

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Neutralizing the political: Language ideology as censorship in Esperanto youth media during the Cold War

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Abstract

This article takes a magazine for Esperanto youth as an entryway to explore the links between language ideologies and censorial practices. During the Cold War, Esperanto print media sought a connection with the Third World to present Esperanto as an alternative to US-led English and USSR-led Russian. With anti-imperialism gaining ground in these magazines, their editors struggled to adhere to the ideology that posits Esperanto as a neutral and international language. Analyzing the editorial work behind the magazine *Kontakto*, I explore how partly silencing anti-colonial perspectives worked to safeguard Esperanto's neutrality, ultimately asking: how can language ideologies act as mechanisms of censorship?

KEYWORDS

censorship, Cold War, Esperanto, Language ideology, silence

INTRODUCTION

In 1972, an issue of *Kontakto*—the most widely distributed international magazine for young Esperanto speakers—featured an opinion article covering the conflicts leading to the independence of East Pakistan. To write on this topic, the magazine editors invited Probal Daşgupto,¹ an 18-year-old Esperanto speaker from Kolkata. Interestingly, the same editors who had invited his contribution prefaced his article with the following disclaimer:

Probal Daşgupto, juna (18-jara) bengala esperantisto el Kalikato, kiun la redakcio petis kontribui al tiu ĉi n-ro de la revuo per “neŭtrala, eventuale prilingva” temo pri

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la novnaskita sudazia ŝtato Bangladeŝo, en letero kiu akompanis la kontribuojn, interalie, skribis al ni: “Malgraŭ cerbumo, mi ne sukcesis elkovi bangladeŝajn (1) ‘neŭtralan’ aŭ (2) ‘prilingvan.’ Hodiaŭ apud nia sojlo ripetiĝas eventfiguracioj (...) konataj el Latinameriko, la venonta katastrofo nepre verŝiĝos ankaŭ rekte sur nin; mi simple ne kapblas tion prisilenti.” Malgraŭ tio, ke nia hinda amiko ne sekvis nian peton pri “neŭtraleco” ĉar, kiel li mem tion sublime simple klarigas—li “ne kapblas”—ni decidis aperiĝi la kontribuojn de Daŝgupto.

Probal Daŝgupto, a young (18-year-old) Bengali Esperantist from Kolkata, was invited by the editors to contribute to this magazine issue a “neutral, possibly language-related” text about the newly born South Asian state of Bangladesh. In a letter that came with his contribution, he wrote to us: “Despite much thinking, I could find the situation of Bangladesh neither ‘neutral’ nor ‘language-related.’ Today, near our [Indian] doorstep, I see repeating a series of events (...) well-known to Latin America, the next disaster will fall directly on us, and I cannot simply remain silent about this.” Even though our Indian friend did not follow our request for “neutrality”—because, as he very honestly explained, he “could not”—we decided to publish Daŝgupto’s contribution (Lins et al., 1972a, 3, my translation, quotation marks in the original).²

Even though the disparities in state recognition between the Urdu and Bengali languages were key aspects of Bangladesh’s independence movement, this disclaimer raises the question: how could an article about the political independence of a country limit itself to language-related issues? What does it mean to discuss political matters from a neutral perspective, and why would the contributor’s refusal to be neutral bother the magazine editors? Despite having been published, Daŝgupto’s piece was shortened, toned down, and supplemented with an excerpt from a journal article on language-related issues in the Bengali-speaking territories that Daŝgupto, then a linguistics student, had previously published in an academic journal.

Upon learning about the edits to Probal Daŝgupto’s article in a conversation with him (in Esperanto) in 2022, I inquired about how he was invited to contribute an article but later corrected for not writing what the magazine editors expected. Daŝgupto promptly raised the issue of censorial editorship (*cenŝura redakto*) during our exchange, but he brought this up with neither dismay nor resentment. Rather, he felt that the editors’ edits and their disclaimer preceding his article were reasonable and aimed to maintain the balance of the Esperanto-medium magazine and the organization behind it. An essential element to understand this case of seeming censorial editorship is the fact that Daŝgupto’s article—as well as the entire content of the magazine at stake—is in Esperanto, a constructed language designed in the late nineteenth-century Russian Empire to facilitate international communication.

From its inception, Esperanto was meant to function as a neutral and international language. Free from associations with any national or ethnic group, Esperanto was linked with the potential to become anyone’s and everyone’s auxiliary language, alleviating the advantages that native speakers of hegemonic languages hold in the uneven playing field of cross-border communication (Zamenhof, 1929 [1906]). In line with how Esperanto became bound up in a language ideology of neutrality, Esperanto’s neutrality lies in how it is meant to form a transnational speech community as a volitional communicative network rather than as an ideological community of some sort (see Forster, 1982; Gobbo, 2017). As such, Esperanto’s neutrality is in line with a certain approach to liberal internationalism that takes language comprehension as a key feature of mutual understanding across national and linguistic boundaries.

Kontakto, in turn, was created in 1963 as the flagship magazine of the World Esperanto Youth Organization (Tutmonda Esperantista Junulara Organizo, hereafter TEJO), with the

aim of fostering an international forum for Esperanto-speaking youth. To make *Kontakto*—and, by proxy, Esperanto—effectively international required giving voice to young people worldwide, and this is what motivated European editors Ulriĥ Lins, Simos Milojeviĉ, and Hans Cajlinger³ to invite an Indian Esperanto speaker to publish an article at a time when the magazine received pieces primarily from Euro-American contributors. In the Cold War period, as the “industrialized world” was torn between the First and the Second Worlds,⁴ the magazine editors (based in West Germany and the Netherlands) were eager to publish first-hand accounts of world affairs that demonstrated that both the magazine and Esperanto could also bear relevance and speak to the Third World.

Nevertheless, from the editors' perspective, this raised a series of controversies. On the one hand, for the language to become international, it should welcome the situated perspectives and voices of contributors from as many national and linguistic backgrounds as possible. On the other hand, for *Kontakto* to comply with the language ideology that posits Esperanto as neutral, its content should be relatable to people from potentially anywhere in the world. To this end, contributions such as Daŝgupto's should avoid taking stances that could be labeled “political”—that is, non-neutral, controversial, or perceived as against Western imperialism, Islamism, Pakistan, or Bangladesh's new leaders.

This article takes the magazine *Kontakto* as an entryway to understand how, in the face of a language ideology of neutrality, Esperanto youth media conveyed anti-imperialist and post-colonialist stances in the Cold War period, particularly between 1963 and 1980. As magazines such as *Kontakto* attempted to establish a global pool of contributors to discuss imperialism and (re)present the Third World to a worldwide readership in a non-confrontational, non-partisan way, how to draw a line separating editorial work from censorial work? Going beyond youth media in a constructed language, the puzzle I address in this article builds upon language ideologies, media, editorship, and censorship to consider the following question: how do languages play a role in shaping what is communicated in them? Put differently, and following the emic use of the term “censorial editorship,” how do language ideologies act as mechanisms of censorship in practice?

