



Migrationspädagogische Zweitsprachdidaktik

**Linguizismuskritische
(Zweitsprach-)Didaktik**

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Kamila Bonk¹, Gizem Evin Dağ¹, M Knappik² & Viviana Sánchez Linz¹

Affiliation: ¹Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany, ²Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany

Email: kbonk@uni-wuppertal.de; dag@uni-wuppertal.de; m.knappik@uni-goettingen.de; viviana.sanchez_linz@uni-wuppertal.de

"Well, I don't know if that's just me." The (non-)sayability of experiences of linguisticism as a result of epistemic violence

Abstract English

This article deals with the (non-)sayability of experiences of linguisticism by teachers with a transnational family history. We explore this phenomenon through an in-depth analysis of an interview sequence showing the exploration and co-construction of a space in which talking about experiences of linguisticism begins to seem possible, albeit tentatively. Drawing on a theoretical framework of feminist and decolonial perspectives, we interpret this phenomenon as a result of epistemic violence.

Keywords: *linguicism, experiences of linguisticism, teachers, sayability, epistemic violence*

Abstract German

In diesem Beitrag geht es um die (Nicht-)Besprechbarkeit von Linguizismuserfahrungen von Lehrkräften mit sog. internationaler Familiengeschichte. In der Analyse einer Interviewsequenz zeigt sich, wie ein Raum erkundet und hergestellt wird, in dem eine Annäherung an das Besprechbarmachen von Linguizismuserfahrungen stattfindet. Dieses Geschehen interpretieren wir als Resultat epistemischer Gewalt.

Schlagwörter: *Linguizismus, Linguizismuserfahrungen, Lehrkräfte, Besprechbarkeit, epistemische Gewalt*

1. Introduction

Recently, research on (racism-related) linguisticism (Dirim, 2010)¹ has increasingly turned to the subject perspectives of people who experience linguisticism (Ayten, 2024; Corona & Block, 2020; Cushing, 2023; Dağ & Knappik, 2024; Fallas-Escobar, 2024; Rühlmann, 2023). However, there seems to be difficulty for research subjects to address and interpret these experiences as linguisticism. It is mostly the researchers who interpret the reported experiences as experiences of linguisticism and classify them as experiences of racism, rarely the research subjects themselves.

Experiences of linguisticism are most clearly articulated as experiences of violence by research subjects who, due to self-positioning as Black or a person of colour (Rühlmann, 2023) or as a strongly institutionally marginalized teacher, namely as a teacher of heritage language (Ayten, 2024), never had the opportunity to follow a 'promise' of white adjacency through internalized (self-) disciplining, a self-linguicization (Dağ & Knappik 2024, p. 98); and it is only in autoethnographies written by researchers on linguisticism (de Quadros, 2023; Zhang-Wu & Goodman, 2025a) that research subjects name these experiences as linguisticism. Given how difficult it is to speak about racism, especially in educational contexts (Doğmuş & Steinbach, 2024), it seems plausible that linguisticism may be similarly hard to articulate. This can be particularly true for teachers who operate within a linguisticist system. Thus, in this article, we explore to what extent and in what ways experiences of linguisticism are (non-)sayable for teachers with a transnational family history.

¹ In this article, we decided to use İnci Dirim's (2010) definition of linguisticism as a form of racism. Whether the German term *Linguizismus* (linguicism) is precise enough to convey the specific meaning intended by Dirim (2010) is an ongoing and very productive discussion within the German-speaking scientific community for racism-related linguisticism research. In particular, when participating in English-medium scientific discourse, the term 'linguicism' is usually associated with Skuttnab-Kangas' (1988) wider definition of linguisticism, which also includes forms of discrimination, such as the connection with classism or ableism. It is important to keep in mind that language-related discrimination exists in these dimensions as well, with all its violent consequences for the people affected by it. We need further disciplinary and interdisciplinary terminological work and research to gain both a broader and a more specific understanding of linguisticism as a whole and of its different forms.

