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Language, Discourse & Society
A Journal Published by the Language & Society,
Research Committee 25 of the International Sociological
Association

Thematic issue
**Language Studies in a Decolonial
Interpretative Key**

**This issue is guest-edited by
Viviane Melo Resende (University of Brasilia, Brazil)**

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The editorial board will consider proposed articles based on clear methodological and theoretical commitment to studies of language. Articles must substantially engage theory and/or methods for analyzing language, discourse, representation, or situated talk.

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Language, Discourse & Society

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Language, Discourse, & Society would like to thank Maud Mazaniello-Chézol, Laura Odasso, and Dasharah Green for their direct and immediate support in bringing to completion the June 2020 issue of the journal.

Language, Discourse, & Society would also like to thank the Editorial Board of *LD&S* for their continued support of the journal.

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Message from the Editor

Welcome to the June 2020 issue of *Language, Discourse & Society*, the journal of the [Research Committee 25 \(RC 25\)](#) of the [International Sociological Association](#). Unfortunately, the world is still contending with the coronavirus pandemic and we are now witnessing this pandemic enter a new phase that some parts of the world are experiencing as worse than earlier phases. This length of this pandemic crisis has undoubtedly had an impact on production here at *LD&S*. We are grateful for the development of vaccines and look forward to a return to some type of normalness.

This thematic issue titled, “Language Studies in a Decolonial Interpretative Key,” takes on the topic of the relationship between the decolonial turn and sociolinguistics, sociology of language, and discourse studies. Organized by guest editor Viviane de Melo Resende, of the University of Brazilia, Brazil, the articles in this collection examine, among other things, the “onto-metaphysics” of language itself; the ethics, ontology, epistemology of the research methods and techniques used to study an element of language; and the relationship between language practices, inequality, and social space in a post-colonial society. Below are some of the highlights.

Carl Mika, Vanessa Andreotti, Garrick Cooper, Cash Ahenakew, and Denise Silva present in “The Ontological Differences Between Wording and Worlding The World,” an examination of Māori language that serves as the foundation for an original philosophy of language that they describe as another “onto-metaphysical orientation.” This extremely original research portends for future explorations exciting developments that may allow us to leave behind the foundational categorizing of the world that emerged and grew from the science of colonialism and the colonizers. In the orientation of their philosophy of language, the researchers do not conflate being and knowing and as such they decenter humanity, one of the main constitutive constructions of Eurocentric modernity.

In “Defusing Master Narratives: Decolonial, Insurgent, Gentle Moves in a Con-Text of Teacher Education and Educational Research,” Maria Marta Yedaide and Luis Gabriel Porta Vázquez use a meta-analysis of quantitative research approaches to reveal the oppressive ontology of the colonial-era master narratives the traditional research techniques work in service of and how these research approaches implicate pedagogy. The authors reveal how critical, decolonial, and queer approaches and “practices” in research make room for “defusing” traditional or conservative master narratives.

Rodolfo Soriano-Núñez’s “Migration and (De)Colonization in the Mexican Government Migration Policies, 2018-19,” in the non-thematic section, describes the fragility of narratives of sovereignty in former colonial spaces. Soriano-Núñez accomplishes this through a phenomenological examination of historical as well as the socio-economic and political forces that shaped the Mexican government’s recent migration policies.

The pieces in this volume represent work in three languages, English, French, and Spanish. They also present empirical material from seven nations: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand; Poland, Portugal, and the United States are represented in the book reviews.

I share the hope from the guest editor’s brief that the articles included here allow for new conceptualizations of decoloniality itself.

Message from the Editor

I would like to thank all editorial contributors for their support of *LD&S*. In addition, I would like to thank Stéphanie Cassilde, Viviane de Melo Resende, Maud Mazaniello-Chézol, Laura Odasso, and Dasharah Green for their work and constant contributions toward the publication of this issue.

I encourage readers to also take a look at the upcoming Call for Papers for the December 2021 issue, this thematic volume will address the Covid-19 pandemic.

Natalie Byfield, Editor in Chief
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Message from the Guest Editor

This issue of *Language, Discourse and Society* addresses different possibilities of the relation between the decolonial turn and sociolinguistics, sociology of language, and discourse studies. The debate on decoloniality is well established in social studies, but yet with little impact over discourse studies and our way to look at language, even though there is an instigating field relating coloniality to research and teaching on discourse analysis (Resende 2018; Pardo 2010). On the other hand, paying attention directly to language issues related to social problems also has a significant potential for an innovative conceptualization of decoloniality. Furthermore, discourse insights can bring even more relevance to the decolonial interpretative key (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018; Walsh 2009; Shi-xu, 2007).