Grounded in archival research, this study was furthered by participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I draw primarily on the analysis of the collections of international Esperanto-medium periodicals such as *Kontakto*, *Esperanto*, *Sennaciulo*, and *Sennacieca Revuo*, administrative records of Esperanto organizations and associations, and reports from Esperanto meetings and congresses, as well as informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with key actors, such as Humphrey Tonkin (*Kontakto*'s founding editor and, later, president of TEJO and the Universal Esperanto Association, hereafter UEA); Renato Corsetti (former president of TEJO and, later, UEA); Ulriĥ Lins (*Kontakto*'s former editor); and one of the magazine's key contributors (and, later, president of TEJO and UEA), Probal Daŝgupto. Here I focus on the material related to *Kontakto* and TEJO—the Esperanto-medium spaces that most openly gave prominence to Third World affairs and debates on anti-imperialism and post-colonialism. My interviews and informal conversations were the result of my long-standing contact and friendship with interlocutors following the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted with Esperanto speakers between 2016 and 2022 in France, and through attending international Esperanto congresses in Europe, America, and Asia (Fians, 2021).

Inspired by how Love (2023) looks at an Algerian newspaper to unpack a series of post-colonial experiences and tropes, this article brings together scholarly work on language ideologies and censorship to explore how editors, contributors, and readers navigated the dilemmas of (political) neutrality and (linguistic) imperialism in Esperanto youth media in the second half of the twentieth century. Regarding censorship, I am interested mostly in moving away from a definition that likens censorship to state-sanctioned prerogatives (see Bayly, 2019; Sheriff, 2000), looking at foreclosures (Butler, 1997, 1998) and cultural regulations (Mazzarella & Kaur, 2009) that rule out the unspeakable at the grassroots level.

I begin with an analysis of the *mise en discours* (Foucault, 1978) of the historically shaped language ideology that sustains Esperanto and its media. Next, I explore how *Kontakto* partly challenged Esperanto's and TEJO's stances on neutrality by bringing political controversies and the Third World to its pages, in a process aimed at featuring non-Euro-American voices in this Esperanto-medium forum, while also limiting what these voices could express and erasing (Irvine & Gal, 2000) controversial forms of language use.

Lastly, by looking at the editorial work that made certain topics more acceptable for discussion than others to an international readership, the article examines a much-neglected element in scholarship on censorship: language and language ideologies. I argue that bringing language from the background to the core of our ethnographic attention to media enables us to recognize how content curation reinforces and challenges assumptions about how a given language should work in practice. Ultimately, this article investigates how language ideologies prompt certain conversation topics while silencing other topics and forms of speech.

The making of a language ideology: The rises and falls of linguistic neutrality

The magazine *Kontakto* was launched in 1963, initially releasing four issues per year—a number that expanded to six in 1983. Mirroring the expected internationality of the Esperanto-speaking community, *Kontakto's* founding editor was a British student living in the United States, the magazine was printed at TEJO's headquarters in the Netherlands, and one of its key contributors, as shown above, was an Indian student living in East Bengal. Understanding the controversial disclaimer that preceded Daśgupto's article requires delving into how this periodical came into being and how Esperanto gained ground via a language ideology that discursively (Foucault, 1978) it as a neutral and international language.

International auxiliary languages gained prominence at a time when the newly developed telephone, diesel locomotives, international postal services, and airplanes boosted the early wave of globalization taking place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Wenzlhuemer, 2007). Against this background, Esperanto—one of several international auxiliary languages created during this period (see Couturat & Leau, 1903, 1907; Eco, 1995)—was designed in Warsaw in 1887, at the desk of the Jewish ophthalmologist Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof. As a proposed solution for increasingly pressing difficulties in cross-border communication, Esperanto developed a fully-fledged vocabulary and garnered a considerable community of speakers in its early decades (Garvía, 2015).

Seeking to circumvent the use of hegemonic national languages (such as French, English, and Russian) for international communication, Zamenhof placed neutrality as one of Esperanto's core traits:

La Esperantismo estas penado disvastigi en la tuta mondo la uzadon de lingvo neŭtrale homa, kiu “ne entrudante sin en la internan vivon de la popoloj kaj neniam celante elpuŝi la ekzistantajn lingvojn naciajn,” donus al la homoj de malsamaj nacioj la eblon kompreniĝadi inter si, kiu povus servi kiel paciga lingvo.

Esperantism is the endeavor to spread worldwide the use of a neutrally human language that, “without intruding into the inner life of peoples and in no way aiming to replace the existing national languages,” would give people of different nations the possibility of understanding each other (2001 [1905], 91, my translation, quotation marks in the original).

Once in this Esperanto-medium middle ground, people from different national, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds would temporarily depart from their linguistic comfort zones and national affiliations to move toward universal fraternity and justice (Forster, 1982, 5).

This forms the basis of the language ideology that portrays Esperanto as a neutral language. As Silverstein (1979) suggests, language ideologies encompass the ways language users rationalize and justify perceived language structure and use. While not always explicitly upheld (Irvine, 2021), such ideologies manifest in how languages come to sound, look, and feel to their speakers, listeners, and readers (Woolard, 2016, 21–22). The language ideology at stake asserts how Esperanto should work: as no one's first language, it should work to establish neutral spaces where its potential speakers could feel welcome and heard.

What I term a language ideology of neutrality is comparable with Woolard's (2016) definition of an ideology of linguistic anonymity. In contrast to ideologies of linguistic authenticity, the former portrays a given language as a neutral vehicle of communication perceived as equally available to all and capable of creating a common ground of some sort (Woolard, 2016, 7). Even though Woolard's linguistic anonymity draws primarily on the assumed impersonality of textbook Catalan and global English, such a definition also speaks to the "neutral" common ground meant to be fostered through the use of an international auxiliary language designed for cross-border communication.

In setting out the roles that languages should perform in the social experiences of their speakers (Heath, 1977, 53), language ideologies also lay out how languages should not be used. In this regard, in her ethnography of the 1988 Corsican Spelling Championship, Jaffe (1996) explores how two contrasting language ideologies gained ground during the competition. Some competitors and language activists attempted to bring Corsican closer to the prestige of French by showing how Corsican spelling could also be systematized. Meanwhile, others sought to keep Corsican distinct from French, highlighting how the former benefits from its varieties and lack of strict standards. In battling for the right spelling of words in a televised competition, the contest participants also laid the groundwork for which language ideology would help define Corsican. Similar issues regarding how contrasting language ideologies influence their speakers' openness to neologisms or adherence to the language's "authentic" vocabulary also manifest in other regional languages (for an example from Occitan, see Connor, 2019), as well as other constructed languages (from Klingon to Esperanto and Eskayan, see Kelly, 2022; Schreyer, 2021).