There is also the possibility of using Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa's (2023) English term, 'raciolinguistic'. For this article, we decided to use the term 'linguicism' in Dirim's (2010) sense and to enrich it with references to Flores and Rosa's work, as this article will be published in a mostly German-medium journal. However, we do not consider our use of the term definite or ultimately valid, but rather as the result of our terminological considerations at this time. We would like to express our gratitude for the very rich and helpful discussions with Kay Busch and our colleagues from the network Linguicism in (Language) Education. Our conversations have already enriched this article greatly.

We suggest a theoretical framework drawing on feminist and decolonial theories of epistemic violence (Brunner, 2020; Fricker, 2007; Spivak, 1988) to analyse the phenomenon of (non-)sayability. In the following, we first lay out this framework. In the methods section, we address the specific interview situation in which the interviewer and interviewee share certain experiences but belong to different status groups, and reflect on this situation with regard to the extent to which it can open up a space for discussing potentially shared experiences. We analyse an interview sequence and then discuss it from the perspective of epistemic violence. In our conclusion, we formulate the possibilities and limitations of making experiences of linguisticism sayable in the context of research.

2. Epistemic violence as a theoretical framework for analysing the phenomenon of the (non-)sayability of experiences of linguisticism

Epistemic violence is a concept that has been developed in feminist and decolonial theorizing.² It “makes connections between knowledge, violence and domination recognizable, nameable and plausible on a global scale” (Brunner, 2020, p. 12). Epistemic violence does not refer to physical violence, but to the violence that results when bodies of knowledge are erased or marginalized. As a result, the only bodies of knowledge available for self-interpretation are those of people who have occupied powerful positions for centuries and whose knowledge legitimizes this powerful position. Thus, violence here is understood in a broad sense. However, the concept of epistemic violence also includes the fact that the erasure or marginalization of these bodies of knowledge is a result of physical violence: Ramón Grosfoguel (2013) names four genocides in the early phase of colonialism, each of which was accompanied by erasure of the knowledge of the persecuted and murdered people. Grosfoguel therefore uses the wording ‘genocide’ or ‘epistemicide’ in order to show the close connection of genocide with epistemicide.

² The history of the term (see Brunner, 2020, pp. 77–146) is complex and wide-ranging, especially since the intertwining of power relations and knowledge production expressed in the term ‘epistemic violence’ has been addressed by many authors without necessarily always being referred to as epistemic violence. In postcolonial theory, this relationship was comprehensively analysed by Edward Said (1978) as the construction of the Orient as the Other of the West to legitimize its continual subjugation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) further developed the concept of epistemic violence in feminist postcolonial discourse by working out the double exclusion of female Indian subjects from both the colonial patriarchal discourse of the British Empire and the patriarchal Hindu discourse.

To lay out our framework, we present some selected terms that Claudia Brunner (2020) groups under the term ‘epistemic violence’: hermeneutical marginalization, hermeneutical injustice, hermeneutical injustice (Fricker, 2007), and the term ‘epistemic violence’ itself. Miranda Fricker (2007) traces how the term ‘sexual harassment’ first had to be found in order to make women's experiences of sexual harassment nameable and discussable—for example, with the authorities when it came to claiming unemployment benefits after resigning because of sexual harassment. Fricker shows that this difficulty in finding words for an injustice and then achieving understanding from others is the result of long-lasting hermeneutical marginalization—i.e. an exclusion from participation in processes of social meaning production due to the marginalization of one's own group. If this participation is denied, there are fewer words for one's own experiences, less collective knowledge about them, and it becomes more difficult to make one's own experience comprehensible to oneself and to others. With the term ‘testimonial injustice’, Fricker describes a situation in which people who give testimony to the injustice they have suffered are often not believed, which Fricker sees as a direct consequence of hermeneutical marginalization. As a result, the experience of those who give testimony but are not heard continues to be excluded from the production of social meaning, and it becomes even more difficult for the speakers to interpret their situation and make it comprehensible. Overall, Fricker refers to this phenomenon as epistemic injustice.