Papers in this monographic address themes related to how coloniality (of knowledge, power, and being) impacts the selections of themes we approach in research, the possibilities of theoretical creation in the field, and the possibilities (and need) of methodological creativity. The volume opens with María Laura Pardo's paper, "**Descolonización del conocimiento, globalización y posmodernidad: los estudios del discurso y el desafío de la identidad**". The Argentinian author offers a critical essay on the colonization of knowledge and science, criticizing the Eurocentrism of academic institutions in Latin America. Following, "**The ontological differences between wording and worlding the world**" is collectively signed by Carl Mika, Vanessa Andreotti, Garrick Cooper, Cash Ahenakew, and Denise Silva, researchers working in New Zealand and Canada. With the background of the philosophy of language original from Maori ontology, they propose different relations between language, knowledge, and being, developing an original argument, not yet developed in the scope of decolonial thought and (critical) discourse studies. Original ideas on decoloniality are also explored in the paper "**Defusing master narratives: decolonial, insurgent, gentle moves in a con-text of teacher education and educational research**", by Maria Marta Yedaide and Luis Gabriel Porta Vázquez, from Mar del Plata, Argentine. The authors address the relevant issue of how master narratives can be called into question through critical, decolonial, and queer pedagogies. The monograph last paper is the essay "**Pathways and crossroads of the decolonial option: challenging Marx and Zeus with a Rabo de Arraia**", by Glauco Feijó and myself. We take the Decolonial Turn as a starting point to discuss recent criticisms arising from decolonial feminism and counter-colonial thinking, arguing that these criticisms generate profound and necessary reflections on this movement, especially visible through a critical discourse point of view.

Finally, the Varia section of this volume brings the essay "**Migration and (de)colonization in the Mexican government migration policies, 2018-9**", by Rodolfo Soriano-Núñez. The author discusses in detail recent changes in Mexican migration policy following the 2018 election. He takes the analytical keys of racism and religion to discuss Mexican public opinion on migration. The Varia functions here, therefore, as a Forum invitation, expanding some of the relevant themes discussed in the papers gathered together in the monograph.

Message from the Guest Editor

I hope the reading will be as instigating as the collective work of organizing this monographic. I should end this presentation by expressing how grateful I am to Stéphanie Cassilde, Maud Mazaniello-Chezol, Laura Odasso and Natalie Byfield for the joint accomplishment, and to the authors in the monographic for their patience and comprehension about the exceptional difficulties of these times.

Viviane de Melo Resende
Universidade de Brasília, Brazil

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Message from the President

Language, Discourse & Society is the international journal published by the Research Committee 25 « Language and Society » of the International Sociological Association since 2011. Launching a journal is a challenge, and Federico Farini's leadership fostered this huge step for our RC until 2015. Members continuously supported this way among others to circulate the knowledge produced "looking at language." Indeed, the editorship, but also the guest-editorship and various actions around the journal (some reviews, helping to seek guest-editors, the posting of articles on the website, etc.) rely on voluntary academic work. Underlying these elements may seem obvious among researchers, as this belongs to our duty in the knowledge production and circulation processes.

Beyond the ongoing challenges, notably toward COVID-19, but also toward all the changes that happen in our societies (social movements, elections, wars, increase of poverty, etc.), I wish to shed light on the following reminder: as researchers, we are also embedded in other roles, including our private life. But sometimes we may forget about it because we may be first in our role as a researcher, notably when it is related to publication.

The past months brought a lot of unexpected situations for all of us, both as human being and as researcher. I am so grateful that the scholars involved in *Language, Discourse & Society* dealt with the numerous issues, as authors, as reviewers, as (guest-)editors, as whatever was provided.

Special thanks should be made to:

Natalie Byfield, our editor in chief, for having navigated toward this context while entering in the position and discovering from inside this still young international journal;

Viviane de Melo Resende, the guest-editor of this thematic issue, for having both kept high standards and be so patient;

Maud Mazaniello-Chezol, our webmaster, for having undertaken editorial tasks which made the difference to achieve the publication;

Laura Odasso, our new co-webmaster, for her huge support.

This issue is also their even more than usually.

Achieving this June 2020 issue is a reward for all of us.

Kind regards,

Stéphanie Cassilde

President of the RC25 of the ISA

Researcher, ASBL Comme Chez Nous, Charleroi, Belgium

Research Scholar, Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship

Call for guest-editors for e- journal *Language, Discourse and Society*

Language, Discourse & Society is an international peer reviewed journal published twice annually (June and December) in electronic form. The journal publishes high-quality articles dedicated to all aspects of sociological analyses of language, discourse and representation.

All interested guest-editors are invited to submit a proposal (a call for papers) in order to edit a thematic issue. The editor in chief will consider proposed call for papers based on clear commitment to studies of language. *Language, Discourse & Society* cannot publish proceedings. Guest-editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal. *Language, Discourse & Society* accepts electronic submissions year round. Please send your proposals to: journal@language-and-society.org

The role description of *Language, Discourse & Society* guest-editor is as follow:

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- for writing the call for articles: within the framework of *LD&S* editorial line and tacking into account that *LD&S* cannot publish proceedings, (co-)editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal.
- for all communications with authors
- for the evaluation process of articles, which includes:
- finding additional reviewers so that each article is peer-reviewed.
- taking a decision regarding the final selection of articles in accordance with the editorial line of *LD&S*
- for keeping the deadline to submit the whole issue to the editor in chief of editing. This includes to take care that minimal requirements are met (front, front size, space, margin, accuracy of references)
- for basic editing regarding the form and the style of each article: the (co-)editor should check whether the references within the article are mentioned in the bibliographical part, whether the references listed in the biographical part are all quoted within the article, and whether the template of *LD&S* is respected (letter font, size, etc.)

The guest-(co-)editor cannot publish an article in *LD&S*, neither as principal author, nor as co-author. His/her name is indicated as follow: “this issue of *Language, Discourse and Society* about {here the final title of the thematic issue} is edited by {here the name of the editor(s)}”.

The position of guest-(co-)editor is unpaid.

