2.3.1 Influence of Critical Theory and Marxism

Critical language policy is considered a rethinking of Marxism (Tollefson 2006: 43). This foundation is evident in the topics that it considers central to language policy as a whole.

Power and Inequality

Critical language policy sees the world as defined by the dichotomy of dominant versus oppressed groups (Tollefson 2006: 46). Power is defined in terms of ownership and wealth which allow for control of society through coercive or consensual (ideological) means (Pennycook 2001: 37). Power is therefore seen as implicit in all social interactions and policy making (Tollefson 2006: 46). As the oppressors are those with the power, language policy and its planners are believed to work for that elite, resulting in elite self-reproduction through language management (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 30). Language policy is therefore seen as central to the reproduction and enforcement of inequitable power relations (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 37). Governments and public institutions, schools in particular, are considered to be arenas in which language policy is able to enforce these inequitable relations (Tollefson 2006: 43).

Given these views, Critical language policy sees its role to be the production of policy that reduces inequality (Tollefson 2006: 43). It places an emphasis on research that further examines the processes through which inequality is created and sustained including forms of linguistic oppression, linguistic repression and linguistic genocide (Tollefson 2006: 43; Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 28, 30; Skutnabb-Kangas 1994: 626). It is believed that such research, linking language policy to inequality, could contribute to the development of an informed and sceptical citizenry which could move itself towards a reduction of inequality (Donahue 2002)³.

Hegemony and Ideology

In its examination of inequality, Critical language policy emphasizes a need to investigate the ways in which such inequality, as well as policies that promote inequitable relations, come to be perceived as natural. The theory claims that 'invisible' (Tollefson 2006: 43)

³ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 44)

forms of inequality are made to seem natural through ideology, the process through which unconscious beliefs and assumptions are ‘naturalized’ (Tollefson 2006: 47). Ideology in turn contributes to hegemony (Tollefson 2006: 47). According to Critical language policy, it is hegemonic institutional practices that ensure that power remains in the hands of the few (Gramsci 1988)⁴. These forces also act to reinforce elite privilege and the legitimacy that it entails as a natural state (Fairclough 1989)⁵. Critical language policy believes that research should be aimed at describing, explaining and analysing the underlying ideologies of alternative language policies in order to expose such processes (Tollefson 2006: 44, 47).

Struggle

A clear footprint of Marxism is seen in Critical language policy’s focus on struggle. Believing that socioeconomic classes have fundamentally and irreconcilably different interests, Critical language policy sees struggle as a prerequisite for change (Tollefson 2006: 46). Language policy, therefore, is seen as an arena for this struggle (Tollefson 2006: 44). Critical language policy believes that struggle over language can often times represent an aspect of a larger struggle for political power and economic resources (Tollefson 2002: 5).

2.3.2 Areas of Concern for Critical Language Policy

Centrality of Cultural, Economic, and Political Factors

While the relative importance of each varies by theorist, cultural, economic and political factors are seen as central tenants of Critical language policy. May (2012) insists that the nation-state needs to be a central factor in any analysis of policy influencing minorities while Mazrui (2002)⁶ and Alidou (2004)⁷ argue that globalization has reduced the role of the nation-state and increased the role of international organizations (p. 4). On the other hand, Tollefson argues, in line with the influence of Marxism, that economic factors are central to the majority of language processes, supported by Luke, McHoul and Mey who

⁴ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 47)

⁵ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 47)

⁶ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 51)

⁷ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 51)

note that in the past, educational and economic systems have acted as defacto directors of language policy (Tollefson 2006: 50; Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 26). Given what he sees as compelling arguments for the roles of each cultural, economic and political factors, Tollefson (2006) argues that future models must be more complex than those seen thus far and involve the role of all three factors (p. 51). Luke, McHoul and Mey (1990) further argue that the way in which language policies may seek to serve other political ends can *only* be understood in terms of the ‘imperatives of economic, political and sociocultural systems’ (p. 34). Given the centrality of these factors, there is an emphasis on contextualized analysis of policy. Further, Critical language policy researchers investigate how social organizations, economics, culture and politics act to establish mass loyalty to a language and develop a discourse of power (p. 32). The concept of discourse will be elaborated upon further in the overview of Postcritical language policy.

Greater Social Justice

Central to Critical language policy is the search for greater social justice. While rarely, and at best vaguely, defined, Tollefson has suggested that greater social justice is to be found in ‘greater social, economic and political equality’ (Tollefson 2006: 52). Critical language policy theorists argue that the role of Critical language policy is to develop policies that see the crucial value of ethnolinguistic identity but avoid falling into the trap of developing policies that lead to new forms of inequality and injustice (Tollefson 2006: 52). Authors such as Skutnabb-Kangas and Tollefson have argued that this goal should be achieved through the implementation of forms of pluralism that grant and protect rights for a wide range of language varieties (Tollefson 2006: 53). As the promotion of indigenous languages is considered to be of key importance to the attainment of social justice, linguistic human rights as well as language maintenance and revitalization also play central roles in the pursuit of social justice. These topics will be elaborated upon shortly. Critical language policy also emphasizes the need for research that highlights the ethical questions of language policy for social change and justice. Social justice therefore provides the ground for Critical language policy’s advocacy for the examination of the processes by which inequality is created and sustained discussed above (Tollefson 2006: 43).

Linguistic Human Rights

In line with Critical language policy's goal to reduce inequality and pursue social justice, the field of linguistic human rights (LHR) has arisen largely championed by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas. The central idea is that the world is rife with 'language wrongs'(Skutnabb-Kangas 1999:5) that are 'a product of belief in normality of monolingualism and the dangers of multilingualism to the security of the nation state' (Pennycook 2001: 18). The field highlights linguistic oppression, in which those with political power shape language policies and discursive practices to maintain control, and linguistic repression in which power relations are maintained through 'subtle but pernicious forms of planning and control' (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 28-29). Linguistic human rights also highlights the dangers of linguistic imperialism in which large languages such as English effectively impose economic, political and sociocultural domination with 'devastating' (Ricento 2002: 16) implications for indigenous languages. In the face of these linguistic wrongs, LHR argues for the provision of special rights to specific minority groups in order that minority language speakers may have the 'right to identify with, to maintain and fully develop [their] mother tongue(s)' (Pennycook 2001: 63). A major focus of these fields is the right to mother tongue education which is seen as crucial to fighting the 'linguistic genocide' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1994: 626) through language replacement prevalent in contemporary pedagogy.

Maintenance and Revitalization

Critical language policy places great importance on the maintenance and revitalization of indigenous, small and threatened languages. Some theorists tout the economic value of language diversity through the emergent, though highly criticized, field of language ecology (see Grin 2002) (Tollefson 2006: 52). Others advocate language maintenance and revitalization for diversity's sake alone. Most Critical language policy theorists, however, argue for maintenance and revitalization on the grounds that the promotion of indigenous languages is of primary importance to the attainment of 'greater social, economic and political equality' (Tollefson 2006: 52) and therefore social justice (Tollefson 2006: 43).

Arguing that the micro level is crucial for maintenance, many efforts at maintenance and revitalization emphasize the importance of schools in catalysing resistance to majority

language policies (Tollefson 2006: 51). Maintenance advocates emphasize that schools are inherently unequal and that aggressive minority language programs are necessary to ensure opportunities for minority language students, a belief held in direct opposition to the argument from the Neoclassical approach that such opportunities were guaranteed through majority language education (Corson 1992: 199).

Centrality of Education

The centrality of education to Critical language policy's pursuit of social justice and combat against inequality was previously touched on above in both *Linguistic Human Rights* and *Maintenance and Revitalization*. The reason for the pervasive emphasis in Critical language policy on education is that education is seen as a key arena for the perpetuation of linguistic hierarchies given its central role in the organization of social and political systems (Tollefson 2002: x). Critical language policy argues that much of education revolves around complex linguistic interactions between students and teachers as well as among students themselves. It is believed that these interactions act to both reflect and shape the linguistic hierarchies that are essential in broader social, political and economic systems of inequality (Tollefson 2002: ix). Thus, language of instruction policies in education are viewed as key determinants in which social and linguistic groups gain and maintain access to political and economic power (Tollefson and Tsui 2010: 2). Given this influence, language in education is seen as both the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalizing a language but also the most direct means of enacting linguistic genocide (Fishman and Fishman 2000, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000)⁸. Thus, many Critical language policy theorists advocate mother tongue education as a means of preventing linguistic genocide and instead maintaining and revitalizing minority languages (Skutnabb-Kangas 1998: 22).

2.3.3 View of Language and Language Policy

Critical language policy fundamentally views language as 'always already political' (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 34). Language policy itself is understood to be central to the repetition and enforcement of inequitable power relations (Luke, McHoul and Mey

⁸ As cited in (Tollefson and Tsui 2010: 2)

1990: 37). Luke, McHoul and Mey (1990) bemoan the lack of acknowledgement of the power and politics in language policy, arguing that it is blind to the network of power in which it operates (p. 38). This raises fundamental questions about how languages gain legitimacy, whose language is being planned and whose language sets the norm for such planning (Luke, McHoul, and Mey 1990: 29). Nevertheless, language is something that can and should be planned. Given its role in social, economic and political inequality, language policy and planning should not only seek to research and highlight such inequalities but also put in place aggressive policies to counteract the naturalized legitimacy of oppressive languages (Tollefson 2006: 52). Critical language policy asserts that only in doing so can it move forward in the pursuit of greater social justice.

2.4 Postcritical Language Policy

While postmodernism's role in language policy is yet to be fully developed, Postcritical language policy has established itself not as a canon of thought, but rather as a way of thinking and doing that is essentially sceptical and takes nothing for granted (Pennycook 2006: 63). Usher and Edwards (1994) refer to it as 'more of a state of mind, a critical posture and style, a different way of seeing and working' rather than attached to 'a framed position, however opposed, or to an unchanging set of critical techniques' (p.17)⁹. Alternatively, Pennycook (2006) sees postmodernism in general as 'a European cultures awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world' (p. 63). On whole, postmodernism is anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist (in that it is sceptical of foundational concepts seen as canons of knowledge) and against grand narratives. It therefore raises questions about central concepts of language planning such as race, ethnicity, power, policy, planning and even language itself, seeing them each as contingent and shifting without the prior ontological status assumed by other theories (Pennycook 2006: 63). For language, specifically, this means a rethinking of the ontology of language as a colonial or modernist construct (Pennycook 2006: 64). Therefore, Pennycook (2006) argues that language policy is 'missing the point' (p. 64) if it limits its discussion to the use of cues or 'languages,' (p. 71) especially if done so in the context of modernist grand narratives such as linguistic human rights or imperialism which play a

⁹ As cited in (Pennycook 2006: 63)

central role in Critical language policy. Pennycook (2006) argues against a universalist position and the relativist-universalist dichotomy it implies, promoting instead the concept of situated knowledge (p. 63). For language policy, such a stance advocates situated, contextualized and contingent ways of understanding language use and language policies (Pennycook 2006: 64) Simply put, postmodernism in language policy can be seen as a ‘restive problematization of the given’ (Dean 1994:4)¹⁰ that rejects the possibility of disinterested knowledge, instead promoting contextualized understanding.

Also central to Postcritical language policy is the act of self-reflection. Pennycook (2001) argues that critical work must not forget to be critical of critical work which he warns is often too normative and unquestioning of its own assumptions. While not explicitly stated, this particular critique was clearly aimed at language policy work influenced by critical theory, but also serves as a reminder that no work in language policy should become so self-assured that it ceases with self-reflection (Pennycook 2001: 44). Postmodernism’s problematizing stance, he argues, must also be turned upon itself in order to maintain a greater sense of humility and raise questions of the limits of its own knowledge. The implication of this self-awareness of limitations is that critical work informed by Postcritical language policy is not interested in creating a new orthodoxy but rather in raising questions about knowledge, politics and ethics and ultimately making applied linguistics and language policy and planning more politically accountable (Pennycook 2001: 7-8).