From the perspective of decolonial and feminist theory formation, hermeneutical marginalization can be seen as the result of epistemic violence. By locating the process of hermeneutical marginalization in the long-lasting context of colonialism and ongoing coloniality, it becomes possible to grasp the historical and systematic dimensions of the relations of power and violence that structure this process, as well as the mechanisms that support it. For Brunner (2020, p. 37 ff.), epistemic violence can be located on three levels: on the macro level of the coloniality of power, on the meso level of the coloniality of knowledge, and on the micro level of the coloniality of being. These three levels interlock: when people are affected by epistemic violence at the micro level, in that their speaking is not heard and their knowledge is not recognized, they are indeed affected as human beings; however, the mechanism of action of epistemic violence goes far beyond the individual level, as it is the consequence of certain knowledge productions and

distributions that have been produced and continue to be produced locally as well as globally and given power over centuries. Brunner states:

What is not said, what is said but not heard, what is heard but not understood, what is understood but not recognized are recurring articulations of epistemic violence that can by no means be justified solely at the micro level, but which become effective precisely there, in people's concrete experiences (Brunner, 2020, p. 278, transl. by the authors).

This enables us to analyse the conditions of interpretability and sayability not only in their subject-related dimension (i.e. at a micro level), but also in its connection with the question of which bodies of knowledge are authorized and distributed and by whom (i.e. at a meso level), and this, in turn, in connection with the consideration of global power relations (i.e. at a macro level). Ann Phoenix's (2024) concept of racialized haunting describes precisely this charging of contemporary experience through the history of racism, a charging that can already be felt before it can be rationally grasped and interpreted.

3. Objectives and methodological approach

The data on which this work is based consist of 14 guided interviews that were conducted as part of Gizem Evin Dağ's Master's thesis. Dağ investigated the extent to which teachers with a transnational family history use or do not use their language(s) in schools. As part of the research project "Linguizismus. Macht. Schule." ("Linguicism. Force/Makes. School.") (2024–2025, funded by FORIS-BUW), the interviews were re-analysed with regard to the teachers' experiences of linguisticism. Although linguisticism was not explicitly asked about in the interviews, the participants addressed corresponding experiences, which is why the re-analysis deliberately focuses on this.

The participants in the study were selected using a snowball system in which teachers with a transnational family history were specifically addressed. The interviewer's name was disclosed from the outset, and during preliminary discussions she also referred to herself using the label of 'having a transnational family history'. The study sample was made up exclusively of female participants.

This resulted in an interview situation in which the interviewer and interviewees shared a presumed common experiential space, such as similar linguistic repertoires and associated similar experiences. However, this is in tension with the roles in the research setting and the resulting hierarchical relationships—the interviewer as academic researcher and the interviewee in the role of research participant.

The following sequence (chap. 4) was selected because it reveals central themes of our research question in a condensed form, the analysis of which not only provides specific insights into the sayability of experiences of violence but also contributed significantly to the development of the research question. The selected sequence is located at the end of an interview and begins with an impulse in the form of a word cloud. The cloud contained different terms depicted in different colours (e.g. red, green, blue), as well as groups of terms in the form of small mind maps (e.g. school: staff, headteacher, pupils, work, professionalism) in a smaller font. The coloured markings of the terms as well as their arrangement were the work of the interviewer. Through the selection, arrangement and colour choice of the terms in the word cloud, the interviewer provided targeted impulses that brought certain words to the fore and guided the interviewee, which is why they cannot be interpreted as neutral. At the same time, the interviewee had enough leeway to set her own priorities and contribute individual associations.

In line with our interest in the extent to which experiences of linguisticism are or become (non-)sayable, we paid particular attention in the analysis to the co-construction of spaces of sayability through the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. We thus locate our approach in an interactional/performative model (Frost, 2011). Characteristic of this approach is the consideration of both the content and the discursive level of what is said—i.e. the narrated as well as the narrative. Against the background of the perspective of epistemic violence and the resulting hermeneutical marginalization and the danger of testimonial injustice or the facilitation of testimonial justice (Fricker, 2007), we enriched this approach with an awareness of the fact that things may not be told or interpreted, or only with difficulty. It was therefore of particular interest to us where incipient possibilities of being able to talk about experiences of linguisticism become apparent, and what characterizes them. We therefore paid attention to how the narrative was embedded and framed discursively and how the interviewer and interviewee may have jointly created spaces of sayability in their interaction.