Since the early twentieth century, the idea that Esperanto should be neutral and belong to no particular ideology or political camp has been repeatedly challenged. In the interwar period, pacifists, socialists, anarchists, and left-wing activists of all sorts embraced this language as an anti-nationalist ally in the class struggle and in the building of a more egalitarian world system (Karlander, 2020; Konishi, 2013; Lins, 2016; O'Keeffe, 2021). Following the end of the Second World War, the emergence of the United Nations and UNESCO brought about a different scenario, in which Esperanto's internationalism and claimed linguistic neutrality were coupled with the political neutrality of these international bodies (Fians, 2021; Forster, 1982; Lapenna, 1974).

The novel links with these international bodies breathed new life into Esperanto, providing new spaces for its non-partisan language ideology to flourish. Time and again, as a language imbued with a cause, Esperanto consistently sees the neutrality trope emerging as the controversial force driving its speakers' perceptions of what this language is capable of, how it should be used, and which topics one should discuss in it.

Given the way dictionaries, prominent speakers, magazine articles, and editors constantly remind each other, reinforce and, occasionally, challenge how neutrality should take place in practice (if at all), can such foreclosures in language use be considered in tandem with a perspective on censorship?

While conventional accounts associate censorship with explicit, coercive actions exercised by the state against those who are less powerful, more recent approaches have considered censorship beyond the institutionalized scope of state action and have emphasized these practices' productive aspects (see Butler, 1997; Candea, 2019). Through non-stated, implicit operations that rule out the unspeakable, censorship also sets out what can be spoken, written, and done. Analogous to language ideologies, censorship frames forms of communication perceived as legitimate. Dialoguing with scholarship on censorship enables us to flesh out the practices and mechanisms of reinforcement that operationalize language ideologies on the ground.

Featuring the political: Neutrality otherwise

The alignment between Esperanto's and the UN's approaches to linguistic and political neutrality establishes the background against which TEJO developed. Founded in 1938, TEJO effectively gained importance in the late 1950s (Fians, 2017; Lins, 1974, 535–538), propelled by the prominent role youth came to play worldwide. The late 1950s and early 1960s epitomized a period of rapid urbanization both in capitalist and socialist countries (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2013; Marwick, 1998), with urban settings hosting much of the experimentation and effervescence of the global sixties. Concurrently, the rising number of young people attending universities both in the North and South hemispheres, as well as a post-Second World War consumer boom in the West, resulted in the establishment of youth-targeted leisure and cultural products, with a set of lifestyles, behaviors, mindsets, and aesthetics becoming widely recognized as characteristic of this age group (Bennett, 2015, 43–45). In a generational shift, the authority traditionally associated with seniority became increasingly contested and youth were acknowledged as having their own interests.

With the emergence of youth as a fully-fledged age group, there was a perceived need to create spaces for young Esperanto speakers to communicate their interests and concerns. With speakers potentially everywhere in the world but concentrated in no particular location, Esperanto and its speech community rely on occasional gatherings (local Esperanto meetings as well as the annual International Esperanto Youth Congress) and on various media (postcards, radio broadcasts, periodicals and, currently, also digital media) to get off the ground. To fulfill this role, TEJO founded *Kontakto*, lending materiality to the voices of the Esperanto youth in a twofold manner: showcasing Esperanto's power to engender global youth networks while also providing a platform for young Esperanto speakers to produce and consume content in the language.

The founding editor of *Kontakto*—Humphrey Tonkin, then a 25-year-old British PhD student at Harvard—wrote the editorial preface of the magazine's inaugural issue, setting the tone of what was to come:

Ni celas ne simple liveri al vi en *Kontakto* nur ankoraŭ alian novaĵfoliaron aŭ anoncaron, sed veran gazeton, kies enhavo ne pritraktu simple Esperanton, sed ankaŭ tiujn problemojn, kulturajn kaj sociajn, kiuj tuŝas la junularon, kaj tiujn apartajn interesojn kiujn havas gejunuloj. Ni scias—iom tro bone scias—ke la gazeto kostas; ni scias ke ĝi plenplenas je malbonaĵoj kaj neperfektaĵoj. En ĉi tiu numero, ekzemple, mankas materialo pri la Orienta Mondo, pri kulturaj demandoj, pri sporto. Sed kun via helpo kaj via komprenemo ni venkos ĉiujn malfacilaĵojn.

In *Kontakto*, we aim to provide you not with just another newsletter or advertising space, but with a real magazine, whose content does not deal simply with Esperanto, but also with cultural and social problems affecting young people

and with the youth's particular interests. We know—know all too well—that the magazine has a cost; we know it is full of imperfections. In this issue, for instance, there is a lack of material on the Eastern World, on cultural questions, on sport. But, with your help and understanding, we will overcome all difficulties (Tonkin, 1963, 1, my translation).

This excerpt establishes the magazine's editorial lines: *Kontakto* would feature content in Esperanto but not on Esperanto, reporting on themes that concern the youth as much as topics related to “cultural and social problems.” Upholding Esperanto's expected internationality, the magazine should offer worldwide coverage of themes and news, this being the reason why the lack of content on “the Eastern world” was an issue flagged from the outset. Such a wide coverage would rely on “your help and understanding,” with youth worldwide expected to contribute content. Whereas the language ideology behind Esperanto posited this language as neutral and international, the media ideology (Gershon, 2010) breathing life into *Kontakto* held the Esperanto youth media responsible for helping shape the emerging Esperanto youth and establish its key talking points.

Printed in the Netherlands and subsequently shipped to TEJO members and magazine subscribers around the world, the early issues of *Kontakto* primarily featured articles about social themes, war and peace, languages of the world, science and technology, travel destinations, cinema, sexual life, and humor. The magazine's early content provides a snapshot of its editorial line: in the first issue, a page-long article by Boston-based Katherine Chaplin (1963) discussed the challenges of single motherhood in the United States, outlining how the US government could mitigate this issue through social services to support single mothers. In the following year, a richly illustrated page-long article described the wonders of the Australian deserts and sea from the perspective of a US Esperanto speaker living in Australia (Broadribb, 1964). In the same year, the Chinese Esperanto speaker Armand Su (1964) contributed the first of his many travel reports—this one, on his trip to the Tombs of the Ming Dynasty near Beijing, illustrated with a black-and-white picture of him standing before the mausoleum.

The following years also saw Armandu Su reporting on the Buddhist statues carved into the rocks of central China's Longmen Grottoes (1965), as well as a Brazilian contributor (Wechsler, 1967) narrating how Carnival is not primarily a stereotypical display of joy, but mostly an occasion for the Brazilian working classes to distract from the anguish and despair that resulted from the financial hardships they faced throughout the year.

