Language and Identity in an Indian Diaspora: "Multiculturalism" and Ethno-linguistic Communities in Mauritius[1]

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1. Introduction

For quite some time South Asian diasporic populations have attracted the attention of researchers as instances of culture "transplanted" across the world. Earlier works typically compared South Asian diasporas with conditions "back home" on the Indian subcontinent and sought to determine processes of cultural retention and attenuation in this regard (Jayawardena 1966; Moore 1977; Schwartz 1967). More recent approaches to the South Asian diaspora have avoided the image of such populations as "extensions" of South Asia involved in trends of "acculturation" to new overseas environments. Rather than exclusively assessing manifestations of "Indian culture" as elements preexisting the migration, which are either eroded in a new environment or retained against pressures of "acculturation," such cultural manifestations are now understood to be the product of changing political circumstances in the diasporic locations. They can thus be seen as new cultural responses to such situations (Vertovec 1994; van der Veer and Vertovec 1991).

Also, "diaspora" is increasingly understood as a condition which not only exists by virtue of the displacement of a population, but as a conscious category, a form of ideological allegiance to what is now considered a "homeland." (Anderson 1994; Appadurai 1996), i.e. diasporas do not exist "objectively" on the basis of a documented historical case of migration, voluntary or involuntary, but through the labor of memory, and the conceptual transformation of places of departure into "homelands." Such newly

conceived "homelands" then function as a reference point for processes of self-definition vis-à-vis what are perceived as ethnic and social "others" in an overseas location. Therefore, the condition of diaspora is not merely a historical "fact," but a cultural category, which may consequently change over time.

The creation of diasporic communities significantly echoes some of the themes prominent in the scholarship on nationalism, notably the idea of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991). Benedict Anderson has analyzed the rise of anonymous national communities far transcending the range of face-to-face interaction and defined on the basis of an invented "common" past and origin. Similar to such nationalized imagined communities, the emergence of diasporic communities is contingent on the successful spread of particular *ideologies* of community and not solely on the fact that a population has shared origins in, say, a certain region of India.

In this essay I focus on language among South Asians in a diasporic location, Mauritius, for two reasons. First, language has often been considered as one of the "transplanted" cultural elements whose persistence may yield clues about the production of diasporic identity. Second, language plays a crucial role in contemporary theories of nationalism, most notably Anderson's account of the rise of national "imagined communities," and ethno-nationalism in turn plays a crucial role in the formation of diasporic communities in Mauritius. In this way, a look at language and communal identity among Mauritians of Indian origin provides insights both on "Indianness" in Mauritius and on the role of language in the emergence of diasporic communities.

2. Indo-Mauritian identity and language

Although a small Indian population existed in Mauritius during the French colonial period (1715–1810), the vast majority of Indo-Mauritians are descendants of indentured laborers brought from India to Mauritius under British rule after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire between 1834 and 1915 (Tinker 1974; Carter 1995). Over two thirds of the population of Mauritius of approx. 1.2 million are of Indian origin, other ethnic groups are the Creoles, Catholics of primarily African descent (28 %), Sino-Mauritians (2 %), and the even smaller but economically powerful Franco-Mauritian group. However, ethnic and religious divisions among the Indo-Mauritian majority are highly salient. Hindus and Muslims (52 % and 16 % of the total population, respectively) consider themselves separate communities. The Hindu group is subdivided into a large community of North

Indian, above all Bihari origin, and smaller Tamil, Telugu and Maratha groups.

Apart from religious differences, subgroups among the Indo-Mauritian population are also considered to be separate language-based communities. Interestingly, such distinctions are not made on the basis of the language regularly used for everyday interaction, which for nearly all Mauritians is French-lexicon Mauritian Creole. About a quarter of the population is also bilingual, Bhojpuri being the second language. However, knowledge and use of the Mauritian variety of Bhojpuri can be found among Hindus as well as Muslims, not only among those with ancestors from present-day Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, but also occasionally among Indo-Mauritians of Andhra origin. What is locally considered as evidence of membership in different linguistic groups are therefore not differences in vernacular language use, but allegiances to different "ancestral languages." Those "ancestral languages" are held to be the standard forms of modern Indian languages, such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Urdu, despite the fact that few, if any ancestors who migrated to Mauritius in the 19th century ever knew these languages. The vast majority of Indian immigrants were illiterate Bhojpuri speakers, though they also included speakers of dialectal varieties of what are today known as Marathi, Telugu and Tamil. However, the Mauritian state officially distinguishes between, for example "Hindi-speaking" and "Tamil-speaking" Indo-Mauritians. The "ancestral languages" referred to are never used for everyday communication, and are not well known by most people classified as members of such language-based communities, but are taught in schools on an ethnic basis and play an important role in religious practices. The affiliation of Indo-Mauritians with their "ancestral languages" developed in Mauritius *after* the migration of their ancestors from India.