In this context, we repeatedly reflected on the positionality of the interviewer and the (self-)positioning of the interviewer and interviewees and interpreted this within and across positions in the research group (Wagner & Akbaba, 2024).

4. Analysis

The results of the interview study by Gizem Evin Dağ point to the diverse experiences of linguisticism of teachers with a transnational family history, particularly in the form of practices of de-recognition, (self-)linguicization³ and the reproduction of language-related power relations in the school context. In the following interview extracts (4.1-4.3), language biographical experiences and the use of different languages in everyday school life were discussed. The participants were asked to describe specific situations with school actors in which they (do not) use their language of origin. The participants were then invited to comment on a migration policy statement. As stated above, the interview was concluded with a visual stimulus in the form of a word cloud, which served as a conversation starter to enable a final reflection on the interview. The following excerpt is taken from the final part of the interview.

4.1 Approaching the creation of a space of sayability

For better contextual comprehensibility, the selected sequence begins with a statement by the interviewee, immediately before the change of speakers.

L: [...] You somehow / can only somehow work with what comes onto the market. And there aren't that many teachers with a migration background, right? Well, I would say that it's still okay at my school. (.)

Imagine you are a pupil at a school where there is no one at all on the staff. You probably wouldn't feel so comfortable there either.

I: I see. I have brought a word cloud with some terms as an impulse. [...]

³ The term 'linguicization', which was developed by Gizem Evin Dağ, refers to the attribution of talking in a specific (often devalued) language, regardless of what language is actually spoken. This is often based on how a speaker is categorized or racialized based on their physical appearance. This attribution is often connected to the accusation of having transgressed a language ban. (Self-)linguicization refers to the internalization of this accusation, resulting in avoidance of speaking the language that is made the subject of transgression.

With the phrases "Imagine.../You [...] wouldn't feel...", the interviewee is turning towards the interviewer, including her in her talk. She introduces the listener to her own account of her remembered experience in a way such that the interviewer becomes a part of it. The teacher's addressing way of speaking enables the interviewee to approach the interviewer's experiential space without directly implying that she has experienced the situations described. Nevertheless, the hypothetical character of the "you" points to a vaguely expressed collectivity of the experience where the interviewer is counted in by the interviewee. Although the interview situation suggests a presumed shared educational and family biography—i.e. being a pupil, student, (prospective) teacher with a transnational family history—and the presumably existing knowledge base about experiences of violence by migrants in the educational institutional context, the (shared) experience remains unnamed here as an act of violence. Instead, a cautious, relativizing formulation is chosen for it ("You probably don't feel so comfortable there either"). Using "you" as a form of address makes the implied experience approachable and at the same time opens up the possibility of empathizing with the interviewee and thus finding a common space for negotiating what can be said. At the same time, not mentioning violence could indicate a questioning of its existence and thus its comprehensibility in the academic context which the listener represents.

The subsequent "I see" from the interviewer confirms the comprehensibility of what has just been said and at the same time makes it impossible to continue the description. With the "I see", everything seems to have been understood and said. Thus, for both people, the knowledge of violence remains located in the abstract, where they do not need to find words or clarify them. The (experience of) violence does not seem to have to be made explicit at this point; it is possibly tangible and therefore sufficiently comprehensible per se. In confirming the listener's capacity for approaching and cautiously talking about an experience of violence ("You are a pupil at a school where there is no one at all on the staff. You probably don't feel so comfortable there either"), the violence becomes visible on the horizon, although it cannot yet be clearly identified as such and cannot yet be discussed.

4.2 A person's own space of experience as a facilitator for sayability

In the further course of the interview, after exploring the word cloud for 40 seconds, the interviewee focuses on the term "headteacher", which appears as one of the sub-terms in the rather inconspicuous lower part of the word cloud, and comments on it:

L: Well, I don't know if it's just me, but when I read the word 'head teacher', the following thought comes to mind. That I somehow have the feeling, especially when talking to the headteacher, which can also be a very banal conversation in the corridor or something like that, that I have to speak really good, highly elaborate German, because / yes / not that they somehow think I can't speak German or something or that I can't express myself eloquently.