2.4.1 Areas of Concern for Postcritical Language Policy

Discourse

The term “discourse,” which is employed frequently by Postcritical language policy scholars, derives from various works by Foucault (See Foucault 1972 and Foucault 1984) Essentially, discourses are ‘socially and historically constrained and produced truths or ways of seeing the world’ (Skerrett 2012: 12). While discourses are objectively neither true nor false, they claim to be true and function as such in daily life (Skerrett 2012: 19). Discourses are crucial to a Postcritical examination because according to this view, it is

¹⁰ As cited in (Pennycook 2009: 63-64)

essential to ‘[resist the urge to decontextualize the linguistic contexts under analysis]’ (Skerrett 2011: 242) and discourses are the very contexts in which social behaviour, including linguistic behaviour, takes place. Such a contextualization is crucial because in this perspective, the view of an autonomous self, capable of fully independent behaviour, is rejected. For example, if one considers themselves a man, woman, gay, or straight, it is because those are the categories which have been allowed for by the surrounding discursive structures, not because they are essential characteristics that arise from that person (Skerrett 2012: 17). While there is an emphasis on contextualized analysis and a rejection of autonomy, Postcritical scholars do not argue that discourses pre-determine human behaviour. Rather, human behaviour ‘can never be fully determined in advance, as it operates within a complex web of interconnected discourses and norms upon which it is contingent’ (Skerrett 2012: 21). Thus, the self is neither free from nor entirely determined by discourse. As Mills (2004) states ‘what we might want to express is constrained by systems and rules which are in some sense beyond human control’ as ‘[t]hese systems are ones which we are not necessarily aware of’ (pp. 67-68). The essential word is “constrained.” Discourses do not pre-determine how a person will act, but rather provide a number of constraints on possible action. As such, this view on discourses still leaves room for human agency which can serve ‘to restructure, resist, and prolong practices and discourses’ and therefore ‘[result] in changes to both discourses and practices over time’ (Skerrett 2012: 149).

Specifically in terms of language policy and planning, as previously mentioned, discourses provide the context within which linguistic behaviour must be examined. While examining language policy and use within context, research must act deliberately in order to avoid taking discourses for granted, instead questioning the categories which are naturalized in society and deconstructing them. In other words, as Pennycook (1994)¹¹ writes, ‘rendering [...] the familiar unfamiliar’ (p. 130). The result would not only be a more complex and critical understanding of a linguistic situation, but also the possibility to modify it. While ‘[n]ew discourses cannot simply be introduced’ (Skerrett 2012: 149), there is a belief that discourses and frameworks can be modified (Skerrett 2012: 60). The implication of this potential modification would be the possibility to move

¹¹ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 17).

away from discourses of exclusion towards ‘discourses of inclusion’ (Skerrett 2012: 143) and thus a reduction of inequality.

Inequality and Preferred Futures

One role of Postcritical language policy is to examine means of creating possibilities for alternative futures in which inequality is reduced (Pennycook 2006: 64). Such a goal is similar to Critical language policy’s search for social justice but with an emphasis on the role of self-reflection and an awareness of limits of knowing. As such, it sees the ‘utopian’ visions of change characteristic of Marxist-inspired language policy as doing little more than providing direction for change given the inherent limitations present in their startling echoes of ‘modernist grandiosity’ (Pennycook 2001: 8). Postcritical language policy, rather, seeks to offer restrained, plural views of where policy might want to head (Pennycook 2001: 8). Pennycook (2006) argues that these views of alternative futures must be grounded in ethical arguments which he believes are the central building block of critical applied linguistics (and therefore Postcritical language policy). He claims that such an ethnical grounding is not normative or moralistic but rather a recognition of the ethical concerns faced by language policy researchers (Pennycook 2001: 9).

2.4.2 Views of Language and Language Policy

As previously mentioned, the influence of postmodernism on language policy brings into question the very concept of language. Pennycook (2006) celebrates that researchers no longer have to cling to the ‘myth’ (p. 67) that language exists, touting the anti-essentialist view that language is an emergent property of social interaction and not a prior system with ontological status. He therefore argues that language cannot be planned as it does not exist and questions what, exactly, language policy is concerned with if the language that it claims to plan cannot claim ontological status (Pennycook 2006: 67). Postcritical language policy sees research and discussions on language policy as ‘missing the point’ (Pennycook 2006: 70) if they focus on the use of codes called “languages,” believing that language is not, in fact, a repetition of prior grammatical structure but rather an act of semiotic restructuring in order to claim identity (Pennycook 2006: 70-71). Given these views on language, Pennycook (2006) advocates a profound deconstruction, rethinking

and reinvention of the ways in which researchers and policy makers view language policy and planning (p. 68).

2.5 Estonia and Estonian

Estonia, one of the three states referred to as the Baltic States, is a relatively small country of only 45,228 square kilometres (*The World Factbook: Estonia* n.d.). The population is estimated to be just under 1.3 million (*The World Factbook: Estonia* n.d.) but is declining steadily due to emigration and low birth rates (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 14). To put the decline in perspective, it is estimated that in 2016 there will be only 27,000 persons age 16-18 in Estonia, compared to 65,000 in the same age category in 2005 (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 14). The only official language of Estonia is Estonian as set out by Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia (*Constitution of the Republic of Estonia* 1992). Officially, the language is seen as the ‘bearer of Estonian identity’ (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 12). Estonian is a member of the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic family of languages. It is closely related to Finnish and less closely to Hungarian. Though there are several other Finno-Ugric languages spoken in Europe (Saami in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, as well the moribund Livonian in Latvia and Võro, whose status as language or dialect varies by source, in Estonia), Estonian, Finnish and Hungarian are the only members of the Uralic family to hold the status of national languages (Abondolo 1998). The Estonian language exhibits significant variety among speakers including a number of recognized dialects which are most often categorized into Northeast Coastal, Northern Estonian and Southern Estonian dialects (Viisto 1998: 115). Estonian has approximately 1.1 million native speakers, around 950,000 of whom live in Estonia (Hogan-Brun 2007: 14). Other significant populations of ethnic Estonians live in Australia, the United States and Sweden, most of whom were exiles from the Soviet occupation or their descendants (Viisto 1998: 115).

After centuries of rule by foreign powers (including but not limited to Russians, Germans and Swedes) who sought to expand their control to the Eastern shores of the Baltic, Estonians capitalized on the collapse of both Germany and Russia by declaring independence for the first time in 1918 (Hogan-Brun 2007: 554-555). The newly

established statehood was short lived, however, as Estonia was occupied in 1939 then annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 (Skerrett 2012: 13). During its time under the Soviet Union, Estonia saw its native population decline dramatically, an estimated 25% through deportation, murder and exile (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993)¹². Heavy in-migration during Soviet rule also saw a fall in the percentage of native population (Hogan-Brun 2007: 556). Estimates claim that the indigenous population of Estonia dropped from 92.4% pre-occupation to 61.5% in 1989 just prior to re-independence (Hogan-Brun 2007: 556). Other estimates by Lieven (1994)¹³ show a drop from 88.2% in 1938 to 60% in 1991. Though immigrants came from around the Soviet Union, those whose language was not provided outside of their home Republic (such as Ukrainians and Belarusians) became ‘Russian-speaking’ (Skerrett n.d.: 3). In the 1950’s, Secretary Khrushchev introduced the notion of a language of international communication following which Russian emerged as ‘one of [the Soviet Union’s] strongest hallmarks’ (Clachar 1998: 108). Throughout Soviet rule, the language of everyday use was Russian which was promoted more as a second native language but functioned effectively as the *lingua franca* (Clachar 1998: 108, 114). Though schools were allowed a certain degree of autonomy in language teaching, Russian became the language of prestige and power (Hogan-Brun 2007: 556). The full range of public institutions operated in Russian with just some operating in Estonian (Skerrett 2012: 15). An asymmetrical linguistic situation arose in which Estonians needed to learn Russian but Russian-speaking Soviet immigrants had little incentive to learn Estonian (Hogan-Brun 2007: 556). Many Russian speakers even believed that they had ‘a human right to be monolingual no matter where they live[d] and work[ed] [in the Soviet Union]’ (Karklins 1994: 158)¹⁴. As a result of the emergent hierarchy, Estonian lost many of its basic functions over the period of Soviet rule (Skerrett n.d.: 3). In 1989, Estonia declared Estonian to be the official language, allowing for a parallel use alongside Russian in public administration (Hogan-Brun et al. 2007: 515). Shortly thereafter, Estonia regained independence in 1991, coinciding with the fall of the Soviet Union (Hogan-Brun et al. 2007: 518).

¹² As cited in (Skerrett n.d.: 2)

¹³ As cited in (Skerrett n.d.: 3)

¹⁴ As cited in (Skerrett n.d.: 3)

More than 20 years on from Soviet occupation, Estonia still bears the legacy of the Soviet era. According to 2011 estimates, ethnic Estonians made up 68.7% of the population, followed by Russians at 24.8%, Ukrainians at 1.7%, and a further 4.8% either other or unspecified (*The World Factbook: Estonia* n.d.). At the time of re-independence, 34.8% of the residents of Estonia claimed Russian as their first language but the number has since declined (Hogan-Brun 2007: 556- 557). In daily practice, society is largely divided between ethnic Estonians, who claim Estonian as their native language, and the “Russian-speaking” population who, while not necessarily ethnically Russian, identify Russian as their native language. While shortcomings of the use of these two markers (ethnic Estonian and Russian-speaking population) will be raised later, they are the terms common in both daily life and literature. Society is largely divided along ethnolinguistic lines unevenly throughout the country. In the north-east of Estonia, in Ida-Virumaa, the strong majority of the population is Russian-speaking (98%) and it is ‘impossible’ (Skerrett 2011: 239) to get by with just Estonian (Ministry of Education and Research 2012: 14). In the country’s largest city of Tallinn, the population is nearly evenly split between Estonian-speakers and Russian-speakers while in Tartu, the second largest city, the vast majority speak Estonian (Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 14).

Language policies since the reestablishment of independence in 1991 have made significant efforts to reverse the decline in public use of Estonian that occurred under the Soviet Union. Such efforts and the laws that resulted are typical of ‘policies expressly designed to overturn a previously imperialistic language situation’ (Ozolins 2002: 2). The planning and drafting of such policies is relegated to the Ministry of Education and Research by the Government of the Republic Act (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 17). The Development Plan of the Estonian Language 2011-2017 defines the language management which it guides as the ‘conscious development, enrichment, stabilization, and updating of the standard language’ (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 20). A number of other institutes and organizations also play a role in language management. These groups include the Mother Tongue Society, the Institute of the Estonian Language, and the Tartu Language Maintenance Centre (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 21). While laws have evolved over time as the result of both evolving political climates and the influence of international organizations, language policy consistently favours Estonian which has held strongly to its status of official national language. Estonian is

the only language of parliament and national government (Ozolins 2003: 224). The Development Strategy of the Estonian Language 2004-2010, the foundation document of Estonian language policy during that period, states that 'it is important to create preferential conditions for the development and use of the Estonian language' (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 15). After initial steps to regulate Estonian language proficiency in every sector of employment were disputed by international organizations, language planners have also produced a list of profession in which a knowledge of Estonian is of 'legitimate public interest' (Poleshchuk 2002: 3) for reasons of health or safety. Nevertheless, language proficiency varies by sector, even in public institutions where Estonian is supposed to dominate. The clearest example of this is the corrections system which functions primarily in Russian (Hogan-Brun et al., 2007: 569). While the official language of national politics is Estonian, in portions of the country in which the Russian-speaking population accounts for 50% of the overall population, communication with the local government can officially take place in Russian (Skerrett 2012: 56). Such conditions are not considered ideal by the terms of Estonian language planning. The Development Strategy of 2004-2010 had aimed to establish a predominance of Estonian as the language of public use by 2010 but that goal is still unattained (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 13).

In the process of establishing Estonian as the dominant public language, policy documents have repeatedly emphasized the role of education, citing it as 'one of the main assurances that the Estonian language and Estonian national cultural space will persist' (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 38). As such, one of the most profound changes in language policy in recent years was the transition of state and municipal secondary schools to a minimum of 60% Estonian-medium education (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 18). Until the enactment of this measure, which had gone through multiple changes and delays since reindpendence, Russian-medium secondary schools had been permitted to teach in Russian with Estonian existing as a second language subject (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 31). With the enactment of the new regulations, the transition to Estonian-medium teaching began in 2007 and was to be completed by 2011 as schools added a new subject each year (Skerrett 2013: 7). Though not without controversy, the new rules were implemented more peacefully than similar legislation that had been enacted previously in Latvia, reportedly because of the slower pace of the transition and more sensitive attitudes (Skerrett 2013: 2).