The key to an understanding of the significance of Indian "ancestral languages" in Mauritius today lies in the state support for the teaching, propagation and celebration of these languages as markers of diasporic group identity. In this way, the Mauritian state apparatus, itself dominated by Indo-Mauritian Hindus, lends legitimacy and official sanction to communities based on the notion of "ancestral languages."

The state-assisted proliferation of such imagined language-based communities in Mauritius is the result of a particular policy of what might best be understood as a policy of "disciplinary multiculturalism", by which I mean that membership in one of such ethno-linguistic communities appears to be inevitable for Indo-Mauritians, for the state does not recognize "Mauritian" as such as a valid category of identification. Further, the state officially represents the support of ethno-linguistic communities built on the basis of "ancestral languages" as a means to control social disruptions in-

duced by rapid "development" through strengthening "culture" and "tradition". In this former plantation colony, a multiplication of ethno-linguistic identities has taken place in the context of the state valuation of multilingualism and cultural "diversity" in terms of institutional support for the teaching and cultivation of languages considered "ancestral." By officially assigning "ancestral languages" to groups in Mauritian society, the Mauritian state has actively encouraged the formation of ethno-linguistic communities built around the notion of Indian "ancestral languages." As a consequence of such institutional action, the Hindus within the group once known as "Indians" or "Indo-Mauritians," mostly using Mauritian Creole and to some extent Bhojpuri in their daily lives, have been officially subdivided into "Hindi-speakers," "Tamil-speakers," "Telugu-speakers" and "Marathi-speakers". In Mauritius, such "ancestral languages" are considered useful by the state for controlling the ambiguous social and political consequences of rapid industrial development, by upholding "tradition."

"Ancestral languages" as an ideological basis for ethno-linguistic group formation in Mauritius points to an alternative scenario of the role of language in the construction of communities. In particular, I would like to point out that community formation in the case discussed here does not rest on boundaries of communication as defined by the distribution of a "shared" linguistic medium or "national language," producing an imagined national community (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991). Rather, the relations between ethno-national group consciousness and the languages believed to provide a base for it, involve complex ideological and semiotic mediations (Irvine and Gal 2000). Languages are connected to ethno-national identities within the framework of linguistic ideologies and not because they "unite" people by providing a medium of communication (Hymes 1968; Irvine 1997; Silverstein 1997).

Communal identities among Indo-Mauritians, almost all speakers of French-lexicon Mauritian Creole, though a number of them are also speakers of a local variety of Bhojpuri, are above all focused on the idea of an "ancestral language." Within this section of the Mauritian population, ideologies of "ancestral languages" closely linked to religious nationalist ideas provide the ideological base for ethno-national group formation. However, the category "ancestral language" is highly polyvalent in Mauritius. There are two main understandings of the idea of "ancestral languages" among Indo-Mauritians, one being used to denote the language an ancestor who migrated from India to Mauritius in the 19th century is believed to have spoken. The other widespread interpretation of the idea of an "ancestral language," crucial for nationalist ideologies among Mauritians of Indian background, is the language of current ethno-religious identification. The confusion between these two conceptions of "ancestral languages" in Mau-

ritian discourses of identity, as well as in state practices of classification as evident in the census, education and the distribution of subsidies for religious organizations, is precisely what makes the ideology of ancestral languages so powerful for ethno-national consciousness in Mauritius. The fiction of the identity of the ancestors' language with modern standardized Indian languages is considered essential for ethno-national group identity. This is the case despite the fact that "ancestral languages", even though they are taught in government schools, are never used in daily life, and especially in the case of Tamil, Telugu and Marathi, hardly ever known by the people who claim them as their ethnic property. The Mauritian case discussed here demonstrates that instead of actual patterns of language use or the issue of "communication" through a "shared" language, ideological mediation provides the link between language and ethno-national identity.