The interviewee links the word "head teacher" to the "thought" of having to "speak really good, highly elaborate German" in a direct conversation with them, combined with the "feeling" – which could also be interpreted as a concern – that "they somehow think" she cannot speak German or express herself "eloquently". However, before she puts this feeling into words, she disqualifies her statement from the outset by stating that this may be an individual case ("Well, I don't know if it's just me"). This not only invalidates the account of her violent experience, but also leaves open the question of whether this is a structural or an individual phenomenon. For although a mutual understanding between the interviewer and herself as people who share a (similar) space of experience seems possible, the interviewer in this context nevertheless also represents the academic perspective as a researcher and thus has a specific interest in what is said. The relativization thus works in two ways: on the one hand, as a kind of safeguard, so that the teacher can present her experiences of violence as purely individual thoughts and not as consequences of structural linguisticism if necessary—for instance when it might not be followed by confirmation from the interviewer; and on the other hand, this also reveals an insecurity about being able to talk about such experiences of violence in the school context at all. In this relativization, it also becomes clear that there could be uncertainty about the extent to which a shared space of experience exists and how far it can be sustained; however, it is also assumed that such a shared space of experience could exist.

After all, the interviewee is familiar with the interview context and knows that other teachers were interviewed who may have had similar experiences.

Nevertheless, after the interviewer's impulse and the resulting opening up of space for the teacher's experiences, the interviewee manages to focus on the consequences of the linguicism that she experienced at school. She particularly emphasizes her violent experiences, which emanate from the school management and reflect the hierarchy of power in the school. Here, the headteacher embodies the head of an institution of knowledge transfer and influences *what* must be spoken in school, but above all *how*, thereby exercising linguicism and thus violence. This leads to the teacher automatically putting herself under pressure to perform in perfect German when talking to the headteacher, even if it is only in a "very banal conversation in the corridor". The "I have to" underlines the teacher's lack of alternatives in such situations and the urgency to play by the rules.

4.3 Interpreting one's own experience as an experience of racism

The interviewee now begins to interpret and contextualize what she reported before:

L: Simply because, yes / that's perhaps also my own prejudiced thinking or that goes a bit in the direction of everyday racism. You're confronted a lot with the fact that you're not originally German or something. Even in little side comments, that the German you speak is great and so on. So it was always subliminal, these little remarks that probably led to me adopting this way of thinking myself [...]

The phrase "yes / that is perhaps also my own prejudiced thinking" initially reveals a denial and a turning of the violence she has suffered against herself, before it is categorized, albeit vaguely, as everyday racism. By using this expression, she picks up on a term used in academic and media discourse on racism, thereby rationalizing her feelings. This rationalization can also be seen as a way of creating sayability. Nevertheless, she formulates this process very cautiously through the "perhaps", the "that goes a bit in the direction of" and the "probably", which expresses how hard it is to explicitly talk about the phenomenon, despite proven knowledge on the discursive level. Linguicism as such, however, remains unnamed. In the following formulations ("You're

confronted a lot with the fact that you're not originally German or something. [...] that the German you speak is great [...]"), use of the pronoun "you" is noticeable, whereas before the speaker used the pronoun "I". This illustrates that she very much sees her experiences, which were previously relativized as individual cases, as part of a collective space of experience; at the same time, the interviewee is also moving away from presenting her experience as a personal experience. She then categorizes her experience—and presumably the reason for her feeling that she had to perform perfectly—as the result of her experiences with everyday racism ("these little remarks, which probably led to me adopting this kind of thinking myself"), because she anticipates a mindset that she herself has often experienced first-hand.

Overall, starting from the tentative creation of a space of sayability based on a presumably shared (violent) experience, the sequence shows that the teacher allows the interviewer an insight into her own space of experience with a focus on violence, which is not (yet) made explicit as such; nevertheless, it is made accessible through verbalization (attempts), even if still vague or relativizing, not only for the teacher, but also for the interviewer as the addressee, and finally classified as an experience of racism.