Interspersing first-person accounts with journalistic-like articles written in the third person, the 20 pages of each issue of *Kontakto* also featured a number of contributions that helped define its editors' perceptions of what counted as “cultural and social problems affecting young people.” In this regard, in 1965, an article described a Dutch governmental program that sent young volunteers to “developing countries” for 2 years (Dijkstra, 1965). Detailing how these young people underwent preliminary language and technical training, this three-page article explained how, through joining an agricultural project in Colombia, educating Brazilian peasants about hygiene, or teaching Cameroonian women to sew, young volunteers could develop a cosmopolitan mindset while making the world a better place.

Similarly, in 1967, an article by 27-year-old German-based journalist Stefan Maul—who succeeded Humphrey Tonkin as the magazine's editor—used statistics to discuss world hunger. Maul's article—one among many about such topics—opens with the following paragraph:

Malpli ol 40 milionoj el la 60 milionoj homoj, kiuj ĉiujare mortas, elmondiĝas pro malsato kaj ĝiaj sekvoj, kvankam en la malsat-regionoj 80 ĝis 90% de la homoj laboras en agrikulturo kaj vivas per ĝi. Kaŭzo de ĉi tiu paradoksa situacio:

la labor-metodoj tie estas malmodernaj, sterkado, semoselektado, plan-toŝanĝado kaj profitiga brutbredado estas preskaŭ nekonataj aferoj. Tial malgraŭ grandaj streĉoj nur minimumaj rikoltoj.

About 40 million of the 60 million deaths [worldwide] every year are due to hunger and its consequences, although in the famine regions 80% to 90% of the people work in and live off agriculture. The reason for this paradoxical situation: the working methods in these regions are very old-fashioned, and fertilizing techniques, seed selection, crop rotation, and profitable cattle breeding are almost unknown. Therefore, despite great strain, they only achieve minimal harvests (Maul, 1967a, 12, my translation).

In the 1960s, articles about history and travel destinations in China enabled young Esperanto speakers in the West to access first-hand accounts of China, whose borders were partially closed to citizens of several nationalities. Likewise, discussing lifestyles in Australia and Brazilian festivals without relying on stereotypes allowed youth in the Second World to have a taste of what was happening beyond the Iron Curtain, via a topic unlikely to feature in most Soviet magazines at the time. Seen from a global perspective, *Kontakto* and TEJO's International Youth Congresses were just two among several youth-oriented spaces of literary, political, and artistic exchange challenging Cold War isolationism (Djagalov, 2020; Rupprecht, 2015).

In addition to other periodicals from Western Europe that also crossed these borders—such as *L'Humanité* and *L'Unità*, which were aligned with communism (Pavlenko, 2003, 323–324)—*Kontakto* tinged these streams of communication with a linguistic dimension. Its articles epitomized how the Esperanto print media sought to feature the world in its pages: by making worldwide news and first-hand accounts accessible and by using an international language to foster connections among young people beyond the tripartite division of First, Second, and Third Worlds.

EVADING THE POLITICAL: BETWEEN FORECLOSURES AND DISCLAIMERS

Reaching a print run of 1600 copies in 1970 (Dobrzynski, 1970, 2), *Kontakto* made content available to a worldwide readership that, though not numerous, perhaps could not have learned about Buddhist stone carving in China or lifestyles in Australia otherwise. Meanwhile, the magazine addressed world problems by proposing world solutions that were nearly uncontroversial: no young Esperanto speaker would likely stand against the improvement of social services in the United States, the posting of Dutch volunteers to Cameroon, or the adoption of new farming techniques in the world's “famine regions.” In this way, *Kontakto* achieved two key objectives. First, by providing content, the magazine consolidated its role of shaping the global Esperanto-speaking youth as an imagined community with shared interests and concerns. Second, by presenting uncontroversial ideas, the magazine contributed to forging an image of the world as one and of Esperanto as a resource to bring humankind together through grassroots engagements with world affairs (e.g., through volunteering).

During the Cold War, claims of Esperanto's neutrality underwent scrutiny to accommodate the demands of the period. Preserving Esperanto's neutrality also meant evading clashes between the First and the Second Worlds, creating a scenario in which Esperanto could stand out as an alternative language crafting nonaligned, nonconfrontational spaces amid the hegemonic “capitalist” English and “communist” Russian languages (Applebaum, 2020). Accordingly, the magazine editors had to ensure that contributors such as Armand Su would not delve into controversial aspects of Chinese politics or criticize the Cultural Revolution, which could culminate in Chinese Esperanto speakers frowning upon *Kontakto* (and, by proxy, Esperanto) as capitalist ventures. Likewise, editors expected Su to highlight the

uniqueness of the Longmen Grottoes without saying a word about how several of these caves' sculptures were pillaged or removed in the first half of the twentieth century and sent to Western collections, such as the one from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Along similar lines, had Stefan Maul held Western imperialism and colonialism accountable for hunger in the Third World, Esperanto associations from Western Europe could have associated *Kontakto* (and, by proxy, Esperanto) with communism. These concerns were not unfounded, given that Esperanto had been deemed dangerously anti-regime in the early decades of the Soviet Union (Lins, 2016) and labeled communist in the United States during McCarthyism (Schor, 2016). Discussing world problems via statistics and first-hand accounts helped convey that *Kontakto* was not taking sides or privileging certain perspectives, but was rather maintaining a semblance of neutrality.

Interestingly, a language that repoliticizes the role played by hegemonic languages in international communication simultaneously seeks to ensure its worldwide appeal by feeding the depoliticization of world affairs. Such a depoliticization eventually aspires to eliminate antagonisms and controversies for the sake of a post-political consensus (Mouffe, 2005), thus helping present Esperanto as a language rooted in nonconfrontational exchanges.⁵

One could argue that the magazine articles presented above were representative of a seemingly prevailing mindset of the Esperanto youth of the period—who had chosen to portray worldliness that way. Yet, an attention to the editorial disclaimers prefacing a number of contributions in the 1960s and 1970s attests to how such an approach was a deliberate concession to Esperanto's expected neutrality.

One of these editorial disclaimers appeared in 1967, accompanying a travel report by *Kontakto*'s editor Stefan Maul on his visit to Israel. Despite the Six-Day War involving Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan having finished just 3 months prior to his trip, Maul did not discuss the war and, instead, prefaced his own article with an explanation:

Ĉi tiu revuo laŭ la principoj de TEJO estas neŭtrala, tial—malgraŭ ke ĝi estas la plej aktuala kaj interesa aspekto—mi ne povas paroli pri la politika situacio en Israelo kaj la Meza Oriento, kiel mi ekkonis ĝin okaze de vizito dum aŭtuno 1967. Sed certe estas permesite al mi raporti pri tiu mirinda lando Israelo, ĉar eĉ plej pedanta leganto el mia laŭdo por Israelo ne povos konkludi mallaŭdon aŭ malamon kontraŭ araboj. Cetere mi kompreneble rajtas nomi faktojn, ĉu agrablajn por iu ajn, ĉu ne.