3. The break-up of the category "Indo-Mauritian"

During most of the British colonial period in Mauritius the population was officially categorized and subdivided into three groups, the "Indo-Mauritians," "Sino-Mauritians," and the "General Population," comprised of everyone who did not belong to the other two categories, which de facto meant Creoles and Franco-Mauritians. Indo-Mauritians were known by the overall label of "Indians," despite their great heterogeneity as a group. However, the 20th century has seen a fragmentation of the category of "Indian" or "Indo-Mauritian," especially after the Second World War. The break-up of the ethnic category of "Indians" occurred against the background of trends towards religious communalism among Indians in Mauritius, and the introduction and cultivation of new "ancestral languages" played a crucial role in this process. In this way, the propagation of new Indian "ancestral languages" contributed to the creation of new Indian ethnic groups in Mauritius, for which the cultivation of an "ancestral language" emerged as one of the crucial mediating links to a diasporic "homeland" in South Asia.

Hindi had become established as a rallying issue of "Indian" identity in Mauritius in the first decades of the century. However, revivalist Hindu organizations, such as the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Maha Sabha were the main champions of Hindi, and Standard Hindi was above all cultivated in Hindu religious contexts and frequently taught in Hindu temples. Therefore, its role as an "ancestral language" for all Indians in Mauritius became problematic. Indo-Mauritian Muslims, who represent roughly 16% of the Mauritian population, already had a well-developed religious infrastructure and organization by the Second World War, spearheaded by wealthy Guja-

rati merchant families, who were also the first mosque builders in Mauritius (Kalla 1987). In a manner recalling similar trends of revitalization and mobilization among Hindus in Mauritius, Muslim missionaries regularly visited from the Indian subcontinent, and were received in Mauritius as bearers of religious purity and authenticity. After the Second World War, a deep political cleavage pitting the established Muslim elite against the leaders of an emerging Hindu political movement developed. On the level of party politics, this conflict also manifested itself through rivalry between the Hindu-dominated Labor Party, which was to emerge as the dominant political force in Mauritius until the 1980s and the Comité d'action musulman. Urdu, which was already taught in religious schools (*madrasas*) without state support, was now propagated by political leaders of Muslims in Mauritius as the "ancestral language". By the late 1940s the spokesmen of the Muslim community had already successfully pressured the colonial government to include Urdu as a language to be taught to Muslim children in government schools on the ground that Urdu was the "language of their ancestors"[2].

As voting rights were expanded in colonial Mauritius, enabling many Indo-Mauritians to vote in elections for the legislative assembly for the first time in 1948 after the revision of the constitution in 1947, the issue of the recognition of Indian "ancestral languages" and their institutionalization in the educational system of the colony became an important political issue. One of the foremost champions of "ancestral languages" was the Hindu politician and member of the legislative assembly Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (1900–1985), who at the time was "Liaison Officer" for the Education Department of the colony and later became the first prime minister of independent Mauritius. He had already organized an effective public protest when the then newly appointed Director of Education for the colony proposed to abolish the teaching of Indian languages altogether in a report published in 1941 (Ramyead 1985). The political pressure prompted the colonial government to expand the teaching of "ancestral languages" in state schools and to provide for the systematic training of Hindi and Urdu teachers at the island's new Teachers Training College with the help of

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[2]   In the 1970s and early 1980s an important movement in favor of Arabic as the "ancestral language" of Muslims, which hardly any "ancestors" from India would have known, was for a time so successful that a greater number of Muslims declared their "ancestral language" to be Arabic rather than Urdu in the 1983 census. The debate within the Mauritian Muslim community about the merits of Arabic versus Urdu as putative "ancestral languages" is closely linked to a competition between different South Asian traditions of Islam in Mauritius (Hollup 1996). These are locally represented by the Sunnat Jamaat, who are followers of the Bareilvi school, and the Tabliqi Jamaat, who are descendants of the reformist Deobandi tradition.

experts from India after 1950. This institutionalization of "ancestral languages," coupled with the prospect of new jobs for Indian language teachers in state schools and subsidies for Indian language teaching in temples and mosques at a time of widespread poverty and unemployment in Mauritius, unleashed a political dynamic throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in which additional claims for the recognition of Indian "ancestral languages" were made.