5. Discussion

Within the analysed sequence, two exploratory movements can be observed: on the one hand, the gradual and obstacle-laden creation of a space in which experiences of linguisticism can be discussed; on the other hand, the likewise tentative, very cautious classification of one's own experience as everyday racism, which is first turned into the opposite and turned against oneself. In this article, we focus on exactly these kinds of tentative, cautious, vague and searching ways of trying to make an experience sayable. Our aim is to describe the phenomenon of the not-easily-discussable and the ways in which it can be discussed. Such a goal faces the challenge of finding words for something that is not or is hardly ever named without imposing words on it. For this purpose, we use the perspective of epistemic violence (Brunner, 2020) as well as the concepts of hermeneutical marginalization, testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007) and racialized haunting (Phoenix, 2024).

In principle, the interview situation represents an opportunity to give testimony, and the circumstances during the sampling clearly show that there was a great need among the

group addressed to do this: more and more participants came forward who wanted to be interviewed. The name of the interviewer suggests to the participants that there is a shared experience between the interviewees and the interviewer of family migration and shared biographical points of contact with decapitalized languages. And yet, as exemplified in the analysed sequence, it becomes clear how difficult it is to find words for the injustice suffered and to create a space in which it can be said and discussed. From the perspective of epistemic violence, this phenomenon should not be seen as an individual difficulty, but as the result of the interaction of knowledge and power relations on the level of the colonality of being, knowledge and power—i.e. on a micro, a meso and a macro level.

In line with Flores and Rosa (2023), we can refer to the headteacher as a representation of the white listening subject. This means that the effect that he has on the teacher interviewed here is not simply located on an individual level: rather, the relationship between a white listening subject and a person who is disciplined by its expectations—and/or their internalization—has a history and unfolds such a violent power precisely because of this. On the one hand, at the micro level, are the history of the teacher's reported experiences at school and the history of her own educational biography; on the other hand, there is also, at the meso level, the history of how German educational institutions deal with languages in the context of migration, which is characterized by hierarchization and decapitalization (here, specifically, in the context of labour migration as a result of West Germany's international labour recruitment agreements from 1954 to 1973). The perspective of epistemic violence also suggests seeing these school and national language policies as an expression of global colonial power relations and locating migration in the context, and as a consequence of, ongoing colonality. This includes the superiorization of Western European languages, which has been produced over centuries in close interweaving with the superiorization of whiteness and the dehumanization of people in racial constructs (Knappik & Ayten, 2020). The urgent effort to perform in "highly elaborate German" is thus charged with the racialized haunting (Phoenix, 2024) of all these historical and contemporary violent conditions. It is haunted by the colonality of power.

Violence is evident in the disciplining of the interviewed teacher by this white listening subject; what we would like to interpret here as epistemic violence, however, is evident

above all in how difficult it is to put this violence into words and to interpret it as violence. The tentative way of speaking, the many small steps that search for and clarify the existence of a shared experiential space and that gradually create a space of sayability, points to the difficulty of finding words for the violent experience of linguisticism and being able to trust that the words will be heard, even by a counterpart in whom the existence of a shared experiential space can be assumed. This expresses the power of epistemic violence; it silences those affected, makes it difficult to find words for it and hinders its 'discovery', because that for which there are no words does not exist; it cannot be proven. As with Fricker (2007), this connection can be interpreted as the result of hermeneutical marginalization.

However, the power of epistemic violence is also inherently impotent because, despite the difficulty of finding words for it, it cannot be ignored: it can be felt and comprehended by those affected. What is effective must therefore exist. Thus, in this sequence, in the process of searching for or finding the shared experiential knowledge, the unspoken or vaguely said, yet comprehensible, can be interpreted as an indication of the existence of the violence and the implicit knowledge of those affected by it. We must therefore point to both the difficulty of interpreting violence as such and making it discussable and to the resistance that arises precisely from the fact that violence takes hold of the body and that it can be felt bodily. This physical level bears witness first; the subsequent process is a search for words and for a co-constructed space between interviewer and interviewee in which these words cannot only be said but also understood.