Call for Papers

The Language of a Pandemic: COVID-19 discursive practice and social change

Thematic issue of "Language, Discourse, & Society", a journal published by Research Committee 25 "Language and Society" of the International Sociological Association, ISSN: 2239-4192, indexed in ERIH Plus. Guest Editor: Maud Mazaniello-Chézol (Maud Mazaniello-Chezol, McGill University)

This thematic issue of *Language, Discourse & Society* seeks to investigate discourses related to the current pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID). As such, we aim to tackle how COVID-19's language is shaping society and how society constitutes the pandemic language, especially how it may transform social norms.

The pandemic of COVID-19 disrupted the social order with sudden changes, affecting the neoliberal system on multiple levels (OECD, 2020). From the disease outbreak news to the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic from the World Health Organization and the associated decisions such as borders' restrictions or confinement/quarantine, new challenges emerged bringing the dominant economic system's limitations out into the light (Nunes, 2020; Saad-Filho, 2020).

Leading to rapid changes in most areas of society, at the macro, meso, micro or individual levels, social functioning was revisited by the performance of a series of new governmental and institutional measures. In doing so, institutional discourse rapidly changed, investing the social realm with new claims, calling upon individuals' behavioral change. Distinguishing services as "essential" or "non-essential", re-ordering priorities, demonstrating violence to apply these priorities, the language shift inherently questioned the dominant ideology. For example, the weight put on healthcare systems and thereby healthcare workers and users has triggered governmental and social responses challenging social values, norms and ethics (e.g., Ortega & Orsini, 2020). Also, while new rituals emerged to thank healthcare workforce in some part of the world (e.g., showing gratefulness with images at the window, regular applause), some works seemed to be newly recognized. The notion of being or staying at 'home' took several dimensions whether people had a safe place to call 'home' (e.g., Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color, stateless persons, refugees, homeless persons), or people were in situation of vulnerability (e.g., in case of domestic violence, abuse, isolation).

COVID-19 reaffirmed the intersections between health and race, gender, and class-based inequalities. It thus highlighted existing social injustice, shedding light on systemic racism. These inequalities translate in several forms and raise how societal fissures along the lines of race, indigeneity, class, gender, immigration, and citizenship statuses are being revealed by the pandemic to be prevailing social determinants of health.

For this issue, we are looking for papers exploring the language of and on COVID-19 and intersecting events. We especially invite research that addresses how/if the language of the pandemic created discourses around systemic oppression related to intersecting identities of race, indigeneity, class, gender, immigration, and citizenship statuses. In this vein, we may question how institutions' discourses operationalize the pandemic, from its beginning to envisioning a post-COVID-19 era; to what extent these discourses affect human rights

principles such as equality and non-discrimination; how the language of the pandemic sheds light to the social structure; how controversies around preventive practices and related regulations on social organization (e.g., #stayathome, social distancing, handmade masks) arise and how do they translate in society; or how stakeholders take part in the pandemic management, including research.

Considering the vast array of sources and questions we may discuss in this thematic issue, papers specifically drawing on government and institutions' discourses, international relations or healthcare systems restructuring, social movements, social organization of confinement, health and illness representation, healthcare workforce role negotiation, or professional identity are encouraged. Rooted in interdisciplinarity (e.g., sociolinguistics, sociology, linguistics anthropology, semantics, political science, communications, education, public health), the articles will study the language of and on COVID-19 as a mode of action, uncovering the “pervasive connections between language structure and social structure” (Fowler & Kress, 1979). Authors are invited to present their work through the lens of critical theory (e.g., neocolonialism, feminism, ecocriticism, intersectionality, critical race theory) (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Buell, 1998), however, any theoretical approach is welcomed and will be considered.

Submission can be done in English, Spanish and French.

Please follow the author guidelines indicated at the following URL, which includes a template for formatting: <https://www.language-and-society.org/language-discourse-society/instructions/>

IMPORTANT DATES

Call for papers	July 2020
Due date for submission	December 2020
Feedback from reviewers	February 2021
Submission of revised articles	April 2021
Issue in press	June 2021
Issue printed	December 2021

This thematic issue will be published in December 2021.

SUBMISSION TO BE DONE ONLINE AT:

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Original Articles

Language Studies in a Decolonial Interpretative Key

guest-edited by Viviane de Melo Resende

The ontological differences between wording and worlding the world

Carl Mika¹, Vanessa Andreotti², Garrick Cooper³, Cash Ahenakew⁴ and Denise Silva⁵

Abstract

We propose a distinction between two onto-metaphysical orientations: one that reduces being to discursive practices, which we call ‘wording the world’; and another that manifests being as co-constitutive of a worlded world, where language is one amongst other inter-woven entities, which we call ‘worlding the world’. Speaking from Indigenous and racialized loci of enunciation, in this article we do not aim to dialectically propose an antithesis to the theses of modernity-coloniality or decoloniality, but to highlight the co-constitution of things in the world by making an ontology that is currently invisible, noticeably absent. We start with a brief outline of a common and arguably unavoidable pattern in scholarship in decolonial studies that tends to conflate knowing and being, inadvertently reproducing the modern-colonial grammar of wording the world that it, dialectically,

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Dr Denise Ferreira da Silva is a Professor and Director at the Social Justice Institute at the University of British Columbia. Her academic writings and artistic practice address the ethical questions of the global present and target the metaphysical and ontoepistemological dimensions of modern thought.