This magazine, according to the principles of TEJO, is neutral. Therefore—even though this is a most pressing and interesting aspect—I cannot talk about the political situation I encountered in Israel and the Middle East during my visit in the fall of 1967. However, I am certainly allowed to report on that wonderful country Israel, because even the most pedantic reader will not be able to conclude from my praise for Israel a disparagement or hatred against Arabs. Moreover, I am of course entitled to name facts, whether these please people or not (Maul, 1967b, 9, my translation).

The magazine articles presented above offer a glimpse into what the Esperanto youth print media could feature. By the same token, editorial disclaimers evince the approaches and themes that were accepted with reservations and partly silenced in these pages. *Kontakto* issues opened with a caveat, stating that “only the authors themselves are responsible for the content of their articles, which do not necessarily align with the opinions or principles of TEJO and the editors” (Kontakto, 1964). The principles of TEJO emphasized Esperanto's neutrality and outlined the organization's commitment to it. This caveat, in turn, gave some leeway for authors to creatively experiment with the boundaries of neutrality. Yet, as both a contributor and editor, Stefan Maul was in a position

that compelled him to adhere even more closely to Esperanto's expected neutrality. In an apologetic tone, his disclaimer anticipated criticisms from readers, all the while setting the limits of what the magazine could cover.

Neutralizing the political, silencing the controversial

Kontakto's editorial line underwent partial reformulation in the years leading up to 1968. While factors such as urbanization, the growth of the university student population worldwide, and emerging lifestyles solidified youth as a stand-alone age group, the late 1960s saw them seasoned with a newfound revolutionary drive. Student-led protests in Paris in May 1968 culminated in generalized discontent in France. Civil rights movements in the United States and several Western European countries fought against racism, advocated for gay rights, and condemned the Vietnam War. Alongside these well-known cases concerning the First World, young activists in the Second World sought to engage in international conversations through student exchange programs, the World Youth Festivals, and cross-border literary and artistic gatherings, while others challenged Soviet imperialism during the 1968 Prague Spring (Applebaum, 2019; Rupprecht, 2015). Meanwhile, the Third World witnessed demonstrations against dictatorships in Latin America, along with antiauthoritarian and anti-colonial protests of young activists in former European colonies in Africa (Hendrickson, 2022).

The Esperanto-speaking youth was no different. Although the dispersed nature of this speech community precluded joint participation in street protests, young Esperanto speakers were also eager to engage more openly with political matters in their publications. After all, what would remain of *Kontakto's* relevance at a time when “neutral” Esperanto seemed to curtail debates on grassroots politics? This matter gained prominence in 1969, when TEJO held its International Esperanto Youth Congress in Tyresö, Sweden. The week-long congress, attended by around 120 participants, resulted in the Declaration of Tyresö (TEJO, 1969), which linked Esperanto's neutrality with the fight for “human integrity” and against “linguistic imperialism” (*lingva imperiismo*):

Se oni konsekvence aplikas la koncepton pri konservo de la integreco de la individuo, oni nepre venas al malaprobo de lingva kaj kultura diskriminacioj en ĉiu formo, al malaprobo de ĉiu tiel nomata solvo de la lingva problemo, kiu baziĝas sur diskriminacio, kaj al konstato, ke oni ne sufiĉe atentis la detruadon de la kultura kaj lingva fono de multaj popoloj. Tiu detruado estas nenio alia ol instrumento de lingva imperiismo.

If we [TEJO members gathered in Tyresö] implement the notion of preserving the integrity of the individual, we necessarily come to disapprove of linguistic and cultural discrimination in every form, the disapproval of every so-called solution to the language problem that is based on discrimination, and the acknowledgment that we do not pay enough attention to the destruction of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of many peoples. This destruction is nothing other than an instrument of linguistic imperialism (TEJO, 1969, 7, my translation).

This declaration emphasized that, if Esperanto aimed to foster international communication on an equal footing, its speakers should oppose imperialist practices hindering the vitality of minoritized languages. Embracing this emic understanding of linguistic imperialism, young Esperanto speakers were then invited to fight political, economic, and cultural forms of imperialism.

In welcoming the engagement of the magazine's contributors with political matters through the lens of language, *Kontakto* sought to cultivate a new form of “being neutral” in Esperanto—which brought the issue of nonalignment back to the editors' desk. After all, criticism of the Soviet Union's Russian-centered language policies or of the linguistic imperialism of the Francophonie could again put the magazine on the verge of pro-capitalist or pro-communist accusations. In the face of this puzzle, TEJO sought to pay more systematic attention to its non-European members, while *Kontakto* embraced Third Worldism, in explicit efforts to transcend Europeanization (*ekstereŭropigo*, see Corsetti, 1971; Sabo-Felšo, 1973).

As my interviews with former editors revealed, the manners in which these efforts unfolded also mirrored the personal preferences of each editor during that period. *Kontakto*'s founding editor, Humphrey Tonkin (active from 1963 to 1966) was keen on expanding TEJO networks toward the Second World (termed the “Eastern world” in his editorial preface). The editorial team in charge between 1970 and 1973—35-year-old journalist Simos Milojević and 32-year-old journalist Hans Cajlinger, led by 29-year-old historian Uliř Lins—fostered a broader dialogue with the Asian continent and other non-European spaces, following Lins' personal experiences and professional interests as a historian of Japan and Cajlinger's trips to North Africa.

Against this background, the magazine editors invited the 27-year-old Malagasy Esperanto speaker Eugène Raveloson to contribute his two-page article (Raveloson, 1971) on the linguistic imperialism brought about by the prevailing use of French and English—instead of Swahili, for instance—as the de facto working languages of the Organization of African Unity. Some years later, 26-year-old Indian Esperanto speaker Yashovardhan Singh also became a contributor, with an article on how people from countryside regions of India and the Third World do not perceive formal education as a self-evident need, given how the content taught at schools is overall detached from the everyday work needs of these populations (Singh, 1977).