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

Having now established the theoretical and empirical background of this dissertation, the analysis section will continue as follows. First, the theoretical underpinnings of the pursuit of social justice will be expanded upon. Then, two approaches undertaken in the pursuit of social justice will be explored: linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization. An examination of these approaches is necessary in an analysis of social justice because the extremely vague nature of the term leaves little substance with which to directly conduct a critical analysis. Therefore, for each of the two approaches, the theoretical foundations will be explained as they are set out by Critical language policy. The dissertation will then undertake a critical analysis of these foundations with significant contributions from Postcritical language policy. Empirical evidence will then be provided by employing evidence from Estonia's linguistic situation to support the previously established analysis. Finally, an alternative to the approach that has been analysed will be offered. After the exploration of linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization, analysis will turn back to social justice itself followed by an application of Estonia's language situation. Finally, all preceding analyses will be synthesised and discussed as they relate to social justice before an alternative is provided to the pursuit of social justice as a whole.

3.1 Framework: The Pursuit of Social Justice

The pursuit of greater social justice is one of the hallmarks of Critical Language Policy. Tollefson (2006) explains that 'work in critical theory generally investigates the processes by which social inequality is produced and sustained, and the struggle to reduce inequality

to bring about greater forms of social justice' (p. 44). This results from the perception that critical theory 'springs from an assumption that we live amid a world of pain and that much can be done to alleviate that pain, and that theory has a crucial role to play in that process' (Poster 1989: 3)¹⁵. While the term social justice is employed frequently throughout the field, it is rarely accompanied by a definition. Tollefson provides the best indication of a definition when he explains that social justice entails 'greater social, economic and political equality' (Tollefson 2006: 52). Even Pennycook, whose postmodernist approach to language policy and planning is fundamentally anti-essentialist and sceptical of universal truth claims, uses the term when asserting that critical applied linguistics must take up 'an overt political agenda to establish or to argue for policy along lines that focus centrally on issues of social justice' (Pennycook 2006: 18). Other authors (see Corson 1992 and Habermas 1985) have sought to explore how critical research can contribute to greater social justice, again without adequately clarifying the term in question.

While the vaguely conceptualised social justice is a central objective of Critical language policy, there is little consensus on the best means through which to attain it. Much of the recent work in the pursuit of social justice has taken a rights-based approach in the form of the linguistic human rights movement (detailed above in *Areas of Concern for Critical Language Policy*) which aims at securing increased linguistic rights for minority groups (Tollefson 2006: 52). Another prominent approach (also detailed above in the same section) has been language maintenance and revitalization which emphasizes the role of indigenous language preservation in the attainment of social justice. Given the prominence of these two approaches in the pursuit of social justice, a critical examination of social justice must also include an examination of these approaches. Furthermore, these two approaches are directly reflected in the language environment of Estonia with Russian language advocates relying on arguments in line with linguistic human rights and Estonian language advocates relying on arguments of language maintenance and revitalization in the pursuit of their own definition of social justice. Thus, the analysis of social justice will proceed with an examination of linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization.

¹⁵ As cited in (Pennycook 2001: 6)

3.1.1 Framework: Linguistic Human Rights

Spearheaded by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, the linguistic rights movement (typically referred to as linguistic human rights in an effort to tie the concept of language to the widely accepted belief in human rights) has made a significant impact on the field. The rights-based approach is grounded firmly in a Marxist dichotomy between oppressed and oppressor. The resulting majority-minority language hierarchies are ultimately seen as neither natural nor primarily linguistic but rather the result of historical, social and political processes deeply connected with wider unequal power relations (May 2006: 259-260). The concept of linguistic human rights is frequently adopted by groups advocating for greater rights, including the Estonian government who justifies the enforcement of Estonian as the national language in terms of ‘the linguistic human rights of the Estonians as the indigenous nationality of Estonia’ (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 17). The concept of linguistic human rights is grounded firmly in the conviction that the world is full of ‘linguistic wrongs’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 1998: 5) that are the result of the reification of monolingualism and the demonization of multilingualism as a danger to the security of the nation state (Pennycook 2001: 18). Skutnabb-Kangas maintains throughout her work that monolingual policies, particularly in Western states, are an ideology that is used to rationalize linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas 1998: 14). These linguistic wrongs can take various forms including what Mey called linguistic oppression which occurs when ‘those who are able to decide what language use(s) can be deemed acceptable [...] are in positions of political power and hence can control the development of language (planning)’ (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 28). Skunabb-Kangas (1998) considers this to be overt prohibition of language which she argues, citing treatment of the Kurds in Turkey, can take the form of laws, imprisonment, torture, killings and threats (p 13). Mey also refers to language repression which takes the form of ‘subtle but pernicious forms of planning and control’ (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 29). Skutnabb-Kangas (1998) argues that this form is widely used by Western states and is more effective than more overt methods (p. 13). Linguistic wrongs are often perpetrated in education, where Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) cites language replacement as an effective tool to further linguistic genocide (p. 626).

One of the primary perceived threats to linguistic human rights is that posed by dominant languages through linguistic imperialism (Pennycook 2001: 61). Coined by Robert Phillipson (1992), linguistic imperialism deals with current and former empires (most notably those of the United States, England and France) whose languages have been promoted in former colonies and beyond through economic, political and sociocultural domination with ‘devastating’ (Ricento 2002: 16) effects on indigenous languages. Linguistic human rights fundamentally questions the morality of teaching ‘big languages’ (Ricento 2006: 16), focusing particularly on English which it sees as posing a threat to smaller languages around the world. This position is also adopted by indigenous language activists including Estonia who cite the English language as a potential threat to the Estonian language (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 39).

There is active debate in the field regarding to which minorities linguistic human rights should apply but the strong majority agree that linguistic human rights ought to be collective rights that are attributed to a specifically defined group. Minority groups are viewed as discrete units with a number of essential characteristics that both unite and define the members of the group which are assumed to have a high degree of homogeneity (May 2012: 8). It is important to note that a “minority group” is not determined by size but rather by power and status (May 2006: 255). Thus, in the Soviet Union, Estonians were considered a minoritized majority. May (2006) makes a distinction between national minority groups, indigenous peoples and ethnic minority groups (p. 260). Each of these definitions relies on ethnicity as the determining factor despite the linguistic nature of the rights being advocated. Thus it becomes evident that languages and ethnicity are seen as implying one another. May (2006) goes on to label national or indigenous groups as those who are historically associated with a particular territory but through conquest or colonization are now regarded as minorities within that territory. In Estonia these are typically considered to be ethnic Estonians and a small number of Russians who were incorporated into Estonia during the first period of independence. Ethnic minorities are seen as voluntary immigrants and involuntary refugees living in a new national context (p. 266). In Estonia this group is considered to consist predominantly of immigrants from the Soviet era¹⁶. While from the perspective of linguistic human rights, national and

¹⁶ It is worth noting that while this group’s status may not be so clear cut as they migrated within what at the time functioned as their own country but after political shift found themselves under the governance

indigenous groups are invariably seen as deserving protection, the inclusion of ethnic minorities varies by scholar.

In opposition to perceived linguistic wrongs, the linguistic human rights movement provides a moral imperative for advocating internal support for minority languages (Pennycook 2001: 61, 63). A central claim of the rights-based approach to social justice is that minority languages and their speakers ought to be granted at least some of the protections and support that are enjoyed by majority languages (May 2006: 266). Furthermore, the ‘right to identify with, to maintain and fully develop one’s mother tongue(s)’ should be acknowledged as ‘a self-evident, fundamental individual linguistic human right’ (Pennycook 2001: 63). “Mother tongue” is defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1998) as ‘the language(s) a person has learned first and/or identifies with’ (p. 22). As a part of the right to identify with, maintain and develop one’s mother tongue, Critical language policy theorists argue that mother tongue education ought to be included as a fundamental human right given the role of education in the maintenance and enforcement of linguistic hierarchies (Pennycook 2001: 59; Tollefson 2006: 51). In this way, mother tongue education is aimed at combatting the possibility of language replacement in which a student should or must learn a majority language at the expense of their minority mother tongue (May 2006: 263). Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) argues that such a process is equivalent to ‘linguistic genocide’ (p. 626) and is a common aspect of education. In the past, language replacement policies were advocated in the name of improving social mobility of minority language speakers but more recently language rights advocates argue that it results in a ‘ghettoizing’ (May 2006: 263) of minority languages within the wider community and, as a result, constrains social mobility. Thus, language rights advocates and, increasingly, international organizations take it as ‘axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is in his mother tongue’ (UNESCO 1953: 11)¹⁷.

While, historically, language policies in the West have been characterized by an intolerance for minority languages and multilingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas 1998: 12), advocates for linguistic human rights maintain that legal protections can be developed

of another. Their relegation to the category of voluntary migrants may derive from Estonia’s continued assertion of the illegal nature of their occupation.

¹⁷ As cited in (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 298)

that enhance the mobility of minority language speakers while simultaneously protecting their right to speak their minority language as they choose (May 2006: 265). Skutnabb-Kangas (1998) lays out three guarantees that such laws should include in order to be compliant with the requirements of linguistic human rights. First, they should guarantee that ‘everybody has the right to identify with their mother tongue(s) and have this identification accepted and respected by others’ (p. 22). Second, they should guarantee that ‘everybody has the right to learn the mother tongue(s) fully, orally (when physiologically possible) and in writing. This presumes that minorities are educated through the medium other their mother tongue(s), within the state-financed educational system’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 1998: 22). And finally, laws protecting linguistic human rights should ensure that ‘everybody has the right to use the mother tongue in most official situations’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 1998: 22). Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) considers violation of these principles to be tantamount to linguistic genocide (p. 626).

3.1.1.1 Critical Analysis: Linguistic Human Rights

Homogeneity of Minority Groups

Linguistic human rights relies unquestioningly on the existence of definable, highly homogenous minority groups. However, Postcritical language policy questions the ontological status of such groups and, in particular, their essential characteristics assumed by CLP (Pennycook 2006: 63). Thus, the term is not as straight forward as it first appears. The very concept of minority groups relies on the assumption that a given group has an underlying internal homogeneity which extends from certain essential characteristics of the group (Skerrett 2012: 22). Based on that assumed homogeneity, advocates of minority language rights tend to presume the identity of linguistic minorities as a given (May 2012: 8). Under this simplification, the group has uniform aims and variation within the group is minimal, making the prospect of collective rights unproblematic. This view of minority groups gives an artificial sense of homogeneity where there is, in fact, great diversity. It assumes a lack of variety in social orientation, political views and other aspects that can actually vary quite dramatically within a group. As a result, linguistic human rights advocates assume that all members of a linguistic group ‘are (or will want to be) principally identified and identifiable by their language’ (May 2012:8). Advocacy of

rights based upon this oversimplification could, in fact, prove detrimental to those who, while being considered members of the group do not necessarily conform to the assumed homogeneity. The CLP definition of minority groups relies on the establishment of an arbitrary we-they dichotomy, separating one group distinctly from the other, which assumes an absolute incompatibility, thus necessitating the assumed homogeneity or essential characteristics to avoid overlap. Such a dichotomy can prove problematic in progress towards the resolution of linguistic and social conflict. Ultimately, as Robbins (2005) notes '[group] identity may be regarded as a fiction, intended to put an orderly pattern and narrative on the actual complexity and multitudinous nature of both psychological and social worlds' (p. 172)¹⁸. Thus, a poststructuralist analysis of social categories reveals them as constructions that have emerged from interaction in social life rather than pre-existing structures that determine it (Skerrett 2013: 5). Therefore, the base assumption of much of linguistic human rights, that these rights belong to a predefined, internally homogenous group, is false and may serve to obscure reality in such a way that is ultimately detrimental to the pursuit of social justice.

