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# Language shaming: enacting linguistic subordination

PROFESSOR INGRID PILLER, PHD

[www.languageonthemove.org](http://www.languageonthemove.org)



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# “I’m not listening to you!”



“I went to the [healthcare provider] and then [they] told me that, hey you don’t have anything, you are not sick and you’re pretending to be sick, and from now on, we don’t want you to come down here, so please stop coming here.”

(Quoted from ABC News)

And he said, ‘Oh, you know we see this, a lot of this Haitian chest pain.’ And I said, ‘What do you mean by that?’ And he said, ‘Well, they come in and the tests are negative, and they have a different perception of pain than other people.’ He kind of wrote it off that way. I felt a little weird that it was written off that quickly. To write off the chest pain on a patient who is having trouble communicating because she’s using a phone interpreter. (Kenison et al., 2016, p. 3)



## Lack of “power to impose reception”

HOW ARE SOME SPEAKERS AND SOME  
WAYS OF SPEAKING MADE UNWORTHY  
OF BEING LISTENED TO?

# LOTE users as suspicious citizens



## Facing the test

**OLD TEST QUESTIONS:**

- What are the colours of the Australian Aboriginal flag?
- What happened in Australia on 1 January 1901?
- Who maintains peace and order in Australia?

**NEW TEST QUESTIONS:**

- Have you found employment?
- Is your spouse enrolled in English-language lessons?
- Are your children attending school?

## No citizenship for no-hopers

MUSLIM extremists, troublemakers and dole bludgers wanting to take advantage of Australia's generosity could soon be stopped in their

“The new test would aim to stop the problem of radical migrants who subscribe to sharia law and speak their own language at home from becoming Australians.”  
(*Courier Mail*)

# LOTE use = disorderly conduct



*‘Should a member use a language other than English without the leave of the assembly it will be ruled disorderly and the member will be required to withdraw the words.’*

(NT Parliament, in response to MP Bess Price’s request to be allowed to address the assembly in Warlpiri, Feb 2016)



## LOTE users as transgressors



### Further examples

- <http://www.languageonthemove.com/multilingual-prohibitions/>
- <http://www.languageonthemove.com/toiletology/>

# Criminalizing LOTE use

## NSW JAIL BAN OF ARABIC



- Prison visits have to be conducted in English
- Phone calls and letters must be in English

‘A principle concern has been that during visits [...] discussions being undertaken were not in English. They were in a foreign language, which in many cases is Arabic [...] While there is no known specific terrorist threat from inside our prisons, these inmates’ communications from prison have the potential to have a direct impact on national security and community safety.’ (Brad Hazzard)

‘So we want to try and limit that influence as best we can, jail is supposed to be about incarcerating [...] it’s not supposed to be about spreading the message of evil. (Peter Dutton)



# LOTE speakers as not belonging



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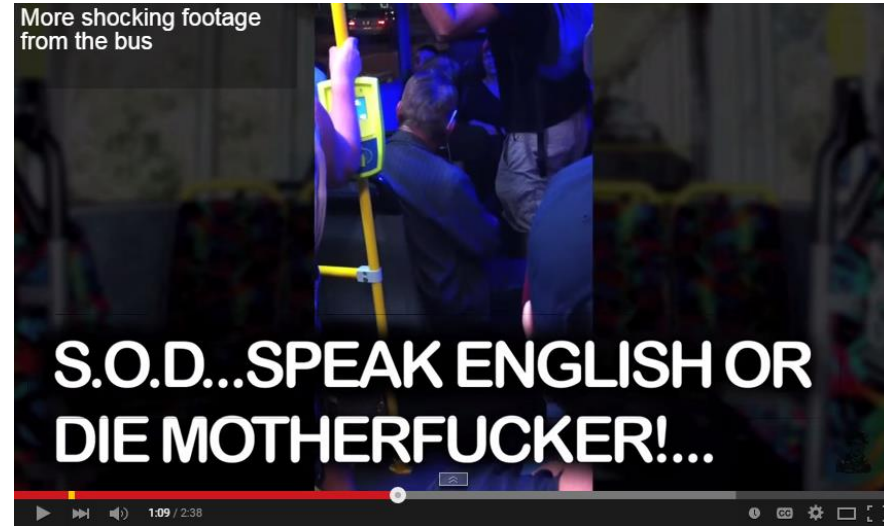
مقررات شامل همه است.  
استرالیا وطن شما نخواهد شد.