In 1972, an issue of *Kontakto* almost entirely devoted to discuss Third World affairs opened with the following editorial preface—a disclaimer unpacking how editors perceived this new approach as a challenge to Esperanto's assumed neutrality:

Eble vi trovos ĉi tiun n-ron de la revuo iom tro engaĝita, preskaŭ “politika”—ne-neŭtrala kiel oni emas diri. Eble vi diros, ke “nia kara lingvo” kaj nia “verda Popolo” ne devus trakti la temojn kiuj enestas la paĝojn kiuj sekvas. Povas esti, ke vi post ĉi tiu n-ro definitive aldiabligos la redaktorojn kaj damnos la Estraron de TEJO, kiu ja “toleras” ĉion ĉi. Sed, se vi vere kapablas [...] abstini rilate la socian “juston” kiu paradas sur la sekvantaj paĝoj, tiam ni damnas vin.

Perhaps you will find this magazine issue somewhat too engaged, almost “political”—not neutral, as one tends to say. Perhaps you will say that “our dear language” and our “green people” [Esperanto speakers, referring to the color of the Esperanto flag] should not deal with the themes that fill the following pages. It may be that after this magazine issue you will definitively condemn the editors and the leadership of TEJO, which indeed “tolerates” all this. But, if you really [...] succeed in abstaining in the face of the social “justice” that stands on the following pages, then we condemn you (Lins et al., 1972b, 2, my translation, quotation marks in the original).

From this perspective, exploring Third World affairs could more effectively present Esperanto as a non-hegemonic alternative amid the bipolarism of United States versus Soviet Union, or English versus Russian. This move also further internationalized *Kontakto*, with the incorporation of Third World narratives to satisfy the curiosity of readers from the First and Second

Worlds, as well as to appeal more directly to those at the margins of the Cold War tensions. Ultimately, this epitomized an explicit attempt to make the Esperanto youth movement—then concentrated in First and Second World countries—more open to accommodate perspectives from the Third World. Thus, generic accounts on poverty in Latin America came to coexist with more incisive reports acknowledging “the restraining forces of imperialism, colonialism, and adventurism” (“la katenaj fortoj de imperiismo, koloniismo, aventurismo,” Maitzen, 1970, 13), as well as articles on Frantz Fanon’s “anti-colonial theories” (Kontakto, 1972, 11).

This shifting approach brings us back to the vignette that opened this article. As of 1969—as illustrated above—the magazine began to invite contributions from young Esperanto speakers beyond Euro-America, expecting them to convey first-hand narratives of events and cultural aspects of the Third World settings they experienced. This explains why Probal Dašgupto, a young and proficient Esperanto speaker from India’s West Bengal,⁶ was asked to contribute his perspective on the independence of his neighboring country Bangladesh.

Published below the editorial disclaimer (discussed above), Dašgupto’s article (1972a) occupied two pages and was illustrated with two pictures: one of a smiling Mujib and one of two children and a baby sitting on the floor, subtitled “Bangladeshi refugees: where is the end of this continuous suffering?” Written in the third person but with descriptive adjectives that lent it a less journalistic tone, the article pointed to evidence of corruption among supporters of both Bhashani and Mujib and reported on how people’s greed had fueled inflation and financial instability. Conveying little hope for the future of the newly independent state, Dašgupto called things by their names. Holding accountable the parts involved in the independence war, he also criticized how the Pakistani army had left behind heavy weaponry, which ended up in the hands of extremist groups that created a perpetual state of insecurity in Bangladesh. Unlike most of *Kontakto*’s previous pieces on social problems in the Third World, this article did not conclude on a hopeful note pointing to how youth solidarity or the UN could help. Most strikingly, the contributor did not use linguistic imperialism as an entry point to denounce other forms of oppression, as had become commonplace following TEJO’s Declaration of Tyresö in 1969.

In 1947, religious conflicts between Muslims and Hindus constituted a driving force behind Pakistan’s independence from India. By contrast, in 1971, language emerged as a catalyst of Bangladesh’s independence from Pakistan, due to the resistance of the predominantly Bengali-speaking population of then East Pakistan against the Pakistani government’s imposition of Urdu (Kabir, 1985). Despite the editors of *Kontakto* expecting Dašgupto to highlight language matters, the author preferred to focus on the outcomes of the recently ended Bangladesh Liberation War. Drawing the readers’ attention to the war, Dašgupto found a way to write to an international readership familiar with power disputes that, in his words, were “well-known to Latin America” (Dašgupto in Lins et al., 1972a, 3) and that were, for this reason, directly relevant to Latin American readers of the magazine.

My conversations with Dašgupto revealed that the editors shortened his article before publication, removing sentences that expressed strong stances against the parties involved in the war and deleting descriptive adjectives they perceived as more critical. Yet he only became aware of these edits upon receiving his copy of the magazine by post. Subsequently, Dašgupto received a letter from Victor Sadler, a board member of UEA—which shared an office with TEJO in the Netherlands—and editor of the linguistics journal *La Monda Lingvo-Problemo*. Sadler explained that Dašgupto’s critique of Bangladesh and Pakistan was toned down and that three complementary paragraphs had been added following his article. These paragraphs—which Dašgupto had published earlier in *La Monda Lingvo-Problemo*—explained the Bangladeshi government’s decision to cease using English and Urdu as official languages and to adopt Bengali more widely. This also meant switching the writing system used in street signs and government documents to the Bengali script, a process to be completed once the new country received a large order of Bengali-script typewriters

(Dašgupto, 1972b). While the editorial disclaimer recognized that Dašgupto did not write about language matters as requested, the editors' addition did focus on language policies.

The instances of editorial work analyzed here thus beg the question: why would the magazine editors tone down and partly disallow the articles they themselves chose to publish? A closer look at the magazine issues published in the 1960s and 1970s reveals how disclaimers operate as metatextual commentaries meant to manage the unspoken and the unspeakable. The first disclaimer analyzed here sought to justify a silence, explaining why an article about 1967 Israel omitted any mention of the major war in which the country was involved that year. The second disclaimer aimed to warn readers that, from the editors' perspective, the expected neutrality of Esperanto should not stop its readers from fighting imperialism and social justice—a fight that should draw on linguistic justice as an entryway to address broader issues. The third disclaimer—the one preceding Dašgupto's article—attempted to detach the magazine from the contributor's controversial viewpoint.

While inviting the Third World to *Kontakto's* pages, editors were still committed to neutralizing the political, and downplaying animosities between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani Esperanto speakers. Rather than outright rejecting contributions that challenged Esperanto's neutrality, the editors made use of their editorial prerogatives to control speech and silence controversies, ensuring that the Esperanto-speaking community would remain a beacon of solidarity and understanding amid a tripartite, conflict-laden Cold War background.

Where does the agency of silence come from?