The fallacy of ethnic or linguistic group homogeneity is clearly demonstrated in the linguistic make up of Estonia. In Estonia, the dichotomy that has been established is between the "ethnic Estonians" and the "Russian-speaking" community. However, this dichotomy is being challenged by the rise of a new category of "Estonian Russians" who, while not considered ethnic Estonians, are adopting an Estonian aspect to their identity (Verschik 2005: 289). The emergence of this group is just one factor highlighting the artificial nature of the ethnic Estonian – Russian-speaking dichotomy.

The emergence of the "Estonian Russian" category not only highlights a challenge to the Estonian-Russian dichotomy but also reveals a lack of homogeneity in the "Russian-speaking" minority which, despite typically being treated as essential, scholars agree contains great variety (Ozolins 2003: 230). First, the adoption of the label "Russian-speaking" itself reveals a degree of variation within the group. The term "Russian" was deemed inadequate because the population, while Russian-speaking, is not entirely ethnically Russian nor is it entirely comprised of Russian citizens. The 2011 population statistics listed 24.8% of the population as Russian, 1.7% as Ukrainian and 1.0% as

¹⁸ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 22)

Belarusian (*The World Factbook: Estonia* n.d.). Nevertheless, during the Soviet Union, Ukrainians and Belarusians whose language was not provided beyond their home Republic became “Russian-speaking” and often identified with the larger Soviet identity (Skerrett n.d.: 2). It has, therefore, been argued that the term “Russian” in reference to a minority group would not signify ethnicity but rather a linguistic minority unified by the Russian language (Skerrett n.d.: 11). Even so, either label, “Russian” or “Russian-speaking,” obscures not only the backgrounds present within it but also the current varieties in citizenship. Current citizenship has been shown to correlate significantly with Estonian language usage. In 2005, 40% of Russian speakers with Estonian citizenship were able to speak Estonian ‘well’ while 0% of Russian citizens and only 5% of stateless Russian-speakers claimed the same abilities (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 16). Thus, the minority category of “Russian-speaking” obscures variety within the group in terms of ethnic background and present citizenship, which has consequences for language use.

The group labelled “Russian-speaking” varies in Estonian language abilities across age as well (Verschik 2007: 82). While many older Russian-speakers have not learned Estonian, an increasing number of parents are sending their children to Estonian-medium schools (Hogan-Brun 2007: 558). Furthermore, a study in 2005 indicated that Estonian proficiency also varied by age. It cited that between 63% and 72% of Estonian Russians under 30 could speak Estonian ‘well’ or ‘moderately well’, while the same could only be said for between 38% and 41% of those between 30 and 60 years old (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 16). The youngest generation, who now has greater exposure to Estonian in the classroom than before as a result of the availability of bilingual programs, parental choice of Estonian medium schools and the transition to 60% Estonian in years 10-12, also varies significantly from previous generations. While considered part of the “Russian-speaking” community, the younger generation does not have a Soviet identity as their parents or grandparents may have had. Nevertheless, as seen in the outpouring of youth in the Bronze Soldier protests, Soviet symbols remain a strong part of their discursive environment. Thus, these youth are not “Russian” nor are they often fully admitted into the Estonian identity (Skerrett n.d.: 15). Nevertheless, the barriers between the two identities seem to be decreasing as studies have shown a change in the grammatical structure of the Russian spoken by youth which has now begun to

incorporate aspects of Estonian which are not present in the Russian spoken by previous generations (for example of grammatical changes see Verschik 2007) (Skerrett n.d.: 9). Thus, the “Russian-speaking” minority varies considerably by age with younger generations having greater exposure to and command of Estonian than their elders.

Finally, significant variety is also seen in the relationship between members of the “Russian-speaking” minority and Estonia itself. Studies are also showing that an increasing number of the “Russian-speaking community” feel at home in Estonia. In 2007, 80% of non-ethnic Estonians with Estonian citizenship considered themselves part of the Estonian nation. In the same study, 59% of stateless people agreed (Lauristin et al. 2008: 57). While the numbers are encouraging from an integration standpoint, for the purposes here, they are significant in the variety of opinion that they demonstrate. The 80% and 59% listed are far from reflecting the homogenous nature assumed by categorizing by minority groups. There is also a growing perception among Russian-speakers of the merit of Estonian as a national language with Skerrett citing one interviewee commenting ‘[b]ecause it's very funny, you try to go to Russia [and say] you know I think that Arabic is better, let's [make] this the state language. What [would] Russians say? You know?’ (Skerrett n.d.: 86). This is notable not because it represents a universal shift among the “Russian-speaking minority” but for quite the opposite reason: it demonstrates a lack of uniformity in the assumed negative attitudes of the community. Thus, the tendency to label the entire group as the “Russian-speaking minority” perpetuates a false sense of homogeneity among a group that differs not only ethnically but also linguistically and perceptually.

Despite the aforementioned shortcomings of the classification of minority group, particularly by language, the classification does have distinct advantages that cannot be ignored. First, it is a group with which many minorities themselves often identify. In the case of Estonia, a study by Asser et al (2002) showed that nearly 90% of non-ethnic Estonians identify themselves as members of the ‘Russian-speaking population of Estonia’ (p. 26)¹⁹. Such a common marker gives individuals who may identify as unprivileged by standardized dominant culture a rallying point to advocate for rights that may otherwise not be afforded to them as individuals. In fact, the wider ranging the

¹⁹ As cited in (Skerrett n.d.: 11)

category, the greater the numbers and consequently perhaps the greater the influence. According to Ozolins (2002), it is not uncommon for members of previous colonists to unite after the fall of their rule and ‘redefine themselves as the embattled minority and to ensure that the imperial language remains the language of inter-ethnic communication, and asymmetrical bilingualism’ (p. 1). Furthermore, in terms of research, the ‘orderly pattern and narrative’ that Robbins (2005) explains is provided by such group identity is incredibly tempting. For, to talk about a number of people who consider themselves part of a population (i.e. the Russian-speaking population of Estonia), how else would one refer to them? Alternatives in Estonia to the term “Russian-speaking” community, minority, or population are limited and the term is used unquestioningly by scholars in a wide variety of fields. Though with a profound rethinking of discourses surrounding identity, these terms could become obsolete, perhaps under the current discourses, researchers have little choice but to use the term, albeit reflexively. Much of the research that will be referred to through this dissertation uses the term “Russian-speaking” and thus the results often allow for little exploration of the complexity behind the term. However, this dissertation will use the term in the most self-reflexive manner possible, acknowledging, where possible, the actual variety that exists behind it.

Mother Tongue Education

First and foremost, the argument for mother tongue education, as well as other mother tongue rights which are the centre of linguistic human rights, assumes unquestioningly the existence of something that could be considered a “mother tongue.” Postcritical language policy questions the existence of such an entity, largely based on questions regarding the definition and discreteness of languages (a topic to be raised later), therefore arguing that the term is not as straight forward as authors such as Skutnabb-Kangas would have one believe. As such, many authors have begun to move away from use of the term (Ricento 2006: 13). Nevertheless, even if theoretically the ontological status cannot be upheld, mother tongue languages exist as a powerful discourse in society. They can be a marker of self-identification or cultural belonging which can be a source of pride or fierce protectionist instincts. Therefore, even if Postcritical language policy can provide grounding for a theoretical rejection of mother tongue languages, their power as a social discourse remains and thus mother tongue languages remain a factor in practical language policy and planning and must be accounted for in relevant research and analysis.

Given the continuing prevalence of the mother tongue discourse, analysis can continue without rejecting the concept. Yet, even if the ontological status of mother tongue languages is upheld, critical research has begun to question the perceived universal rightness of mother tongue education which is often touted as the cornerstone to linguistic human rights (Tollefson 2006: 51). It has been shown that mother tongue education can, in fact, be a component of oppressive language policies which seek to maintain social, economic and political advantage (Ricento and Wiley 2002)²⁰. Blommaert (1996)²¹ provides the example of South Africa where mother tongue education played a central role in the apartheid. Thus, there is an evident need for greater research into the use of mother tongue policies for the pursuit of political agendas related to struggles for political power (Tollefson 2006: 51). Lacking such research, it remains essential to turn a sceptical eye on the infallibility of mother tongue education, lest linguistic human rights advocates inadvertently promote the violation of rights through segregation which can result from mother tongue education.

Language of instruction in education is undoubtedly a crucial issue in terms of the maintenance and enforcement of linguistic power relations. As such, this dissertation is not aiming to question mother tongue education as a very concept (despite the aforementioned theoretical questions regarding mother tongues) but rather to question the assumption that it is in all cases the “right” answer which will invariably contribute to the ideal of social justice. Such an assumption is speculative at best, reflecting many of the problems inherent in the prescriptive universalist claims common to Critical language policy.

Throughout the Soviet Union, education segregation based on mother tongue language was arguably significant in the establishment and maintenance of segregated societies (Skerrett 2013: 4). Now it is argued that the separation of Estonian schools based on the same criteria is continuing the process. Beyond the physical and social isolation presented by separate schooling locations, separate schools have also facilitated the continuation of a linguistic divide. Prior to the education reforms which installed a 60% Estonian curriculum in years 10-12, Russian-medium schools offered very little instruction in

²⁰ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 51)

²¹ As cited in (Tollefson 2006: 51)

Estonian and what was offered is generally acknowledged most often have been ineffective (Skerrett 2013: 3). The new policy is aimed at enabling Russian-speaking high school graduates to be more competitive in the work force and public higher education (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 47). Celebrating the legitimacy of such goals, one member of the Ministry of Education and Research claimed that Russian-speaking principals are ‘very loyal’ as ‘it is not possible to finish high school and be competitive afterwards if you cannot speak Estonian’ (Skerrett 2013: 10). While many agree that it is possible to find a job in Estonia without command of the Estonian language (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 18), it is generally acknowledged that for better positions and opportunities at advancement, high proficiency in Estonian is necessary (Vihalemm, Siiner and Masso 2011: 121). Thus, advocates of the new language in education laws argue that mother tongue education was establishing the conditions for economic segregation of students from Russian-medium schools later in life and that the new laws will reduce such segregation (Skerrett 2013: 10). Though this argument seems compelling, it is somewhat reminiscent of the Neoclassical justification for the imposition of the majority language on minority language speakers. While workplace competency is a public relations-friendly goal, the centrality of this language policy to Estonia’s overall integration plan reveals the perception that segregated schools are perpetuating a segregated society not only economically but also socioculturally. This perception revolves largely around the centrality of Estonian language competence in successful integration, an approach which has received wide ranging criticism (Ozolins 2003: 231). Prior to the education reform, Russian-medium schools were turning out students with little functional knowledge of the Estonian language which was understood to entail a similar level of Estonian culture and values. Such results were believed to perpetuate linguistic and social segregation. Thus, with education reform, Estonian was taught through subjects which ‘relate to the Estonian cultural context and [thus] Estonian citizens or at least residents of Estonia’ (Skerrett 2013: 7) in order to combat segregation and promote integration. While at present Estonia cannot, and loudly professes a lack of desire to, eliminate mother tongue education at younger grades, policy makers do contend that education reform would be more successful if started at that level (Skerrett 2013: 12). Estonian-medium subject teaching in Russian-medium basic schools is scheduled to begin in the 2015/2016 academic year (Estonian Language Institute 2011: 48).

Thus, it is generally accepted that mother tongue education perpetuates segregation in Estonia. Protests to the new language in education laws have not revolved around whether such laws will reduce segregation (though there has been critique on the overreliance on these laws for integration reform overall) but rather on whether segregation should be reduced. The Language in Education Policy Profile compiled by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research claimed that a narrow majority of Estonian Russians were opposed to the reforms because of a perceived threat to group identity maintenance (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 18). Policy makers have also noted significant resistance to the new laws in Narva where nearly all of the population speaks Russian as a first language (Skerrett 2013: 8). Such oppositions have been raised by a self-perceived oppressed minority fighting for the right to continue education in their language and maintain existing segregation in the name of group identity maintenance (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 18). Given this example, perhaps the perpetuation of segregation cannot inherently be considered a flaw of mother tongue education but must be viewed as context dependant, taking into account the varying situations and aims of self-defined minority groups.