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aims to delink from. We then present a Māori philosophy of language that grounds a completely different relationships between language, knowledge and being to those that can be imagined and experienced within the grammar of modernity. In the final section we explore the implications of this philosophy for the call of decolonizing discourse studies, offering some (im)practical suggestions, given the current context of intelligibility and affective investments in academic settings.

Keywords

modernity-coloniality, decolonial thought, Māori language, metaphysics of presence; Indigenous ways of being.

First submission: July 2019; Revised: July 2020, Accepted: October 2020.

Introduction

Coloniality has often been described and approached as a problem of the attempted universalization of a particular (Eurocentric) way of knowing and being, whose hegemony is asserted through systems of material domination and ideological manipulation (i.e. knowledge/power) (see for example Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2007). In turn, when different (marginalized) ways of knowing and being are posed as counterpoints to, or means for resisting, coloniality, they are often presented as “worldviews” that consist of concepts, values or convictions grounding alternative practices and forms of relationship (see for example Burman, 2016). The idea is to replace one, dominant worldview with another, less harmful one, or perhaps, with a proliferation of multiple possible worldviews. In both instances, however, knowledge is perceived to be the foundation of practice, and indeed of existence. This assumption reproduces an onto-metaphysics that tends to reduce being to knowing, knowing to the production of meaning, and the real to the ideal, what we call “the wording of the world”. This ontology engenders particular conceptualizations of and relationships with language that perceive language to describe or construct a reality that is either apprehendable or constructed through the rational production of meaning by humans, and that is (relatively) controllable through human agency.

Politically, this can be observed in the search for shared meaning as the substance that defines the grounds for and that mediates our perception of institutions, relationships and collective action within modernity-coloniality. For example, most recognized movements against oppression have been built around ‘naming the world’ (or oppression) as a pre-condition for acting upon it for liberation (see for example the work of Freire, 1970; 2000). However, this dialectical form of liberatory reason reproduces the same onto-metaphysics that presupposes an individual who is an independent agent, separate from nature and who, driven by desires for mastery, teleological progress, certainty, and autonomy (presumed to be elements of ‘human nature’), exercises control over reality (Andreotti, 2016). If this aspect of rationality and set of desires are integral to the grammar of modernity-coloniality, what can be said about coloniality and decoloniality is already bound by what is intelligible (and perceived as ontologically desirable) within this modern-colonial grammar. Is it even possible then to write about what lies outside of this grammar? And if our history of articulable political resistance has also acquired legitimacy through the reproduction of this knowledge-based ontology, how can decolonization manifest itself “otherwise”?

We propose a distinction between two onto-metaphysical orientations: one that reduces being to discursive practices, which we call ‘wording the world’; and another that manifests being as co-constitutive of a worlded world, where language is one amongst other inter-woven entities, which we call ‘worlding the world’. Speaking from Indigenous and racialized loci of enunciation, in this article we do not aim to dialectically propose an antithesis to the theses of modernity-coloniality or decoloniality, but to highlight the co-constitution of things in the world by making something currently invisible visibly absent. We start with a brief outline of a common and arguably unavoidable pattern in scholarship in decolonial studies that tends to conflate knowing and being, inadvertently reproducing the modern-colonial grammar of wording the world that it, dialectically, aims to delink from. We then attempt to present a Māori philosophy of language that grounds completely different relationships between language, knowledge and being to those that can be imagined and experienced within the grammar of modernity. In the final section we explore the implications of this philosophy for the call of decolonizing discourse studies, offering some

practical questions and (probably impractical) suggestions, given the current context of intelligibility and affective investments in academic settings.

We use the term worlding the world to refer to a relationship with (and as part of) an unknowable reality of factual intra- and inter-woven beingness (Mika, 2013; 2017). We propose that the sensibility involved in the worlding of the world is ontologically different from the sensibility driven by the wording of the world. We write about this speculatively from a paradoxical space where we acknowledge that “wording” this reality (i.e. naming and writing about it as we are doing here) cannot do the job of “worlding” it. We draw on our experiences inhabiting Indigenous and racialized bodies navigating the interfaces of juxtaposed complex contexts within and outside of academia in different countries and contexts. We also draw on our interest in and appreciation of decolonial theory as a way of speaking that calls for a world where “symbols, relations of power, forms of being, and ways of knowing [manifest] beyond modernity/ coloniality” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017: 112).

Therefore, this paper is about several things. First, it is about the difficulties of writing about an onto-metaphysics that is not necessarily discussable within the grammar of modernity-coloniality. Secondly, it is about questioning the modern-colonial desire for mastery and certainty that prompts the indexing of reality into language and the tendency for relationships to be established and mediated through categories of representation. Thirdly, it is about gesturing towards the possibilities opened when we have a glimpse at de-centering humanity from the center of the world and sensing the world as unknowable in its totality and co-constitutive of the self. Lastly, it is about a responsibility we feel, as Indigenous and racialized scholars indebted to all things in the world, to attempt to signal a worlding ontology through a different form of speculative writing that does not act in service of the presumed totalization of the wording the world, but to the unknowable totality of the world’s realness and facticity.