In establishing the limits of the unspoken and the unspeakable, the editorial disclaimers at *Kontakto* made silences more evident. Maul's disclaimer to his own article recognized that, in publishing certain critiques of Israel, the magazine was pushing the boundaries of Esperanto's neutrality, while also conceding that there was a limit to how far these boundaries could be stretched. Ulrih Lins, Simos Milojevič, and Hans Cajlinger's editorial preface (1972b) sought to open a new era in the magazine's history, in which contributors would more openly engage with political issues—but this was an engagement that had to be announced in advance, in a partly radical, partly apologetic tone. In turn, Ulrih Lins, Simos Milojevič, and Hans Cajlinger's disclaimer (1972a) to Dašgupto's article on Bangladesh acknowledged that the author had gone too far—the editors accepted to publish the author's perspective, but by disavowing its content. In silencing controversies, at times editorial work resembles censorial work.

Rather than the absence of speech, silences are an intrinsic part of the very possibility of speech (Foucault, 1978, 27). Along these lines, as Bayly (2019) reminds us, there is more to a silence than the explicit power of a censor to control or extinguish speech. In her ethnography of people's responses to governmental iconography in late socialist Hanoi, Bayly (2019) explains that her Vietnamese interlocutors systematically refrain from talking about street posters promoting the Communist Party because they are indifferent to them. As they perceive these posters' content as disengaging, with dull messages and alienating cartoonish imagery, far from originating in fear of voicing criticism, their agentive silence is a deliberate form of reinforcing their dignified position as educated citizens who show no interest in demeaning forms of state communication.

Examining another ethnographic case in which customary silences gain ground in the absence of explicit coercion, Sheriff (2000) discusses how working-class people in a favela in 1990s Rio de Janeiro remain silent about racism. She explains that, overall, middle-class white people do not talk about racism because they think it is no longer existent. Meanwhile, people from the predominantly black working classes avoid talking

about racism and their experiences of it out of shame. Referring to this as cultural censorship, Sheriff stresses that, unlike conventional state censorship and self-censorship, the form of silence behind cultural censorship is historically rooted and customary. As such, the latter does not rely on obvious and explicit forms of enforcement, and calls into question the idea that censorship is an exclusive prerogative of the state and other powerful institutions.

Such perspectives have broadened anthropology's understanding of silencing and censorship, going beyond the conventional approaches of the powerful oppressing the powerless. Yet, for the purposes of our discussion, the most striking contribution of this bibliography is how Bayly and Sheriff underline a form of silencing that is customary and agentive.

Reaching back to *Kontakto*, the editors' practice of featuring tourist sites in China, youth volunteering in “developing countries,” and language policies in the Organization of African Unity while partly silencing wars and their controversies through editorial disclaimers blurs the distinction between editorial and censorial work (Schimpfössl et al., 2020). If at first glance the magazine editors could be pointed to as those making decisions regarding content curation, Maul's disclaimer prefacing his own article, as well as Lins, Milojević, and Cajlinger's preface to the magazine issue they curated, seem to evince a sense of forced—although partial—compliance to principles that exceed their will: in Maul's words, he “cannot talk” about the political situation in Israel but is “certainly allowed” to report on the country's tourist sites (Maul, 1967b, 9). In generically ascribing these permissions and prohibitions to the neutrality-laden “principles of TEJO” or the principles of “our dear language,” these disclaimers imply that the silences on certain topics were enforced from above.

At the same time, my conversations and semi-structured interviews with the magazine's editors and contributors suggest the absence of actors (institutional and/or human) overseeing the editors. The TEJO board of directors had a say on who would become *Kontakto*'s editors, but the latter were free to work unsupervised upon taking up the magazine's editorship. In one of my interviews, when explaining to me (in Esperanto) his role in the early years of the magazine, Humphrey Tonkin jestingly stated: “many times I wondered if the directors of TEJO even read the magazine at all.” If the instruction to silence or downplay certain themes came from neither the editors nor the directors of the Esperanto organization responsible for *Kontakto*, then where did it come from? The ethnographers above, as well as scholars associated with New Censorship Theory (see Bunn, 2015; Freshwater, 2004), invite us to think of agents of censorship beyond the framework of the state. I, in turn, argue for expanding these scholarly debates by examining the enforcement of censorship beyond identifiable human actors.

In line with how Irvine and Gal (2000) place erasure as one of the core semiotic mechanisms driving language ideologies, the editorial work behind *Kontakto* involved attempts from the editors to erase written uses of Esperanto that they deemed “non-neutral” or aligned with the First or Second Worlds. To follow the principles of TEJO—tasked with “creating international friendship and understanding among young people” (“krei internacian amikecon kaj interkompreniĝon inter la junularo,” Maitzen, 1969, 4)—included fostering a post-political, “neutral” univocality and circumventing controversies. This entailed erasing everything that could oppose the representation of the magazine as a respectful international forum for the Esperanto-speaking youth.

This language ideology—which came to nurture the principles of TEJO—emerges, ultimately, as the source pointing to which themes and forms of language use should be avoided. Rather than acting as censors, editors were also subject to this language ideology and, once responsible for ensuring the proper functioning of Esperanto print media, were tasked with safeguarding this perception of the language as neutral and international.

Silencing speech as a speech-producing mechanism

Proposing to distinguish between censorship and legitimate silence, Candea (2019) defines censorship as the producer of silences perceived as illegitimate or unacceptable. Even though this proposed definition only partly covers self-censorship, it helps raise the question as to what extent the functioning of language ideologies that I analyze here can be labeled censorship. After all, overly stretching the applicability of the concept risks turning censorship into an empty signifier.

Such a risk is aptly considered in Mazzarella and Kaur's approach (2009) to cultural regulation (Post, 1998; Thompson, 1997). Moving away from censorship as an exclusive prerogative of state-sanctioned institutions, Mazzarella and Kaur address censorship as one among several forms of cultural regulation. Looking at the regulation of intimate scenes in 1990s Indian cinema, they examine how the Indian state censored movies with "excessive" kiss scenes, while viewers who frown upon such scenes boycotted these movies. Along these lines, both the state censors' censorship and the viewers' boycott qualify as practices of cultural regulation, with censorship pointing mostly to institutionalized and legalistic forms of regulation.

Discussing non-state censorship from a different standpoint, Butler (1997, 1998) proposes foreclosure as a more appropriate term to refer to implicit forms of censorship. As "a kind of unofficial censorship or primary restriction in speech" (Butler, 1997, 41), foreclosure encompasses the "implicit operations of power that rule out in unspoken"—or, I would also add, spoken—"ways that will remain unspeakable" (1997, 130). Regardless of the term we choose—censorship, cultural regulation, or foreclosure—an analysis of *Kontakto* highlights how silences, caveats, prefaces, and disclaimers limit the domain of the speakable—but, in doing so, they also produce it. Constraining undesired speech helps shape a particular register (Agha, 2007) that frames what is perceived as acceptable speech.