In the 1950s, the decision of the colonial government to revise its policy of subsidies for religious bodies by granting subsidies to non-Christian religious associations for the first time, prompted the foundation of a range of religious organizations among Indo-Mauritians in order to claim and distribute the subsidies to temples and mosques. This change of policy resulted in both a higher degree of religious organization and an increased organizational fragmentation especially among Hindus. Tamil, Telugu, and later also Marathi Hindu organizations were revived or newly established, all rejecting a subsumption of these ethno-linguistic labels under the larger category of "Hindu." This trend towards the organizational and ethnic break-up of the category "Hindu" went hand in hand with claims for Tamil, Telugu and Marathi as separate "ancestral languages" to be recognized and taught in state schools, in opposition to the category of Hindi, which had earlier been earmarked as the "ancestral language" of all "Hindus." Tamil, Telugu and Marathi Hindus, who, if they had studied an Indian language, would mostly have learned Hindi at the local temple or school, were now provided with their own "ancestral languages." Local varieties of these languages presumably spoken by ancestors had practically vanished by the 1950s and are extinct today. The question of the "ancestral quality" of these standardized languages is further complicated by widely acknowledged and long-standing patterns of intermarriage between rural Tamils and Telugus as well as between Marathis and supposedly "Hindi-speaking" North Indian Hindus. Further, although some Muslims of South Indian and possibly even Marathi background migrated to Mauritius in the 19th century (Carter and Govinden 1998), the ethno-linguistic categories have become exclusively Hindu so that it is impossible to identify a person as a Tamil, Telugu or Marathi Muslim in Mauritius today. Muslims of such backgrounds have been absorbed in the "Muslim community" of Mauritius, which is not defined by regional or ethnic origin, and their "ancestral language" is supposed to be Urdu.

Tamil temples are among the oldest temples in Mauritius. Most Indians in Mauritius during the French period (until 1810) appear to have been Tamils and in the 19th century a small Tamil merchant elite was well established in the capital Port-Louis. Tamil was even taught in some schools in Mauritius throughout the 19th century. Thereafter, evidence for a strongly

institutionalized "Tamil community" distinct from the "Hindus" fades and they appear as largely absorbed in the "Indian" and later the "Hindu community" of Mauritius. Tamils and Tamil associations did not play a prominent part in the Hindu mobilization effected by the Arya Samaj and its antagonist, the Sanatana Hindu Maha Sabha since the 1920s, although individuals of Tamil background participated in the newly emerging "Hindu" consciousness and also learned Hindi. On an official level, a separate "Tamil identity" became more evident after the foundation of the Hindu Maha Jana Sangham in 1944. But it is only after the foundation of the Tamil Temple Federation in 1952 in order to receive government subsidies for temples that a "Tamil community" became a political force separate from the majority, namely the North Indian, so-called "Hindi-speaking", Hindus. Activists associated with the two Tamil associations successfully lobbied for the recognition of Tamil as the "ancestral language" of the group and for its inclusion in the rapidly expanding program for teaching modern standardized Indian languages to students of Indian background in government schools. The ideological attachment to Tamil, seen as a central constitutive element of a Tamil identity in Mauritius despite the fact that only very few Mauritians of Tamil background know Tamil well enough to speak it fluently, is very intense in Mauritius. When in 1998 the Bank of Mauritius issued a new series of bank notes on which the details in Tamil were placed beneath those in Hindi, inverting the previous order, Tamil activists stormed the building of the Bank of Mauritius, staged demonstrations across the country and forced the government to dismiss the governor of the Bank of Mauritius and to withdraw the new series of bank notes.

The case of Telugu is similar to that of Tamil insofar as Telugu was recognized and institutionalized as an "ancestral language" after Hindi, and that Mauritians who identify as Telugus today would as "Hindus" previously only have had Hindi as an available "ancestral language". However, in contrast to Tamils, who can identify a long "Tamil" history in Mauritius, there is scant evidence of a distinct Telugu group separate from the "Indians" and later the "Hindus" in Mauritius before the Second World War. The Mauritius Andhra Maha Sabha, the recipient of government subsidies for temples, was only established in 1947, and it took longer than in the case of Tamil to set up an infrastructure for the teaching and learning of Telugu, whose spoken varieties are extinct in Mauritius, and whose standard variety is mastered only by very few individuals. In fact, the only Indian language that Mauritians of Telugu identification are likely to know and use today is Bhojpuri along with Mauritian Creole. A more widespread awareness of the Telugus as a group distinct from the North Indian or Bihari Hindus on the one hand and the Tamils on the other hand, has only caught on since the 1960s. A crucial event was the return of Pandit Ootoo (1913–1971), a Mau-