Wording the world into fragments connected by meaning

It is important to present a layered image of modernity-coloniality. If we see it an olive tree its roots and trunk could represent visible and invisible aspects of its ontology (ways of being), its branches could represent a variety of different modern epistemologies (ways of knowing) grounded on the same trunk. Its leaves, flowers and fruit could represent a multiplicity of methodologies, practices and outcomes (Andreotti et al., 2018). The roots of this modernity-coloniality tree are sustained within a metaphysics of presence (Mika, 2017), which would be the soil in this image. In the metaphysics of presence the world is experienced by humans as if it is fragmented and atomistic. Each thing in the world is perceived as highly evident and possessing static characteristics (Fuchs, 1976; Mika, 2017). Therefore, relationships with things in the world are mediated by descriptions that place things in their separate hierarchical categories. These relationships, in turn, are decided by the human self and are conceptual/notional in nature. It can be argued that the genealogy for this mode of thinking begins with Plato, who posited that it was through the permanence of the Form that things attain their identity. Within this ontology, language is mobilized in service to this fixity; it is used to describe and represent with truth the nature of things in the world. Language is said to “establish human kind’s specialness and superiority over other species” (Kagan, 2014: 38).

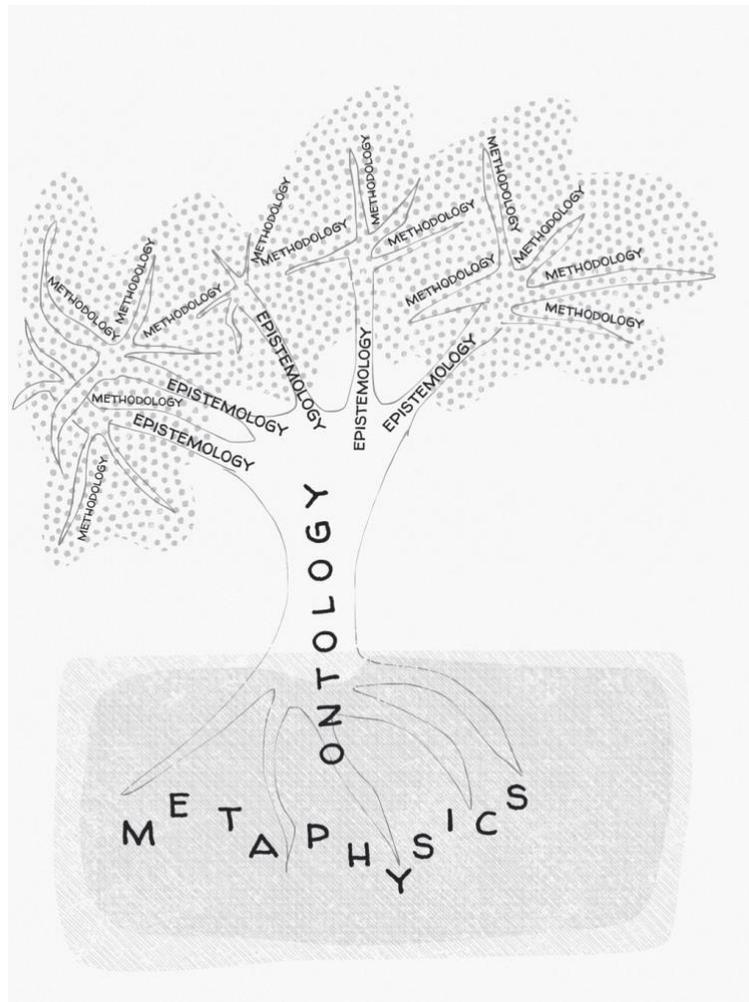


Figure 1 Modernity-coloniality tree

Even when it is said that language constructs the world, the same metaphysics is at play as the relationship with the world is still mediated by concepts created through language. The ordering of these language concepts in hierarchical structures (categories, cognitive frameworks, understandings, etc.) forms the basis of an onto-episteme or the frame of intelligibility (the part of the trunk that sustains the branches) of a set of bodies of knowledge (the branches themselves). Hence, we claim that, in the metaphysics of presence, the relationship with the world is mediated by knowledge to the point that being (in its onto-metaphysical dimension) is discursively always reducible to knowing (i.e. expressing an onto-epistemology as the totality of being) (Andreotti, 2016).

Silva (2017) traces the genealogy of this phenomena in Western philosophy to what she calls ‘separability’ – the separation of human beings from the land/world that precedes, but is always parallel to and resonant with the violence committed against Indigenous and Black female bodies. We contend that, through this separation, land is turned into property and/or resource subservient and submissive to man’s desires and perceived entitlements. As a result, the intrinsic value of life which is tied to the inter-wovenness of a wider living metabolism of self-insufficient and

indispensable organs/entities, is rendered invalid. The living metabolism is perceived as and turned into a machine where the value of different parts, that are disposable and replaceable, is distributed according to their capacity for (re) production in/of pre-established market economies of different types of material or symbolic commodities (of use- or exchange-value). We argue that the erasure of the land as a living entity and the invisibilization of its labour, which is required to metabolically sustain life in the planet, is only a facet of a much deeper wound of separation that requires the numbing of our sense to our co-constitution with everything else, living, or not, past, present and future. The perception of time as linear and the notion that being is tied to form/identity and engendered through knowledge production arises from this wound-separation and forms the basis of modernity-coloniality’s anthropocentric grammar (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Andreotti, 2014, 2017; Souza, 2011).