Grand Narrative of Linguistic Human Rights

Linguistic human rights have begun to be questioned increasingly by Postcritical language theorists who warn that the assumption that its prognostic formula will result in a positive outcome universally is speculative at best. Corson (1992) warns that such attempts ‘amount to attempts to work out in advance, from the interests of dominant groups of individuals, what arrangements would be chosen under unknown conditions by other groups of people whose interests may not be detectable by anyone who is not steeped in the relevant class, gender, or minority culture’ (p. 196). The linguistic human rights movement fails to take into account (as seen previously with the critique of mother tongue education) the varying political means that its prescription could be used for in differing political and social climates. This is problematic across both space and time. To assume that policies which are seen to secure linguistic rights in one specific linguistic situation in the present will also do so invariably in the other linguistic situations in the future lacks a self-reflexivity necessary to avoid complacency. By seeing the dichotomy between linguistic imperialism and linguistic rights as universal and essential, this view is unable to perceive the more ‘mobile, fluid and contextual’ (Pennycook 2006: 69) way in

which language resources are used in the pursuit of different ends. Thus, based upon a dichotomy which is seen as essential, linguistic human right provides a uniform prognostic solution which fails to account for not only the fluidity of linguistic environments which are prone to change over time but also the variety that can exist within those environments at any given time.

Estonia presents a particularly difficult case for the universality of linguistic human rights as it is a clear example of the way in which time can radically alter the nature and subjects of linguistic oppression. Under the Soviet Union, Estonian fell from being an official national language to being a minoritized majority language (Skerrett 2013: 3). It very quickly lost both domain and strategic value. Russian held a position of dominance to the extent that few immigrants from the Soviet Union felt the need to learn Estonian at all which led to a system of asymmetrical bilingualism in which Estonian speakers needed to learn Russian but a knowledge of Russian was sufficient not to necessitate the learning of Estonian (Skerrett 2011: 238). However, the reassertion of Estonian in 1989 marked the beginning of a rapid reversal of linguistic power and the Russian-speaking population very quickly lost its 'guaranteed position' (Vihalemm, Siiner and Masso 2011: 116). While Estonians welcomed the opportunity to reassert the primary status of their language, Soviet immigrants viewed events as a tragedy as they lost their social and linguistic hierarchy (Skerrett 2013: 3). Estonia moved quickly, enacting a number of harsh language laws including the Law on Basic and Secondary Schools of 1993 that required all state-funded secondary schools to use Estonian as the sole language of instruction by the year 2000 (Jurado 2003: 339). In a matter of just a few years, the linguistic hierarchy and objects of oppression changed dramatically.

Generic, absolutist prescriptions by linguistic human rights are not capable of accounting for such change over time. For example, two perceivable prescriptions would be possible from linguistic human rights in the case of Estonia: one which focuses on the minority language, whether it be Estonian or Russian and the other which focuses exclusively on Estonian given its indigenous status and more fragile state. While unreserved promotion of the minority language (Estonian) in the Soviet Union may have furthered minority rights, the same prescription may not have produced similar results after the reinstatement of independence. While Russian became a minority language after reestablishment of

Estonian independence in 1991, it still held enough control that unreserved promotion of the language may have proven detrimental to the recovery of Estonian and resulted in the perpetuation of the former occupier's linguistic domination. Alternatively, the prescription of unreserved promotion of Estonian specifically, given its diminished capacities and vulnerability, may have allowed for expanded rights in the Soviet Union, but such unreserved promotion after independence allowed for severe subjugation of the new minority language (Russian) which was quickly condemned by international organizations (Jurado 2003: 399). Continued assessment and re-evaluation may have been able to provide more appropriate suggestions over time, but that is not the essence of linguistic human rights. Rather, they are an absolute and universal set of guidelines which are believed to invariably contribute to social justice.

3.1.1.2 The Alternative: Contingent Linguistic Identity and Discourses of Inclusion

Few alternatives have yet to be proposed for linguistic human rights. Reliance on linguistically defined groups is a daunting obstacle to overcome when combating linguistic inequality. Perhaps the most encouraging alternative was offered by May (2012). Though not fully developed in the context of an alternative to linguistic human rights, May offers two ideas which could provide essential guidance in the process. The first of these ideas is the need for a contingent understanding of linguistic identity. Essentially, this can be defined as an understanding that the languages one speaks are not inextricably linked to his or her ethnic identity. The idea, which is directly contradictory to the method in which linguistic human rights approaches rights advocacy, is that language does not necessarily define a person and may not even constitute a significant or necessary feature in a person or group's identity (May 2012: 9). Of course, this can vary across individuals and groups, as well as within groups. Ultimately, the argument is that 'the language we speak is crucial to our identity *to the degree to which we define ourselves by it*' (May 2012: 141, original emphasis). This is a key aspect missing in linguistic human rights which assumes not only that language and ethnicity are inexorably linked but that each person within a linguistic community would choose to be identified by it. May (2012) is clear to emphasize, however, that to say that language is a contingent factor of identity does not in any way mean that it cannot ever be significant or

constitutive (May 2012: 9). To argue that degree of universal insignificance would require significant explanation of the central role of language in innumerable conflicts throughout history and modern times. Instead, the point is to gain an understanding that language and ethnicity do not inherently imply one another. As such, speakers of one language may not choose to be associated with it or defined by it. While this understanding does not provide an alternative to linguistic human rights, it is a significant step in moving beyond a critical flaw in the approach.

The second idea proposed by May (2012) which may provide guidance for moving towards an alternative to linguistic human rights is the need to adopt an attitude of 'linguistic complementarity' (p. 10). This idea emphasizes the fact that the requirement to speak a common language is a relatively recent one, having developed only with the establishment of the nation-state (May 2012: 6). May (2012) argues that by allowing for minority languages to be reinstated into the civic realm, including institutions such as education and governance from which they have traditionally been excluded, it is possible to allow for changes in the way in which minority languages are perceived and used over time (p. 10). He argues that such changes would allow for minority speakers to 'get ahead' (May 2012: 11) while maintaining their language rather than being forced to sacrifice it for the majority language as has been the case in the past. This idea directly contradicts the reification of national languages (May 2012: 11). While the idea of linguistic complementarity remains in need of significant development, not least to explain how forced implementation of minority languages into the civic realm varies significantly from linguistic human rights, it does support the postmodern idea of moving towards discourses and practices of inclusion. Discourses of inclusion are those which are amenable to all parties in question, while those that maintain segregation are termed discourses of exclusion. Discourses of inclusion must take into account both the social and historical context of the parties in question in order to progress towards a mutual understanding (Skerrett 2012: 150). While discourses cannot be created, they can be influenced by practices over time (Skerrett 2012: 60). Thus, by moving towards practices of inclusion and away from the reification of national languages, rather than discriminating against minority languages, progress could be made towards May's linguistic complementarity in which languages could coexist. Therefore, approaching the matter from the perspective of discourses of inclusion would aim to change the discourse

surrounding minority language use, rather than fight against current discourses as was the practice of linguistic human rights.

The combination of a contingent understanding of linguistic identity with modified discourses surrounding minority languages could allow for linguistic mobility not seen under the current linguistic environment. While it would be overly optimistic to assert that such changes could eliminate linguistic hierarchies, these changes could move towards an environment in which the very concept of linguistic replacement (discussed previously in *Linguistic Human Rights*) is outdated and linguistic mobility may not necessarily be unidirectional away from minority languages as has been the norm (May 2012: 10). Majority and minority languages will more than likely persist despite the best of efforts due to their intimate connection with wider discourses of power, but given a move towards contingent understandings of linguistic identity and discourses of inclusion, the stigma of minority languages may decrease allowing for their expanded use and increased utility.

The development of an understanding of contingent linguistic identity and discourses of inclusion offers significant potential for Estonia. An understanding of contingent linguistic identity could aid in the break-down of barriers that exist between the groups. Acknowledging and accepting that the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking populations are far from internally homogenous would be a significant step in the direction of discourses of inclusion as it would move towards the understanding of the social and historical contexts of both parties which is required for the development of such discourses. Skerrett (2013) suggests that discourses of inclusion could move towards the development of a civic identity rather than the oppositional ethnic and linguistic identities that promote discourses of exclusion (p. 20). By breaking down the barriers that currently paint linguistic relations in black and white terms in which that which benefits one group inherently harms the other, progress could be made towards the possibility of policy and practices which can be constructed and viewed as mutually amenable. While the progress may be slow, fostering practices and discourses of inclusion in the younger generations who have not yet become accustomed to the practices and discourses of exclusion could allow for significant change in the future.

3.1.2 Framework: Maintenance and Revitalization

In the pursuit of social justice, the field of language maintenance and revitalization has emerged as a result of the increasingly pessimistic view of prolonged contest between majority and minority languages; a situation of which linguists are ‘almost certain of what the outcome will be’ (May 2012: 1). Though language loss and shift has existed throughout history, in the twenty-first century, the rate of such loss and shift has increased dramatically and estimates claim that only 5-10% of the world’s current languages ‘will survive in the longer term’ (May 2012: 2). Advocates of language maintenance and revitalization lament that minority ethnic groups within the modern nation-state, when given the opportunity and incentive, typically shift to the language of the dominant group (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 295). May (2012) also notes that minority communities are increasingly choosing to express themselves through a majority language, drawn by the level of power, prestige and influence it offers (p. 1). This language shift occurs almost exclusively in the users of disenfranchised languages or dialects and typically coincides with a loss of culture (May 2012: 156). Bilingualism can often be a mechanism of language shift and almost always precedes it (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 296). Another, often less voluntary, mechanism is language replacement which entails the learning of a majority language at the expense of one’s first language. The idea behind language replacement is that individuals within the minority community will find their social mobility increased as they are freed from the ‘ghettoized’ (May 2006: 263) minority language which had previously constrained them. It argues that the sentimental value placed on minority languages inhibits social and economic mobility and that the opportunities offered by a majority language are more ‘sensible’ (May 2006: 263). The choice between majority and minority is established as mutually exclusive, a person cannot choose both (May 2006: 263). The fear among linguists is that such processes of language replacement lead to language shift or death. Language maintenance seeks to prevent these shifts away from minority language use before language revitalization is necessary to reverse the process.

Despite fears of language shift, there is acknowledgement that the process is far from uniform. This acknowledgement is particularly important for the case of Estonia where minority language speakers’ reluctance to adopt the majority language continues to frustrate language policy planners. As thus far presented, the theory makes language shift

out to be a rapid and inevitable outcome of prolonged competition between majority and minority languages. However, it has been argued that without access to learn the majority language or without motivation to do so, in the form of income or prestige, the minority language is often maintained (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 295). Even more crucial, it has been argued, is the origin of the language contact situation. Lieberman et al. (1975) elaborates that the relations and shift will also differ in situations where the subordinate group is indigenous as compared to those when the migrant population is subordinate (p. 53). While voluntary migration often results in a rapid shift, annexation or colonization often result in a much slower shift, if any occurs at all (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 295-296). When a shift does not take place, there are often three major factors: self-imposed boundary maintenance, externally imposed boundary maintenance and complementary functional distribution of languages. The other possible result is long term group bilingualism (as seen in Catalonia) or an official national policy of bilingualism or multilingualism with mostly monolingual speakers (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 297).

As previously mentioned, language maintenance seeks to prevent language shift. This process is often promoted in schools which are used to catalyse resistance against what is seen as intrusion by threatening languages (Tollefson 2006: 51). In the event of the failure of maintenance efforts, or a lack of maintenance efforts altogether, language revitalization is employed as an effort to reverse language shift and prevent language death (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 303). A notable example has been the revitalization of the Maori language in New Zealand. A variety of arguments for maintenance and revitalization exist, including diversity for diversity's sake and language ecology which, despite the brief moment of prestige it enjoyed, was quickly discarded as its basing in Darwinism inadvertently advocated a "survival of the fittest" mentality not appreciated by language maintenance advocates (May 2012: 4). However, the strong majority of arguments for language maintenance and revitalization are grounded in social justice, seeing indigenous language survival and prosperity as a key requirement for 'greater social, economic, and political equality' (Tollefson 2006: 51).