The provisions include  
everyone. Australia will  
not be your home.

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# LOTE shaming

“I start to take English class after a bus driver yelled at me when I lost count of stops. I ask, “What stop it is?” And he says, “Can you read?” I left the bus quickly, not knowing where I was. I walk home afraid in darkness. I start taking English class the next week. I say, I will not be embarrassed again.” (Burmese migrant in Kentucky; quoted in Nordquist, 2017, p. 15)





[CHORUS]

You always make us wait  
You're the ones we hate  
You can't communicate  
Speak English Or Die.

You don't know what I want  
You don't know what I need  
Why must I repeat myself  
Can't you fuckin' read?  
Nice fuckin' accents  
Why can't you speak like me  
What's that dot on you head,  
Do you use it to see??

(Stormtroopers of Death, "Speak  
English or Die")

You come into this country  
You can't get real jobs  
Boats and boats and boats of you  
Go home you fuckin' slobs  
Selling hot dogs on the corner  
Selling papers in the street  
Pushing, pulling, digging, sweating  
Where you come from must be beat

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# Language learning as personal responsibility





Eugen H. Stark,  
Schweizer

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INTEGRATION**



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Elaine Tejada,  
Modelle, Schauspieler und Musiker

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**DEUTCHLANDSTIFTUNG  
INTEGRATION**

Henri,  
Regisseur und DJ

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Sigrid Eksen,  
Niederländische Ministerin für  
Soziales, Familie, Kindertagesstätten und Immigration

**RAUS MIT DER SPRACHE.  
REIN INS LEBEN.**

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**Q: Why is there so little desire to learn German?**

**A: Many people are too lazy. [...] I hope the campaign motivates some people to attend a language school. All you have to do is go to the campaign's homepage. There's a great database and it's easy to choose a school.**

**Q: And that's enough?**

**A: You can't make it any easier than that. All we can do is get people to think and then we have to say: 'Ok, you've got to do the rest by yourself.'**





Aggi Ekren,  
Niederländische Ministerin für  
Soziales, Familie, Kindertagesstätten und Immigration

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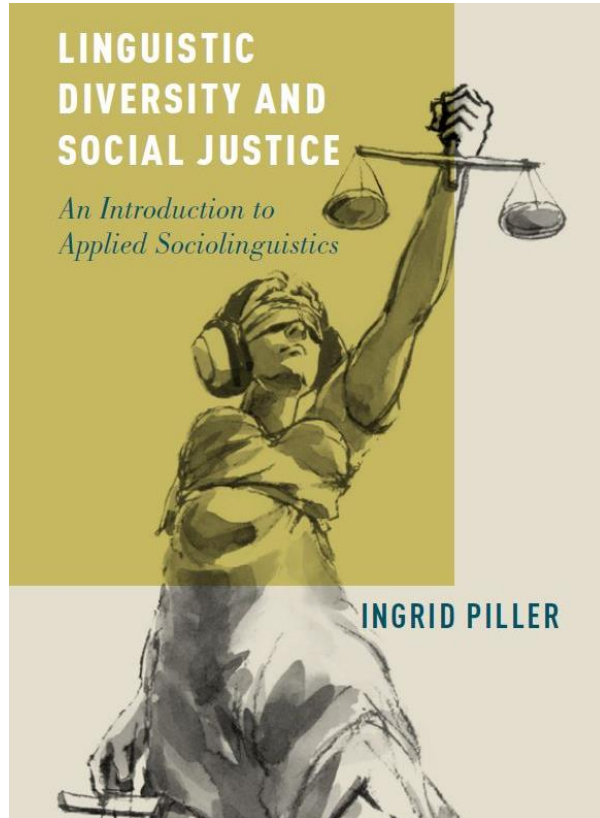
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# Linguistic subordination



## Ideologies of language shaming:

- Language repertoires as indices of legitimacy or illegitimacy
- Language repertoires as indices of moral worth
- Language learning as a matter of personal responsibility
- Language learning as a relatively easy and banal undertaking
- Failure to measure up to an imaginary linguistic norm as a sign of laziness or self-isolation
- Relatively static linguistic habitus of adults



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