This modern grammar sets a specific relationship between modern-colonial ways of doing, saying, sensing, wanting, hoping, knowing and being (where knowing engenders being) that is different from the tree presented earlier (where a specific metaphysics engenders particular ways of being that engender related ways knowing/saying/doing) and that circumscribes the realm of what is intelligible, desirable and relatable within modernity-coloniality. The modern grammar sets conditions for what can be asked, talked and ‘understood’, restricting legibility to specific referents that are marked by anthropocentric, anthropomorphic, teleological, dialectical, utility-maximizing, logocentric, dialectical and allochronic modes of expression and experience (Ahenakew, 2016; Andreotti, 2016). Through academic language (legitimized by academic referential and deferential genealogies), our attempts to deconstruct these tendencies are mostly futile because our own intelligibility is dependent on the grammar and the intellectual, affective and performative economies the grammar itself sustains and is sustained by. In other words, if we decide to deconstruct all referents at once we are rendered unintelligible and unimaginable (and therefore irrelevant).

This grammar manifests in different ways in decolonial and anti-colonial scholarship (including our own scholarship), despite self-declarations of innocence (i.e. naming, critiquing or deconstructing something does not make us immune to its reproduction). We understand this as part of the argument of Ahenakew (2016) who problematizes how Indigenous epistemologies are interpreted through non-Indigenous ontologies. Using an analogy related to plant grafting, he refers “to the act of transplanting ways of knowing and being from a context where they emerge naturally to a context where they are artificially implanted” (323). He argues that seemingly radical and benevolent acts of inclusion offer only conditional, domesticated and sanitized forms of visibility for Indigenous modes of existence. Similarly, Cusicanqui (2012) challenges decolonial theorists who

appropriate the language and ideas of indigenous scholars without grappling with the relations of force that define their relationships to them, thus decontextualizing and depoliticizing these concepts and marginalizing indigenous scholars from their own debates. (95)

This might be unavoidable in the broader field of decolonial studies given the privileging of a teleology of transmodernity, of narrativization, of dialectics, of articulable political struggle, of the theorization of coloniality as originating in human conquest and domination (rather than the

separation from the living wider metabolism) and of the use of the academic genre itself as a vehicle for decoloniality. The grammar can be found, for example, in Mignolo's (2003) assertion that

'Science' (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language; languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what humans beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being [colonialidad del ser]. (633)

Our aim in this paper is not to deconstruct decolonial theory or take it to task, since we find its critique extremely useful, but to point to a difficult predicament related to a prevalent philosophy of language that is expressed in the example illustrated in Mignolo's assertion and that currently permeates both colonial and decolonial thinking. This philosophy, that we call 'wording the world', engenders a specific and (academically) omnipresent perception of being as grounded in its totality in knowable knowledge(/power) and language. This philosophy resonates with those of Western scholars who have problematized rationality, language, representation, and being, like Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Derrida and Foucault, but whose inquiry has remained (anthropocentrically) focused on the relationship of the human subject with knowledge, truth and meaning. In the next section, using a different mode of writing, we invite readers to have a glimpse at a philosophy of language that grounds completely different relationships between language, knowledge and being to those that can be imagined and experienced within the grammar of modernity-coloniality and that manifests as, and is embedded in, the 'worlding of the world'.

A Māori philosophy of language that is and expresses the worlding of the world

The theme of interconnection between/within things in the world is a highly charged one and goes to the heart of how one represents the world. In this article we want to write counter to the ontology of presence that assumes that things should be represented with their own, single and static characteristics, privileging the single object in its autonomous resplendence. Instead we seek a speculative way of writing that considers the possibility of the full (unknowable) world within the 'thing' being apprehended. Even 'apprehension', we acknowledge, is a problematic term given the issue we are trying to write against; here, we raise the first of many impediments that militate against worlding the world instead of simply wording it. Indeed, in academic writing, the insistence that everything should be a "concept of" is ubiquitous and remains firmly intact, negating the co-constitution of writing, the theorising self and the world.

By 'world' we mean the reality of all things which are both seen and unknowable; the fact of existence and non-existence that precedes language and collapses both form and time. In this article we refer to this very material reality as nothingness/fullness, unknowable totality and/or worlded and worlding (worlded/ing) world. We contend that Te reo Māori (the Māori language), despite what it has suffered in translations into the metaphysics of presence through being grafted into non-Indigenous institutions (see Ahenakew, 2016), still overwhelmingly reveals the complex and interrelated nature of all things within and beyond perception. We propose that a Maori philosophy of language allows all things/entities to be worlded - to be seen as co-constitutive of each other. Language from a Māori perspective is one of these living entities in the world and is therefore in itself interconnected with the world. It is unique as an entity because it also (re)presents that interconnection. Language has its own life-force that is dense with the full interplay of the world.

Nevertheless, as Ahenakew (2016) warns, there is no guarantee that Te reo Māori will remain instinctively open to the idea of the worlded world. As the grammar of modernity-coloniality tends to translate Indigenous languages into its onto-metaphysics, and dictionaries are created with a version of the language that is intelligible to its grammar, Te reo Maori risks losing its ability to present the nothingness/fullness of the worlded/ing world. When Te reo Maori starts to be used as a simple translation of what people would say in English, Te reo Maori’s capacity to present a different onto-metaphysics - a different sense and experience of the world - is gone. This translation (usually perceived as benevolent or ‘revitalizing’) could be interpreted as the last bastion of colonialism in the project of domestication of Indigenous thought: Māori land has been individualized and commodified (Park, 2006); Māori notions of health are now sourced in notions of “personal dysfunction” (Durie, 1985: 483); the Māori body has been essentialised (Hokowhitu, 2009), and so on. It would be unusual for Māori thought to be left alone by colonization, then. A Maori philosophy of language may be a ‘last bastion’ for colonization, but it is not immune to it.