Ultimately, language maintenance and revitalization advocates are looking for two levels of progress. First, similarly to linguistic human rights advocates, they are looking for legal

protections to be developed which would aim to enhance the mobility of minority language speakers while simultaneously protecting their right to continue speaking their minority language (May 2006: 265). Changes in the educational system are seen as central to this process as education is traditionally seen as promoting state-sanctioned linguistic uniformity and therefore language replacement and shift (May 2012: 176). Given its efficiency in the elimination of minority languages, advocates argue that education's usefulness in the revitalization of those languages should not be underestimated (May 2012: 176). Corson (1992) maintains that schools are inherently unequal for minority children as the result of exercises of power by dominant groups. Therefore, he argues, assertive programs of support of minority languages are essential if 'reasonable' (p. 198) educational and economic opportunities are to be available for minority-language children. As education plays a role in constituting what is 'acceptable' (May 2012: 176) cultural or linguistic knowledge, it could play a key role in furthering change in favour of language maintenance and revitalization. Nevertheless, other authors caution against an over-reliance on the education system in the process of halting or reversing language shift, arguing that such a process cannot be borne solely by the education system (Fishman 1991)²². Previous attempts, they argue, have failed to address the wider issues of social and educational disadvantage faced by linguistic minorities which can also prompt a shift away from minority language use (May 2012: 176). As such, change must go beyond policy of the majority language government. The second level of progress is therefore located within the minority itself. Advocates seek to engage the minority language speakers themselves in the advocacy for change, arguing that the most successful movements are carried out not by the government but by the minority itself (Bratt Paulston and Heidmann 2006: 303).

3.1.2.1 Critical Analysis: Maintenance and Revitalization

Defining a Language

A key challenge for language maintenance and revitalization is confronting the question "what language?" When setting out to protect a language, the very definition of what

²² As cited in (May 2012: 175)

language is being protected should be viewed as incredibly problematic. Protecting *a language* assumes a uniform and invariable entity capable of being preserved. However, language is far from that. Borders of languages are politically, rather than linguistically defined and any given language can exhibit a wide range of use across a population. Often times, dialects within a language are not even mutually intelligible, further emphasizing their political rather than linguistic definition (May 2012: 5). Languages also vary and evolve over time through both natural and artificial development (Skerrett 2012: 33). Given these obstacles in language definition, at the most extreme, postmodern theorists question that there is any essential characteristic of a language at all. Pennycook argues that ‘we no longer need to cling to the myth that language exists’ (Pennycook 2006: 67). He suggests that the current notion of language is a product of the colonial or modernist state and ought to be critically examined (Pennycook 2006: 66). This is not to say that communication does not take place through a series of codes that are then called language but rather that ‘language [is] an emergent property of social interaction and not a prior system tied to ethnicity, territory, birth or nation’ (Pennycook 2006: 67). This view further questions the absoluteness with which languages as ontological entities are defined such as structure, grammar and form (Pennycook 2006: 66). While such a view is valuable in its acknowledgement that language is not a prior system and does not belong to any group or region, it poses significant difficulties in its practical application. To say that Russian or Estonian do not exist makes any analysis of the linguistic realities of Estonia incredibly difficult. Much like the categorization of social groups discussed earlier, perhaps the practical value offered by this complete deconstruction of language is a heightened awareness of the artificial nature of linguistic boundaries. It has been well established that language definition and standardization are tools of the modern nation state. The concept of a standardized language is relatively new, arising only as a tool of nationalism through mass education after the French Revolution of 1789 (May 2006: 261). Rather than disregard these constructed boundaries entirely as postmodernism would have, in practical terms it is perhaps best to use them with extreme caution and self-reflexivity, acknowledging that the terms themselves hide a great deal of complex variety in use as the result of political rather than linguistic division.

Estonian contains a large number of recognized dialects which are typically divided into three categories: Northeast Coastal, North Estonian and Southern Estonian. One of the

most commonly recognized dialects is Võro, a member of the Southern Estonian dialects. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, Võro remained largely uninfluenced by Northern Estonian dialects. As such, today it remains poorly understood by speakers of other Estonian dialects (Viisto 1998: 15). While Võro is referred to as a dialect here, its status varies by source with some referring to it as a language, others as a dialect. The distinction is not linguistic but rather political, as theorized above. Even the Estonian Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages refers to the ‘Võro language’ [Võru keel] (*Võro Language* n.d.) but goes on to clarify that it has no official legal status. Rather, Võro has the socio-cultural status of a dialect (*Võro Language* n.d.). Thus, Võro provides an apt example of the political rather than linguistic definition of a language versus a dialect, highlighting the extreme caution that must be used when selecting and defining a language for maintenance or revitalization.

Preventing Language Change over Time

Even if analysis proceeds cautiously granting the ontological status of languages, language use evolves naturally over time in a manner unaccounted for by language maintenance and revitalization efforts. Language itself cannot be seen as uniform and unchanging. Rather, language use is constantly influenced by surrounding discourse and exists in a continuous state of flux (Skerrett 2012: 30). To view language as essential, constant and unchanging is not only to obscure reality, ignoring that the version of the language set to be preserved only exists as the result of evolution over time, but also to lay the ground for discriminatory, protectionist ideology and policy. Efforts to “protect” a language against external influences which would contribute to language evolution over time, viewing unofficial lexical or grammatical borrowing or innovation as a threat to the purity of the language, prevent the natural process of language development that has taken place continuously over time to produce the variety of language that is currently being protected.

As is typically for any living language, Estonian has exhibited variety over time, evolving both naturally and artificially with significant influence of the various regimes that sought to control Estonia throughout history. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, two very distinct varieties of Estonian developed: a Northern dialect and a Southern dialect. With the publication of the bible in the Northern dialect in 1793, the Southern dialect began

a decline into obsolescence which was completed in the nineteenth century when a consolidation of a standard Estonian language took place on the basis of Northern Estonian (Verschik 2005: 284). In the nineteenth century, Estonian underwent further radical changes at the core of its grammar stemming both from the increased participation of Estonians in the linguistic field and a recognition that Estonian was in many ways similar to Finnish. The changes resulted in a shift of basic grammar and spelling forms from the Germanic model to a more Finnish-based model (Verschik 2005: 283). In 1872, the Society of Estonian Literati (*Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*) began to institutionalize the process of language planning. Under Russian and German rule, Estonian linguists studied in Finland and used Finnish as a source for lexical, derivational and morphological innovation (Verschik 2005: 284). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the language was still considered under developed and linguists such as Johannes Aavik expanded the lexicon with loan translations from a variety of languages, particularly Finnish. He also sought to de-Germanify Estonian (Verschik 2005: 285). Thus, to view Estonian as an unchanging defining characteristic of “the Estonian people” preserved through the generations is inaccurate. The language has changed over time both naturally through language contact and selective use and artificially through intentionally developed grammars. The version of Estonian that exists now is not the same as that which existed in the romanticised past of the nation but rather the result of the natural evolution that protectionist efforts seek to prevent by isolating Estonian from foreign linguistic influences. Thus, Estonian demonstrates the fallacy of assuming homogeneity and linguistic purity over time.

Homogeneity of Language Use

Even if analysis were to disregard language evolution over time, a crucial question would still remain: Whose current variety is then chosen to be maintained or revitalized? Within any given linguistic community, language use can vary between speakers at any given time. Yet, language maintenance and revitalization often focus on a pure, “standard” variety which is almost always unrepresentative of the language actually used by the population. May (2012) cautions that minority language rights may not lead to an increased inequality because of the ‘mismatch between formal language recognition and individual language use’ (p. 10). The standard variety is often most representative of the variety used by the dominant population and taught officially in schools and higher

education. In almost any perceivable case, language preservation cannot accommodate great linguistic variety. However, perhaps asking it to do so is asking too much. In the face of a moribund language, much of the variety within the language is likely to have died out already and the variety that does exist is likely on a more manageable level. Yet, when facing a language that is not yet moribund but nearly so perhaps the variety that exists within the language is of secondary importance to the preservation of some form of the language. Granted, such a view almost implicitly understands “essential” characteristics to be preserved but in a language that has shrunk to the levels of near extinction, common characteristics between varieties are likely. So, perhaps in desperate cases of near extinction, criticizing language maintenance and revitalization for not encompassing all varieties is unrealistic but a self-reflexive approach emphasizing an awareness of existing variety is undoubtedly advisable. For the case of Estonian and many other languages, however, the question of maintenance and revitalization is not being framed in terms of extinction but revitalization and expansion. In these terms, the critique of the exclusion of varieties becomes of central importance. Maintenance and revitalization efforts that focus on one variety at the expense of others are in some ways threatening the language rather than supporting it as they are detrimental to the existing richness and variety present.

Perhaps even more alarming than inadvertent exclusion of linguistic variety is the possibility of maintenance and revitalization efforts targeting that linguistic variety as a threat to the language. The protectionist policies that can result from maintenance and revitalization may serve not to maintain the language as it is but rather purify it to what it should be. Such policies can seek to actively eliminate variety of use which it views as a corruptive force acting against the integrity of the language being protected. While these tendencies were touched upon above in regard to the prevention of language change over time, it is crucial to acknowledge that efforts also exist to eliminate existing variety within languages subject to protectionist policies. Such protectionist ideologies are able to develop from maintenance and revitalization efforts as a direct result of the theoretical flaw at their core: an assumption that languages can be defined by clear borders within which exists a high degree of homogeneity.

Having established that Estonian has varied over time, it is also essential to understand that it varies over space as well. Even in the Estonian language, with only an estimated 1.1 million speakers, there exists a great deal of variety in use (Verschik 2005: 283). Variation within the language at any given time has been a constant throughout history. While much variety eludes official recognition, even the number of dialects recognized by a linguistic analysis of Estonian performed by Viisto (1998) is outstanding. Dialects listed by Viisto include Insular, Western, Central, Eastern, Mungi, Tartu, and Võru (Viisto 1998: 15). While a select few of these varieties receive state recognition and support, many do not which may put them at risk in the process of the purification of the Estonian language.

As is typical in protectionist environments, in Estonia, the answer to the question “whose language?” is answered clearly by preservation and preferential treatment of the “standard” variety. As previously mentioned, it is often the case that a single dialect or variety is selected and enforced in the name of maintenance or revitalization, in Estonia that version is ‘Standard Estonian’ (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 19). The Development Strategy for the Estonian Language 2004-2010 states that the use of the common language is essential ‘to ensure the functioning of the Republic of Estonia and the Estonian society by means of a language that is understandable to all the inhabitants’ (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 17). The same document defines Standard Estonian (the capitalization of the “s” in “Standard” indicates the importance the dialect is afforded) as ‘the most important, unified and standardized variety of Estonian that is used in the entire language area’ (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 19). The standard version of the language is viewed as carrying the essential characteristics of the language which ‘[keep] together the national language’ (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 20). The standard form’s ‘uniformity, comprehensibility, relevance, and modernity’ are viewed as essential and a ‘guarantee of a democratic state’ (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 20). Despite theoretical problems with the ontological status of language, it is not the definition of a standard language that is, in and of itself, troubling but rather the weight placed on it by the policy. While both the Development Strategy (2004-2010) and the Development Plan (2011-2017) have sections dedicated to regional varieties of Estonian, with the Development Plan even describing them as ‘a cultural treasure,’ (Estonian Language Foundation 2011: 58) the tasks and actions listed to ensure the regional varieties’ survival and development

at times directly contradict measures mentioned elsewhere aimed at the enforcement of Standard Estonian. Furthermore, the Development Strategy document displays notably defensive justifications for the need for a standardized version of Estonian, detailing the turbulent past of the language and a lengthy list of current perceived threats (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 19-21). Among these ‘background factors’ that have ‘adversely affected’ the Estonian language are the ‘explosive growth of linguistically uncontrolled text,’ the ‘spread of careless attitudes towards language in society,’ and an ‘inadequacy of activities supporting the standard language’ (Eesti Keelenõukogu 2004: 21). Each of these factors could refer to the use of varieties of Estonian which the government has not given the unique status of “national treasure.” The list clearly displays an animosity towards variety within the language and a tendency towards potentially harmful protectionist ideologies. Despite the recognition of some varieties which are at least superficially promoted, others remain seen as a threat to the language as a whole and are therefore targets of the language purification processes.