Accordingly, the language ideology that constitutes and constantly reinforces Esperanto's neutrality and internationality is produced through a set of foreclosures, making it possible for some exchanges to take place in Esperanto on the condition that other exchanges are foreclosed. Hence, practices such as inviting certain contributions, prefacing controversial content with editorial prefaces and disclaimers, and proposing uncontroversial solutions to world problems help define which world affairs will come to constitute talking points for the Esperanto youth. In setting the boundaries of the debate in the print media, editorial work—here perceived as craftsmanship (Boyer, 2003)—turns censorship into a productive form of power: in engendering spaces for acceptable speech to flow, these practices also engender vocabulary development in a constructed language that, when created, had no words to refer to Bangladesh, Israel, or crop rotation. As such, censorial work operates in line with the production and reinforcement of language ideologies.

Emphasizing the implicit functioning of censorship, Butler asserts that "when we cannot tell whether or not speech is censorious, whether it is the vehicle for censorship, that is precisely the occasion in which it works its way unwittingly" (1998, 250). Therefore, it is not only because of Zamenhof's statements that its speakers adhere to neutral and international uses of the language. Rather, the language ideology sustaining Esperanto is what it is because the solution to world hunger depends on advanced farming techniques, because problems in the Third World can be solved by young Western European volunteers, and because language issues are a key aspect of the *modus operandi* of the Organization of African Unity and of the independence of Bangladesh. It is due to such ordinary uses of the language that Esperanto comes to sound, look, feel, and read in certain ways. As *Kontakto*'s particular attention to the Third World turned neutrality into a speech-producing mechanism, silences became speech, as the former say something about a language ideology and its process of becoming.

Final remarks: Language ideologies and/as censorship

By unpacking how an Esperanto youth magazine engaged with world affairs in the Cold War period, this article explored one aspect that is common to language ideologies and censorship, namely, the ways in which everyday language use reinforces and challenges assumptions about how ordinary communication should take place. An analysis of the editorial work behind *Kontakto* scrutinized the experimental practices of Esperanto youth media in their quest for ensuring Esperanto's neutrality and internationality by actively seeking to engage with Third World affairs amid the geopolitical clashes between the First and Second Worlds.

As the Third World was invited to join the international Esperanto-medium youth forum, political matters beyond Euro-America gained ground in the pages of the magazine. Yet, for this Third-Worldist approach to work in line with the language ideology behind Esperanto, such increasing internationality needed to work in tandem with a certain operationalization of neutrality. Accordingly, avoiding animosities and ensuring the unity of the Esperanto-speaking community required neutralizing certain political aspects of world affairs. In reporting the world's social problems by regretting the problems per se without recognizing their institutional and/or human perpetrators, this approach sought to sanitize discourses and silence controversies, thus welcoming the Third World to debate in post-political—rather than post-colonial—terms.

The editorial work that put forward this approach involved operationalizing right and wrong ways of language use, identifying terms that could and could not be used (such as “linguistic,” rather than “political imperialism”), and establishing which talking points were legitimate and worthy of discussion. As other ethnographers (such as Agha, 2007; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Jaffe, 1996; Woolard, 2016) have shown, language ideologies can help establish the “right” spelling of words as much as consolidate the preferable vocabulary and forms of expression that give character to a language. Likewise, censorship, cultural regulation, and foreclosures can implicitly help establish which themes can be effectively discussed and which approaches are recognized as legitimate, acceptable speech. Along these lines, erasures (Irvine & Gal, 2000) seem to operate alongside foreclosures (Butler, 1997) in setting the limits of the speakable at the grassroots level, beyond the framework of state-led prerogatives (Bayly, 2019; Sheriff, 2000). Fully appreciating the editorial work at hand requires examining how erasure processes of language ideologies and censorial practices are jointly operationalized.

Constructed languages provide us with a prime entryway to discuss the links between language ideologies and censorship because such languages are created with a purpose. As I examined here, even though Esperanto can be potentially used on any occasion, with vocabulary developed enough to cover any topic, certain talking points—for instance, colonialist, xenophobic, or divisive themes—are not perceived as suitable for discussion in this language. Looking at these issues beyond Esperanto, the Eskayan language—created in the early-twentieth-century Philippines—was constructed as a reaction to colonialism and was meant to be a language superior to Spanish and English. Consequently, any use of Eskayan that compares it to the colonizers' languages or openly borrows vocabulary from them without adapting these loanwords is frowned upon (Kelly, 2022). Relatedly, but from a fictional perspective, George Orwell's Newspeak was designed within the scope of the totalitarian setting of the novel *1984* (Orwell, 1949) to limit people's ability to articulate subversive concepts. As such, both Ingsoc's language ideology sustaining Newspeak and print media in the language were meant to constrict human thought by linguistically narrowing the semantic space of language itself (Blakemore, 1984). Making these three constructed languages—Esperanto, Eskayan, and Newspeak—function according to their purposes entails practices that foreclose communication possibilities in terms of language use and debated content.

Even though attempts to make languages favor certain forms of expression may appear more explicitly in the case of constructed languages, the foreclosures that are brought about by language ideologies and that are in line with censorship practices are also pervasive in other languages. In this sense, Alim and Smitherman (2012) analyze occasions when Black English speakers in the United States choose to switch registers and use a “White voice” when speaking on the phone to avoid displays of racism from their interlocutors. Similarly, reaching back to the Cold War period, Pavlenko (2003) explores how young people from Poland, Romania, and other countries on the fringe of the Soviet Union were subject to the compulsory learning of Russian at schools, but they associated this language with oppression and, therefore, resisted learning military vocabulary and reading romanticized biographies of Soviet communist leaders in Russian.

Taking the proposed framework into account and recognizing language ideologies as mechanisms prone to prompting certain talking points over others encourages us to consider the possible relations between/of language ideologies and/as censorship: like the latter, the former trigger communication as much as silences, via practices that (re)produce certain perceptions of what a language should do and what should be done in a language.

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ENDNOTES

¹ His legal name is Probal Dasgupta, with Probal Dašgupto being his penname in Esperanto.

² All translations into English are mine.

³ Their legal names are, respectively, Ulrich Lins, Simo Milojević, and Hans Zeilinger.

⁴ My use of geopolitical Cold War terminology throughout the article—with tropes such as *First*, *Second*, and *Third Worlds*, as well as *industrialized*, *developing*, and *developed countries*—does not mean to endorse such divisions of the world, but rather to echo the emic terms that prevailed in the magazine in the 1960s–1970s.

⁵ Even though prevalent among the language's speakers and activists, this strategy to advocate for Esperanto has not always been perceived as appealing to non-Esperanto speakers, as scholarship on the workers' Esperanto movement attests (Karlander, 2020; Konishi, 2013; Lins, 2016; O'Keeffe, 2021).

⁶ Then an undergraduate student, Dašgupto would later enroll in a PhD in the United States and become a Professor of Linguistics in India, a member of the Academy of Esperanto (since 1983), and the president of UEA (2007–2013).

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