However, our discussion here is more concerned with a theoretical view of language itself than one particular language, therefore we use Maori as an example of a gesture towards a philosophy of language that lies beyond the grammar of modernity-coloniality, in particular as it relates to form and time. As we have stated earlier, from a Maori vantage point, language is, like all other things or entities in the world, a confluence of all events and entities. Language is hence wedded to the world, inseparable from its reality. This reality of the nothingness/fullness resides in a particular notion of time. It is debatable whether Maori ever had a notion of ‘time’ in the first instance (Andreotti et al., 2018; Mika, 2017), but if we pretend/impute ‘time’ in Maori thought, then we would have to contend with it as a collapsed phenomenon, for Maori current philosophy posits the past, present and future as One (Mika, 2017). Categories of past, present and future (and hence linear notions of time) have been imposed on Maori through colonisation, but these distinctions are artificial and their indivisibility has massive significance for every utterance or declaration because it also re-addresses the idea of form and space. If time is collapsed, then it is difficult to sustain a currently teleological continuum in which things in the world occupy their separate position. In other words, if time is collapsed, then so are all things in the world. It is our intention here to consider language as a reflection of that immediate and primordial fact, in which if time is primarily non-linear, then language must ethically be collapsed with all things and articulate them in that way. If ‘time’ does exist at all for Maori as a concept, it resides within the world as much as language or any other entity, and hence loses its clarity of meaning, like everything else.

From a Māori philosophical perspective, language and all other things are both co-constitutive of the human self, but the human self is not placed at the center of the world. We suggest there are two main kinds of language in Maori thought (Mika, 2017). The first of these, what we call here primordial language, is the expression of the world itself. By ‘world’, we mean the ‘world’ as in ‘earth’ and ‘nature’ but also – and equally – the totality of emotions, ideas and invisible realms that are said to constitute our current reality. The world expresses itself in that most basic sense by the brutal fact of its insistence. This existence/insistence is (unknowable) totality; thus, the sheer facticity is a holistic one. A natural phenomenon such as a tree is immediately declarative of a particular fact, which is the fact of the worlded/ing world. The world is constantly – in fact, unremittingly – voicing its everythingness by virtue of the everything’s facticity. This primordial language might best be thought of as a ‘frequency’ (akin to music), which can be translated as ‘Rangi’ in Maori – this term is, in turn, shorthand for ‘Ranginui’ or Sky Father, which is significant

in Maori traditional thought. Yet, it is not one resonance of many but that initial reverberation that conditions and comprises all that exists in the world.

There exists in the Maori language a homonym that serves a dual purpose of reflecting an utterance and this facticity. Here we encounter a signpost to a discussion about language, whilst keeping in mind that language is also that endurance of World. It should be noted at this point that a Maori worlded linguistics makes very little note between enforced distinctions of meaning. For instance, the Maori term ‘whenua’ means both land and placenta (at the same time), not one or the other. The term, ‘mea’, which hints at the primordial language we have just discussed, is a verb that similarly declares its fullness with the world, because it refers to both ‘to say’ and ‘thing’ (what is expressed) (Mika, 2016; 2017). Firstly, it suggests that ‘saying’ is imbued with thingness. Again, if I articulate something about the tree, I am in fact a representative of the world’s facticity but not in a detached sense because I am also presented by the world, constructed and constituted by it. I am therefore not so much saying something about the tree but am enmeshed with the tree-world reality, which resonates in my speech as much as it does within all other things. Conversely, the fact of the thing is a mode of speech. The problem with this term for dominant western linguistics is that ‘thing’, paired with speech, is not a noun in the conventional sense but a presenting entity that presses within speech (thus, speech ‘things’ with the world) or, with its converse iteration, that a thing ‘things’ and thus speaks and reverberates. That discussion can best be simplified by the following: that ‘thing’ is another way of saying ‘the full and unequivocal resonance of World’, which is a form of ‘saying’. The human self, then, can make an utterance but it resonates (not with but) all entities.

Human agency and language

Discourse analysts tend to posit a constructivist role of language. That view gives rise to an issue that, for Maori thought, must deal with the type of reality that is constructed. In fact, a Maori metaphysics of (collapsed) time would suggest that reality is always-already constructed, and language as we have seen is always-already constituted by the world, so language does not construct anything in particular. Language, then, is a reiteration of that always-already world. But what happens, then, to the supreme agency that is ascribed to the human self in conventional views of language? At this point, we arrive at a second, more directly related version of language to the dominant western canon, which privileges the human self with rational thought and therefore language. Yet we should retain that primordial reality of the worlded/ing world even in that discussion on human language, because it will be recalled that our speaking of the tree is indebted to that fact of the world. This world constitution-disclosure/language is not especially concerned with the certainty of the human self, despite the moments of clarity that we have about certain phenomena. Instead, the always-already world, or worldedness, is much more concerned with the Being-of-all-things that posits itself prior to knowledge. It may help the non-Maori reader to think of language as a device, but this device works both ways: one can use language whilst one is simultaneously devised by the world, including one of its entities: language.