Paradoxically, purism can also act in such a way as to counteract maintenance and revitalization efforts as well as government measures to expand use of Estonian and establish it as *lingua franca* in society. There is a tendency for Estonians to consider ‘incorrect’ (Ehala et al. 2006)²³ use of the national language by minorities as a threat to the survival of both the Estonian language and culture. Thus, it is this ideal standard to which language learners are held. This was demonstrated by Lindermann and Voormann (2009)²⁴ who showed that a good command of spoken Estonian does not give Russian speakers the same opportunities as ethnic Estonians in terms of job positions or salaries. For this, they need very strong writing skills as well which the study authors argue demonstrates the promotion of an ideal, grammatically correct standard language. The result of these unrealistically high standards and protectionist views is that Russian speakers have adopted the view that they should not use Estonian unless they speak it well which inherently hampers language learning (Siiner and Vihalemm 2011: 123). Such a view is detrimental for the linguistic integration at the heart of the majority of Estonian language policy as well as maintenance and revitalization efforts (Siiner and Vihalemm 2011: 123). With Russian waning as the *lingua franca*, if Estonian does not take its place,

²³ As cited in (Siiner and Vihalemm 2011: 123)

²⁴ As cited in (Siiner and Vihalemm 2011: 124)

the clear alternative is English (Skerrett n.d.: 13). While there is currently no location in Estonia where English language competency is higher than Estonian (Skerrett n.d.: 11), the potential for English to ‘inhibit’ the acquisition of Estonian by ‘non-Estonians’ (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2010: 39) is an area of concern for language planners.

3.1.2.2 The Alternative: The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis and Linguistic Relativity

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis that ‘the language we speak influences the way we think’ (Tohidian 2008: 66) is not new to the linguistic world, but fell out of favour in the early 1970’s when more universalist perspectives gained favour. Yet, in light of postmodern rejection of the concept of “languages” and re-thinking of language as a socially contingent phenomenon, the hypothesis now offers an intriguing angle from which to approach the field of language maintenance and revitalization. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis originated with Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf who, through the study of Native American languages, arrived at the notion that linguistic features may force speakers to think differently (Skerrett 2012: 37). The idea held some sway in psychology until the early 1970’s when a shift towards universalist notions had critics arguing that language did not shape thought but only provided different ways of describing universal ways of experiencing the world (Skerrett 2012: 37). However, with recent rejections of the universalist notions of language, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis merits re-examination. In recent studies, the hypothesis is more commonly referred to as the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis (Tohidian 2008: 65). Controversy over the hypothesis resulted in a split between strong, weak, and weakest versions (Tohidian 2008: 68, 70). The strong hypothesis sees thought as determined by language. Based on work by Whorf (1956) the hypothesis has found little evidence in its support and that evidence which has been presented is seriously flawed (Tohidian 2008: 68-69). As such, Tohidian (2008) claims that the strong hypothesis is not currently viewed as a plausible theory (p. 69). The weak hypothesis sees perception as influenced by language (Tohidian 2008: 70). The weak version has managed to find some support in studies on colour perception but the findings are mixed between support for universal colour categories and more relative colour perception (Tohidian 2008: 72). Nevertheless, Skerrett argues that recent studies

by Matsumoto and Juang (2008)²⁵ indicate that grammatical and syntactic differences have strong potential for supporting a weak version of the linguistic relativity hypothesis. The weakest hypothesis, that language influences memory is the most widely accepted version of the language relativity hypothesis (Tohidian 2008: 72).

An alternative to the previously mentioned hypotheses has been proposed by Hunt and Agnoli (1991) who believed that the weak version of the linguistic relativity hypothesis was compelling but unprovable (p. 377). As such, they recommended the Cognitive Approach which argues that ‘different languages make certain thoughts easier or harder’ (Tohidian 2008: 72). They argue that while all concepts can be translated, some may require more ‘computational cost’ (Tohidian 2008: 72) depending on the language. They offer the compelling example that ‘[t]here is no word for flat in Quechua [an indigenous language of the Andes], which must make thinking about a plain difficult’ (p. 386)²⁶. Thus, while perhaps it could be argued that no concept is incapable of being translated, there is growing support that various linguistic features may make certain ways of thinking more ‘natural’ (Skerrett 2012: 39) or ‘that different languages pose different challenges for cognition and provide differential support to cognition’ (Hunt and Agnoli 1991: 387). In other words, the Cognitive Approach argues that some languages make it either easier or harder to think in certain ways (Tohidian 2008: 72). While each of the hypotheses mentioned are far from undisputed, this line of research holds promising implications for the field of language policy and planning.

By arguing that language structures or influences thought, and therefore each language allows for a unique way of thinking, the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis offers a unique view on the issue of language maintenance and revitalization. It suggests that perhaps language maintenance is valuable for its contribution to the maintenance of a diversity of meaning and semiodiversity which offer alternative views of the world and our existence within it (Skerrett 2012: 13). From this perspective, it is not diversity of languages themselves that needs to be promoted, but rather diversity of meaning (Pennycook 2010)²⁷. According to this argument, local language practices and usages are valuable in

²⁵ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 39)

²⁶ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 39)

²⁷ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 35).

what they can reveal about local issues and concerns and as such, a loss of that language would result in a loss of valuable insight (Skerrett 2012: 35). If language is viewed as ‘differential’ or as ‘cutting up the world’ rather than ‘referential’ or ‘having universal meaning,’ it becomes clear that ‘we learn to mean’ (Belsey 2002)²⁸ through language and a loss of linguistic diversity would result in a loss of ways of seeing the world. Therefore, by establishing a discourse ‘about the production of knowledge through language,’ Pennycook (2010) argues that linguistic diversity is indeed valuable and linguists have a ‘moral imperative’ (p. 121)²⁹ to help maintain and promote global linguistic diversity.

Though attractive in its ability to promote language maintenance and revitalization without having to limit such efforts to “a language,” this perspective still poses a number of risks which would need to be accounted for before its general acceptance into the field. First, by focusing too intently on the value of linguistic diversity, it risks valuing language over its speakers. Scholars have called into question the perception that equipping indigenous groups to maintain their language will lead to greater social equality. Ladefoged (1992) argues that ‘it is paternalistic of linguists to assume that they know what is best for the community’ (p. 810). While he concedes that ‘[t]he case for studying endangered languages is very strong on linguistic grounds’ and ‘[i]t is often enormously strong on humanitarian grounds as well’ he is insistent that ‘it would be self-serving of linguists to pretend that this is always the case’ (Ladefoged 1992: 809-810) and that the view of language as sacred is not universal. Dorian (1993) furthers this argument by explaining that individuals make ‘choices’ to discontinue their use of a language often in search of ‘social betterment that they believe they can only achieve by abandoning [...] a stigmatizing language’ (p. 577). While, as Tollefson (1991) maintains ‘language itself leads neither to equality nor inequality, but instead is a tool to further them,’ (p. 183) the social reality of linguistic hierarchies cannot be ignored. Though they might not be natural, the barriers faced by speakers of minoritized languages or language varieties are for them very real and societal discourses of power may lead them to abandon their minority language for one of higher prestige. This perspective, that an endangered language ‘may be a liability for its speakers is rarely admitted into the discussion’

²⁸ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 36).

²⁹ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 36).

(Coulmas 2005: 201)³⁰. By not considering such a possibility, linguists risk blindly promoting an ethnolinguistic democracy that does not necessarily imply ethnolinguistic equality (Fishman 1995)³¹. Given the imperfect link between language maintenance and equality, May (2012) concisely highlights the debate that needs to be brought forward, asking ‘should we intervene or are we valuing the notion of languages in the abstract over the decision of individual speakers to “get ahead” socially and economically via another (majority) language?’ (May 2012: 3). If an ethnics of compassion ought to be at the centre of language policy as Tollefson and Pennycook argue, language maintenance and revitalization cannot take place for the sake of the language but rather the situation of the speakers of the given language must be central in any evaluation of how to proceed. This “moral imperative” to preserve linguistic diversity would need to account for how it will do so while maintaining the compassion and empathy that Pennycook has previously argued ought to be at the centre of policy. Furthermore, while evidence continues to mount in favour of this hypothesis, there is much more to be done before it has been thoroughly vetted. Scholars should remain cautious of reliance on a hypothesis, appealing though it may be in its support of the linguistic holy grail of language maintenance, until a more solid body of work can support or inform the nature of its use. Though the hypothesis is not new, it is as yet controversial and understudied and its implications for policy planning, though promising, are yet to be understood.

Given the previously stated cautions, the immediate implications for Estonia are perhaps limited. What it does offer is a reminder that linguistic diversity may be valuable in ways not yet fully understood. For this reason, policies aimed at language maintenance and revitalization ought to be constantly aware of the ways in which their efforts to encourage one form of the language directly or indirectly impact the other varieties that exist. Language variety should not be seen as a threat to Estonian but appreciated for what it can reveal about those who use it and possibly, if the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis holds, how they understand and interact with the world around them.

³⁰ As cited in (Skerrett 2012: 16)

³¹ As cited in (May 2012: 176)

3.2 Critical Analysis: Social Justice

Despite growing criticism of linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization, the concept at their core, a pursuit of social justice, has emerged largely unscathed by the critical eye that has been increasingly turned towards such universal truth claims. It is perhaps its vagueness that has permitted it to avoid scrutiny in that it provides little substance to directly analyse. By contrast, linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization are supported by explicit theoretical foundations and pursue a series of well-defined aims. Such specificity, while on one hand lending credibility to the approaches, also provides a clear line of argument against which one can establish an opposition. However, the vague nature of social justice does not allow such an approach. While employed by a variety of authors, the term goes largely undefined. Corson (1992), after an extensive review, concluded that ‘we are not certain what “justice” might be’ (p. 181). Tollefson (2006) equated greater social justice to ‘greater social, economic and political equality’ (p. 51) but the term has been used elsewhere by Tollefson, Pennycook and others without the employment of any definition whatsoever. While the employment of such a term by Tollefson is rather unsurprising given his foundation in critical theory which relies largely on grand narratives, its use by Pennycook, who turns a critical eye on naturalized discourses of any kind, merits pause. Pennycook acknowledges the controversial role of moral judgement in his postmodernist-influenced critical applied linguistics but does so in reference to the role of preferred futures in the field (Pennycook 2001: 9). Preferred futures, as established by Pennycook, reject the modernist grandiosity of grand narratives such as linguistic human rights, seeing such utopian views as, at best, providing a general direction for the field (Pennycook 2001: 8). He also notes through his use of Foucault (1974) that discourses of justice can act as an instrument for or against economic and political powers (Pennycook 2001: 43). Thus, his use of the term social justice appears contradictory. While the vagueness of the term means that it could be employed for a variety of uses, perhaps even off hand as a convenient synonym for preferred futures, this answer remains unsatisfying. It is used as if it does not need definition, its definition is assumed, as if a universally understood truth, exactly what postmodernism cautions strongly against.

The assumption of universal truth which underlines the employment of social justice as a goal without the need for definition fails to take into account the varying perceptions of

morality that occur both across and within cultures. According to Corson (1992), ‘basic moral views among people who are quite morally upright within their own societies and groups, may vary across cultures, groups and even by gender’ (p. 194). Thus, by assuming a universal definition of social justice, Critical language policy risks ‘power in moral debate [resting] unequally with those individuals who have the ability to wield complex and sensitive moral vocabularies’ (Corson 1992: 194). Therefore, while the pursuit of social justice is an easy employed and feel-good goal to pursue in language policy, its current status as universally understood and therefore without need of a concrete definition is troubling in its modernist grandiosity.

In Estonia, the concept of social justice encounters a concrete problem: a strongly divided opinion on what constitutes social justice. Far from being universally understood, the definition of social justice seems to differ greatly across the population. The opponents in Estonia can *roughly* be categorized into two camps whose roots can be traced to varying interpretations of recent history. On the one hand are those who view social justice as intimately connected to language rights. They believe that the Russian language should retain more power and they should have the right to mother tongue education and government. Many who hold this view had migrated within their home country (the Soviet Union) but in the early 1990’s found themselves automatically located in a different country with a different language. Their history was redefined from a worker’s paradise to one of ‘terror and extermination’ (Sztompka 2004: 164). For many, the changes that have taken place since Estonia’s re-independence are interpreted as discrimination which has taken from them the right to speak their mother tongue in their home territory (Skerrett n.d.: 15). In this discourse, social justice clearly entails language rights in the form of mother tongue language use.