ritian of Telugu origin, from a 13-year stay in Andhra Pradesh in 1960. Pandit Ootoo had studied Telugu and Sanskrit in Andhra Pradesh and popularized regional forms of Hindu worship and festivities from Andhra Pradesh after his return to Mauritius. Among Telugus today, he is widely regarded as having established the Telugu Hindu tradition in Mauritius, which people consider had been "lost" earlier.

Finally, a separate Marathi identity distinct from the "Hindus" is an even more recent product of Mauritian history. The Mauritius Marathi Mandali Federation, another recipient of government subsidies for temples was only established in 1960, and Marathi as a separate "ancestral language" only institutionalized shortly before independence. Varieties of Marathi have long been abandoned in Mauritius, and their identification is unclear. According to one source, dialects of Konkani were actually spoken by early immigrants from the area of present-day Maharashtra (Mullo 1984: 65). Only very few Indo-Mauritians of Marathi identification know Marathi well, but an important number used to learn Hindi because Hindus originating from what is today Maharashtra often patronized Arya Samaj temples in Mauritius. The crystallization and semi-official recognition of a separate Marathi community in the 1960s represents the final step in the break-up of the category of "Indo-Mauritians" to date.

To sum up, the disintegration of the "Indian" or "Indo-Mauritian" community in Mauritius has proceeded in two major shifts. First, due to religious nationalism and the intense interaction with religious nationalist organizations and missionaries from the subcontinent, the split between Hindus and Muslims became so profound that "Indo-Mauritians" became either "Hindu" or "Muslim" by the 1940s. In everyday discourse the label "Indian" (*endien* in Creole) has become a synonym for Hindus, but is never applied to Muslims despite their Indian background. In a second step, in the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the "Hindu" community became further subdivided into "Hindus" as such, meaning Hindus of North Indian, mainly Bihari background, who are the great majority among "Hindus" in a wider sense and who are considered to be "Hindi-speaking," and the much smaller Tamil, Telugu and Marathi groups.

4. The Mauritian state and "ancestral languages"

Hindi is by far the most important and actively supported "ancestral language" in Mauritius. This is not only due to the numerical superiority of North Indian Hindus over Tamils, Telugus and Marathis as well as Muslims in Mauritius, but is above all a result of the dominant political position of

this ethnic group in Mauritius since independence. Every government since 1968 has been heavily dominated by "Hindi-speaking" Hindus, and they also hold most key positions in the state apparatus. All prime ministers since independence have been Bihari Hindus. Further, Hindi has been strongly promoted in Mauritius by transnationally operating Hindu nationalists, including the powerful Hindu nationalist RSS (Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad, who are well established in Mauritius. These groups have gained considerable influence over state policies, also in the field of education, through establishing a network of followers in the Hindu-dominated state apparatus up to the ministerial level. The promotion of Hindi has always been one of the most important political demands of these organizations in Mauritius.

In the vision of the Hindu nationalist advocates of Hindi as "ancestral language" of the Hindus of Mauritius, Hindi assumes an important role in concerns about religious and ethnic purity, which is sought to be maintained by links to an "ancestral culture" located elsewhere spatially and temporarily. Fears about the disappearance of Hindi are linked to fears about the disappearance of the Hindu religion and of the "Hindu community" as a distinct ethnic group. These apprehensions were played upon by the erstwhile Prime Minster of Mauritius in the electoral campaign of 1995, when the issue of the inclusion of Indian "ancestral languages," Hindi being by far the most important of them, as subjects to be relevant for the "ranking" in the Certificate of Primary Education exams, emerged as the main issue in the elections. According to this logic, the "protection" of Hindi equals the "protection" of Hinduism in Mauritius.