An obvious limitation of our interpretation of the (non-)sayability of experiences of linguisticism as a result of epistemic violence arises from the change in the research question in the context of the re-analysis of the interviews. Originally, we did not directly ask about experiences of linguisticism, but about the practice of (not) speaking languages other than German by teachers with a transnational family history. This limitation must be reflected in our considerations. However, it is questionable whether it is easier to talk about linguisticism if it is asked for directly, as this can be very stressful. By not asking directly, the interviewees could decide if and to what extent they wanted to share their experiences, which is an important aspect of research ethics.

The methodological framework of qualitative interviews, in particular the requirement to exercise restraint and to refrain from evaluative or confirmatory reactions (Kleemann,

Krähnke, & Matuschek, 2009), can have a limiting and potentially violent effect in certain interview situations. This was particularly evident in the interview situation analysed here: the interviewer only responded to the description of a potentially violent experience with "I see". Any further empathetic response—for example, by drawing on shared experience—was not envisaged due to the methodological requirements. This necessary restraint served to maintain scientific neutrality, but at the same time entailed a form of epistemic violence. In such situations, the absence of an empathetic response to shared knowledge or experiences can have the effect of distancing or lead to uncertainty and is exemplary of the ambivalence of a research practice in supposedly shared spaces of experience.

This makes it necessary to reflect critically on and further develop existing approaches to conducting interviews with regard to research situations with shared spaces of experience in order to avoid forms of epistemic violence and to enable a research practice that does justice to relational responsibility (Haraway, 1988).

6 Conclusion and outlook

In giving the title "Well, I don't know if it's just me", it becomes clear that addressing experiences of violence is accompanied by a deep ambivalence between individual insecurity and the need for collective understanding. In these exploratory movements, in the cautious creation of a space for sayability, epistemic violence becomes noticeable precisely in the unspoken, the unheard or the unacknowledged (see Brunner, 2020, p. 278). This dynamic indicates that violence is not only effective on the micro level of the individual, but is embedded in a powerful structure of school, academic and social knowledge and power order (meso and macro levels), and that all levels are intertwined. This becomes evident in the power of the white listening subject that is represented by the headteacher but cannot be explained by their persona alone.

For future research, these findings suggest the need to work out the micro, meso and macro levels of violence and their (non-)sayability to a greater extent and to interlink these levels analytically. The perspective of epistemic violence offers a promising analytical tool for this. Furthermore, the analysis points to the central importance of shared experiential knowledge for enabling interpretability and sayability. Where spaces of experience are shared—through migration, language, or other categories of difference

such as gender, for example—sayability can arise without always having to verbalize fully what needs to be shared. Not everything that is not named does not exist. Not everything that is not explained remains unheard. On the contrary: the unsaid can be felt and shared if spaces are available and/or created for it. For other constellations, however, the question arises as to how knowledge about violence can be communicated, shared or even recognized if these shared spaces of experience are missing. This is a central desideratum.

Finally, the observations lead to the demand to create spaces for raising awareness for linguisticism in teacher education and at the same time to think of professionalization as an ongoing form of raising awareness. Sayability must be understood as the goal of professional action, not its starting point, and is of particular importance for teacher training across all phases. Only when talking about violence is allowed and shared can the "loss of the ability to engage in dialogue" (Brunner, 2020, p. 278) be productively irritated and perhaps even be broken through.

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Biographies

Kamila Bonk works as a research assistant in the field of multilingualism in schools at the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Wuppertal. Her research and interests focus on linguistic (criticism) and multilingualism in schools.

Dr M Knappik works as a research assistant at the Centre for Global Migration Studies (CeMig) at Georg August University in Göttingen. Her current research and interests focus on racism and linguistic (criticism), migration futures, language acquisition, multilingualism and translanguaging, as well as ethnographic research methods.

Gizem Evin Dağ works as a research assistant in the Multilingualism in Schools department of the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Wuppertal. Her work focuses on racism and linguistic criticism in teacher training.

Viviana Sánchez Linz works as a research assistant in the Multilingualism in Schools department at the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Wuppertal. Her research and interests focus on language and migration, as well as criticism of racism and linguistic.