The other dominant view of social justice in Estonia is tied more closely to language maintenance and revitalization. This view, which is strongly reflected in Estonian national language policy, prioritizes the expansion of the Estonian language which is seen to have been discriminated against and severely damaged during the Soviet era (Skerrett n.d.: 3). By this view, Estonia was unjustly dominated by a foreign power who caused harm to their national language. Social justice, therefore, entails the correction of a previous injustice. It focuses on the revitalization of the language and its reestablishment

as *lingua franca* of the state, a status being reclaimed from Russian (Skerrett 2012: 182). This is being accomplished in part by ‘raising the status of the national language and creating operative reasons for its acquisition and active usage’ (Siiner and Vihalemm 2011: 124).

It becomes clear, then, that the narrative of social justice cannot stand up to application in Estonia. While it has been demonstrated that there are differing views of what social justice is in Estonia, the same arguments would still hold if Tollefson’s (2006) definition of social justice as ‘greater social, economic and political equality’ (p. 51) was maintained. Even with a grounding in that definition, the controversies that exist in Estonia would remain relevant given the wide range of interpretations still permitted by the imprecise definition. Thus, whether applied vaguely in the spirit of an unspoken, universally understood definition or imprecisely defined by Tollefson, social justice proves unable to stand up to more critical investigation or application to Estonia.

3.3 Discussion: Social Justice and its Approaches

Though social justice remains to be clearly defined by language policy scholars, even to the extent that it is currently defined, it displays a crucial flaw: the assumption of the existence of a single, definable end point. In reality, however, perceptions of what may constitute a desirable outcome from language policy can vary dramatically. Despite the limited degree to which social justice can be directly examined, this fundamental flaw serves as a means to unite the shortcomings of linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization. The critical analysis of linguistic human rights established that despite Critical language policy’s tendency to assume homogeneity, variety can exist not only between but also within groups. Only in moving beyond this assumption of homogeneity does the extent to which perception of social justice vary become evident. This reveals that universally-minded prescriptions made in the pursuit of social justice are flawed not only in their assumption that they will invariably result in said social justice, as discussed previously, but also in their assumption that the social justice they are pursuing represents a universal truth. The implications of these flaws go beyond a theoretical debate. Pursuing social justice under the guidance of flawed

theoretical foundations can have significant consequences for the speakers of languages being planned. In practical terms, these flaws may serve to perpetuate the inequality that the approaches they inform were employed to combat.

3.4 The Alternative: Preferred Futures

The question that remains, then, is how to move forward in the spirit of compassion for others that both critical and postmodern authors agree is at the heart of language policy. Pennycook argues that postmodern-influenced critical applied linguistics must operate with some vision of what is preferable and move beyond the tendency in language policy research to critique without offering alternatives. His solution lies in the concept of preferred futures. Through these preferred futures, language policy research can offer ‘a more restrained and plural view of where we might want to head’ (Pennycook 2001: 8). Such an approach avoids the prescriptive nature of grand narratives and operates under a constant self-reflexivity. Nevertheless, Pennycook (2001) asserts that such futures must be grounded in ethnical arguments which establish why some alternative futures may be preferable to others. Ethics, he argues, is a key building block of critical applied linguistics but he denies that it constitutes a normative or moralistic code. Rather, the presence of ethics within critical applied linguistics is viewed as a recognition of the ethical concerns with which language policy must invariably deal (Pennycook 2001: 9). While the acknowledgement of and reliance on ethnics is hotly debated, with many arguing that such a base is normative, it is consistent not only with Postcritical language policy but also Critical language policy as both acknowledge the political nature of the work and a concern for suffering which is, if not explicitly, inherently ethical. Nevertheless, the involvement of ethnics must exist amid a constant awareness that ethics represent a discourse which, like others, is dependent on the positioning of the theorist within a web of discourses. As such, theorists must use caution when employing ethics and recognize it as socially contingent lest it transform into another grand narrative.

This alternative to the universal prescriptions of Critical language policy is by no means perfect. As currently defined by Pennycook, preferred futures simultaneously employ ethical arguments and skirt away from criticism of the resultant policy implications by

downplaying them as possible alternatives. This approach has its advantages when applied on a large scale. It allows theorists to look at widely varying situations without paternalistically prescribing a formulaic solution but instead proposing a number of alternatives to consider. By acknowledging the role of ethics in this process, the approach allows for a degree of self-reflection in their application. However, the more concrete, national or local level, as would be the case with Estonian policy making, such an approach is frustrating in its lack of specificity. It provides little with which policy makers can work in order to create equitable policy in their region. Yet, such a frustration is somewhat inherent in the application of postmodernism to language policy given its extreme caution against prescription. Nevertheless, the process of explicitly assessing the ethical arguments for alternate policies in a state of constant self-reflection is a valuable tool for policy makers in highly complex linguistic environments such as Estonia.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of Argument

Given the prevalence of Critical language policy in the field of language policy and planning, this dissertation undertook the task of performing a critical analysis of one of its foundational pillars: the pursuit of social justice. This analysis was not only theoretically justified but also empirically justified by the potential role of Critical language policy in linguistically complex environments such as that of Estonia. Social justice was selected as the object of analysis based on its heretofore unexamined foundational role in Critical language policy. Included in this analysis were two frequently employed approaches in the pursuit of social justice: linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization.

The analysis of linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization revealed a number of shortcomings in their theoretical foundations. These shortcomings can be categorised into two groups: a reliance on oversimplifications through categorization and a failure to acknowledge the problematic nature of universal prescriptions. As was demonstrated in its definition of minority groups and language, Critical language policy relies heavily on an assumption of the existence of discretely definable categories within which exist high degrees of homogeneity. A theoretical exploration, aided by the anti-essentialist Postcritical language policy, revealed such homogeneity and distinct boundaries to be an oversimplification which obscures high levels of linguistic and social variety. This finding was supported by evidence from Estonia which revealed high degrees of variety within both languages and their speakers.

Critical language policy's reliance on discretely definable, homogenous categories was a key foundation supporting the unproblematic universal nature of its prescriptions. Thus, when this foundation was removed, the problematic nature of these universal prescriptions was exposed. Analysis revealed that grand narratives such as linguistic human rights prescribe solutions which are speculative at best in their assumption that they will promote social justice in all linguistic and social environments across both time and space. This fault was demonstrated in part through application of universalist principles to Estonia both during and after Soviet occupation which revealed an inability of such principles to promote equality in both of the radically different environments. Beyond exposing and analysing the aforementioned shortcomings of linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization, this dissertation also briefly addressed the practical consequences that may result from the flawed foundations. It was demonstrated that assumed homogeneity within languages and their speakers can form the basis for intentionally or unintentionally discriminatory policy while a failure to acknowledge the limitations of universalist prescriptions can result in the implementation of unquestioned "rights" which actually perpetuate the linguistic inequality they sought to combat.

Despite the increasing criticism being raised in response to linguistic human rights and language maintenance and revitalization, the pursuit of social justice at their core had remained unquestioned in the field. Frequent use of the term "social justice" has rarely been accompanied by a definition in language policy and planning. Thus, though serving as a foundational pillar in Critical language policy, social justice remained a concept that evaded critical analysis. When such analysis was conducted, however, this dissertation established that even though vaguely defined, the use of social justice as a pillar for Critical language policy was flawed in its assumption that social justice represents a universally agreed upon truth. In reality, perceptions of the very definition of social justice and the best means to achieve it can vary dramatically. Therefore, despite previously having avoided scrutiny through vague application, upon closer examination, the pursuit of social justice proves to be a severely flawed foundation of Critical language policy which, as demonstrated through its approaches, can result in the perpetuation of linguistic inequalities.

4.2 Summary of Unique Contributions

Until now, Critical language policy is a term that has been used imprecisely to refer to incompatible ideas developed based on at least two fundamentally different theories. Thus, the term needed to be broken down for more accurate analysis. By isolating the two separate categories, it was possible to ascertain that not only were many of the theoretical shortcomings of the previously labelled Critical language policy unique to just one of the two newly divided approaches (Critical language policy), the second of those divided approaches (Postcritical language policy) actually offered not only a new lens with which to reveal and examine the shortcomings, but at times, as in the case of preferred futures, also an alternative to those shortcomings. The division of Critical language policy proposed by this dissertation is novel in the field and represents a unique theoretical contribution.

The second theoretical contribution took the form of a critical analysis of a foundation of Critical language policy: social justice. While Postcritical language policy as of yet had failed to challenge this foundational concept, its anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist lens provided the necessary perspective with which to highlight the shortcomings of social justice. A critical analysis of the arguments and theoretical foundations of approaches employed in the pursuit of social justice, namely the rights-based approach (linguistic human rights) and language maintenance and revitalization, provided a significant base from which to approach the critique which ultimately revealed a flawed tendency towards universal assumptions of rightness and oversimplification through categorization. When applied to the pursuit of social justice, these shortcomings are united in the fundamental assumption of a universal truth of social justice. The critique that has been established by this dissertation is essential because Critical language policy is a widely-accepted theory informing current policy research and planning around the world. Not only does this critique establish that there are preferable alternatives to Critical language policy, but further that a reliance on the faulty claims of Critical language policy can have dangerous consequences.

Beyond the established theoretical contributions, this dissertation also provided practical empirical contributions relevant to Estonian language policy and planning. Despite current tendencies towards protectionist policies, were Estonia to begin incorporating more widely accepted approaches into its language planning, Critical language policy would be the natural choice given its dominance in the field. Given the delicate and complex nature of the linguistic environment in Estonia, application of policy informed by a fundamentally flawed theory could have serious ramifications. Thus, the demonstration of Critical language policy's incompatibility with the Estonian linguistic situation was a crucial outcome of this dissertation. Beyond establishing incompatibility with Critical language policy, this dissertation also examined the possibility of alternative means of approaching Estonian language policy and planning. While most of these alternatives remain to be fully developed, it was established that a constant process of self-reflection, an awareness of the problematic nature of linguistic and social categorization and continued explicit analysis of competing ethical arguments would prove valuable tools in Estonian language policy and planning.

4.3 Limitations

Inherent in any theoretical critique are a number of limitations. As Critical language policy has dominated the field of language policy and planning for roughly two decades, the amount of work on the subject is insurmountable. As such, any analysis necessarily must synthesise principle theoretical arguments. In the case of this dissertation, the scope of the analysis undertaken was limited by requirements on length. Therefore, the synthesis of theories was perhaps more exaggerated, working off of the contributions of major authors. The result was undoubtedly the simplification of complex, controversial topics into more manageable units for the sake of analysis. It is possible, then, that the arguments put forth based on analysis of these topics fail to fully account for the nuances of the topics that may be expanded upon by other authors. Nevertheless, it is maintained that the arguments put forth operate on an analysis of the synthesis of the major theoretical arguments established by principle authors in the field and therefore reflect the core of the approaches discussed.

A further limitation, which was touched upon early in the dissertation, results from the problematic nature of linguistic and social categorization. While it was established that categories created in terms of language or ethnicity often obscure the existence of variety that underlie them, the use of such categories is still the norm in the field of policy and planning. Thus, despite attempts to remain vigilant and self-reflective in the use of terms implying categorization, given the difficulty of negotiating language policy and planning without reference to such terms, self-reflection may not always have resulted in the ability to resist oversimplification through categorization.

4.4 Implications for Critical Language Policy

Even accounting for the aforementioned limitations, the outcomes from the analysis of social justice and the approaches taken in its name provide significant grounds on which to question Critical language policy. By establishing not only that Critical language policy's foundation in the pursuit of social justice exhibits significant theoretical flaws, but also that these flaws can ultimately serve in the perpetuation of inequitable linguistic environments, this dissertation provides the basis for a profound questioning of Critical language policy as a whole. Critical language policy positions itself within the field of language policy and planning as the best option for speakers of disenfranchised languages. Yet, given the flaws in its theoretical foundations established in this dissertation, Critical language policy may actually serve to perpetuate the marginalization of these speakers. This is problematic not only in its continuation of systems of inequality but also in the fact that it does so at the expense of other approaches whose firmer theoretical foundations actually offer greater promise in the creation of mutually amicable language policy.

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