However, official discourse on the importance of "ancestral languages" also emphasizes a different theme. State support for Indian "ancestral languages" is presented as a commitment to a "multicultural" Mauritius, a diverse, "colorful" and tolerant society in which every ethnic group can obtain state support to cultivate its traditions. This perspective is greatly stressed in the promotion of Mauritius as a tourist destination and in presenting a harmonious image of Mauritian society to potential investors. What is passed over in these representations is the rigid ethnic compartmentalization this policy of identifying and sponsoring objectified "ancestral cultures" and "ancestral languages" imposes on Mauritian society and their entanglement in issues of political and ethnic conflict in Mauritius. In this way state support for "ancestral languages" can be described as a policy of "disciplinary multiculturalism." For example, the selection of five to six year old first grade students for instruction in a particular "ancestral language" in government schools is performed by school officials on the basis of the children's names only, without consulting their families. The first graders are made to study the "ancestral language" which in the school

officials' view corresponds to the ethno-religious identity they can infer from the children's names, also occasionally drawing on local knowledge of the ethnic identity of the families concerned. This compulsion to choose an ethno-religious identity poses a dilemma for students who do not want to identify as members of a particular ethnic group, to children of mixed marriages and others who might prefer to identify simply as "Mauritian," an option not available in this system. In practice it is also very difficult to have one's children study an "ancestral language" different from the one commonly associated with a family's known ethnic identity.

Also, official discourse on "ancestral languages" stresses their role in the "preservation" of "ancestral" cultural values, considered very important in order to mitigate the negative aspects of economic "development" in Mauritius.[3] The crucial point here is that much of the non-Indian population of Mauritius, especially the Catholic Creoles, most of whom are descendants of African slaves and for the most part monolingual Creole speakers, do not have any recognized claims to an "ancestral culture" or "ancestral languages." In the context of the policy of "disciplinary multiculturalism" described here, this situation leads to social and political disadvantages for the Creole ethnic group in tow ways. First, Creoles lack access to the elaborate infrastructure and administrative-political networks that come with each of the institutionalized Indian "ancestral cultures" and "ancestral languages," which not only provide jobs, but also function as important channels of political lobbying in contemporary Mauritius. Second, by not being able to claim an official "ancestral" culture and language, which are represented as having beneficial and protective effects in the face of "development," they are implicitly, and sometimes explicitly blamed for what are perceived as the negative aspects of the profound social transformations that have accompanied the economic "boom" in Mauritius since the early 1980s.

5. Conclusion

The Hindu "ancestral language"-movement for Hindi as well as the claims for Tamil, Telugu and Marathi in Mauritius should not be understood as a separatist struggle against the dominance of a national language or as being

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[3]   Mandarin is also taught in schools with a significant presence of Sino-Mauritian students. Its ideological and political ramifications, are, however, very different from the Hindu case. The small but economically very significant Sino-Mauritian group keeps a low profile politically in Mauritius, and is much less concerned about state support for its "ancestral language" than Hindus, who establish an ideological link between state support for Indian languages and legitimacy of their political dominance in Mauritius.

directed against the hegemony of a Mauritian "national" culture. A strong pan-Mauritian nationalism does not exist, and there is no "national" language. True, English, which only relatively few Mauritians know well, is the de facto official language of the state, even though French is dominant in the private sector economy and mass media, and almost all Mauritians share a knowledge of Mauritian Creole, which is the first language of the great majority of Mauritians. In the 1970s, a movement championed a new post-colonial Mauritian nationalism primarily based on the ideology of Creole as the national language for all Mauritians, regardless of their ethnic background. However, the attempt to institutionalize Creole as the national language failed spectacularly in 1982. This was mainly because the idea that Creole could be a "language" in its own right and is not, as is still believed by most Mauritians to the dismay of Creole linguists, an inferior version of French, had failed to gain sufficient adherents. Also, given the background of interethnic rivalry and suspicion prevailing in Mauritian party politics especially at election time, Mauritian Creole was not considered ethnically "neutral" enough by important sections of the politically powerful Hindu elite.

To conclude, the Mauritian example discussed here stresses the significance of imagined "ancestral languages", as opposed to languages used in daily practice or in print-media, as a means of ethno-national classification. They provide a strong case against the primacy of the "actual medium" of oral and print communication in explaining the creation of ethno-national communities. Finally, they demonstrate that the link between language and community formation is not immanent in the functionality of communication, but mediated through linguistic ideologies (Woolard 1992), which in the case presented here take the form of imagined "ancestral languages".

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