Language hence shares similarities with all other things in the world for the human self because it faces towards a metaphysics and therefore announces the fullness and nothingness of all things whilst calling for things to be (re)presented in that way through it. In other words, it is dense with the unknowable totality of the world, but is immediately usable in that regard as a worlded

(re)presenter that is part of the worlded thing of language. We suggest here that a worlded language may not be language at all – in the same way that worlded time is not time and in Maori thought does not occupy a particular ontological category – but that it is simply one many facets of the expression of the world. While other authors do not seem to redefine language as a non-language languaging as we have, Abrams (1996) gestures towards the reductionism that language enacts when defined by dominant western thought. He argues that, in western thought, “language functions largely to deny reciprocity with nature – by defining the rest of nature as inert, mechanical and determinate – [so far as to render] our sensorial participation with the land around us [...] mute, inchoate, and in most cases wholly unconscious” (71). Abrams does not take to task the possibility that ‘language’ as a concept or tool for communication is inadequate for indigenous thought but seems to be suggesting here (and we are repurposing his words somewhat within the context of worldedness) that nature should be seen as an equal player with language. We, again, infer from the equal playing field that the phenomena of language and things in the world are collapsed such that they are indistinguishable - language, as an entity, and humans, as entities, are both integral (and collapsable) to the worldness of “nature” (i.e. there is no man and/or/versus nature, there is only ‘nature’ as a primordial expression of a worlded/ing world).

A Maori worlded/ing discourse analysis: ‘Hūtia te rito o te harakeke’

The discussion of ‘mea’ reminds us that there is a mode of expression that may, in part, refer to what we call ‘language’ today, but which is broader than what is experienced through modern-colonial onto-metaphysics. It is this more expansive language-world, in its usable form, that will inform the rest of this text because it raises the possibility of a form of worlded discourse analysis. Because we are academics, we see this point as essential, particularly for Maori scholars and students but also for those who want to try and represent the world within academic writing. Anecdotally speaking: we have noticed that indigenous audiences in general agree with a proposition of holism in writing. This act of holistic writing is an ethical one (Arola, 2013) that is not simply a Maori version of proper academic writing, but is also meant to protect things in the world and, ultimately, the (unknowable) totality of the world. At this point, we return briefly to our critique of the modern-colonial metaphysics and thus language and thought. Heidegger (1967) and Derrida (1997) problematised presence, which both critiqued for its relationship to logocentrism and anthropocentrism (importantly, without overcoming their anthropocentric mode of knowledge production). From Maori experience, the focus on the present in thought and language obliterates the possibility of the worlded/ing world by, firstly, fixing the characteristics or properties of the thing being represented and, then, parsing it out from its worlded status. This denial of the World is very dangerous for Maori who are constantly, from a young age, forced to engage with a particular essence of the object that gives it its overwhelming, separate ‘thereness’.

A major challenge therefore presents itself in thinking about how to decommission that highly colonizing influence. We use the example of a proverb to illustrate the difference a worlded discourse analysis could make. There is a widespread Maori proverb that has been utilised by government departments and various other corporate entities throughout Aotearoa/ New Zealand. It goes:

Hūtia te rito o te harakeke, Kei whea te kōmako e kō? Kī mai ki ahau; He aha te mea nui o te Ao? Māku e kī atu, he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.

It is often loosely translated as:

If you pluck out the centre of the flax bush, where will the bellbird sing? You ask: what is the most important thing of the world? I respond: it is people, it is people, it is people.

At the time of writing, a google search rendered 9040 results, attesting to the proverb's popularity. Yet the proverb is rarely critiqued for its anthropocentric and anthropomorphic emphases, despite overtly privileging the human self both in the first part, where the centre of the flax bush is often interpreted to be children surrounded by the community, and in its final stanza that elevates people as the most important thing in the world.

This traditional Maori proverb offers several possibilities for critique from a Maori worlded-language philosophy and discourse analysis. First, if language is worlded, then it must be read as if it incorporates things in the world, as we have reiterated up to this point. Whatever occurs at the beginning of the proverb, then, must be retained throughout its remainder and vice versa. To avoid a teleological 'leaving behind' of different parts of the sentence, a Maori discourse analysis would assess the sentence against the indebtedness towards the (unknowable) totality of worldedness. In that light, the first elements of the sentence must infiltrate within whatever (apparently) comes later, and thus the naturally occurring phenomena - flax bush, bellbird, world - must resonate with the fullness of the saying. Although flax bush and bellbird in particular offer no apparent connection to the human self, in fact they can be read as an ameliorating influence on the totalising statement that seems to privilege humanity. Already, through the introduction of an apparent metaphor - the natural world - a statement made by the human self about the human self is undermined in its certainty. By this, we mean that those phenomena that are non-human have actually constructed the reality of the saying. In a straightforward way, we could say that if the human being was truly as transcendent as the enthusiastic users of this proverb believe, then there would have been no need to refer to anything else apart from the human entity.

Two aspects arise here that need to be reiterated: a discourse analysis based on a worlded philosophy of language should consider the worlding that gave possibility for an utterance and it should view anthropocentric, anthropomorphic and dialectic tendencies with scepticism. We continue with the problem of anthropomorph/centr -ism. In its translation into English, the proverb 'Hūtia te rito o te harakeke' as it stands can certainly be challenged for the fact that it elevates the human self. At this point, we broaden the sense of one of the proverb's components out from its usual link to the human world. 'Te rito o te harakeke' is often linked with the central wellbeing of human communities - which is why it fits so snugly with the discourse of government - and it is then assumed that the world is a human one. But instead, it may be a metaphor for the wrenching out of the worlding world. It would then be more properly translated as 'if one pulls out the worlded world from the 'everything' (the centre of the flax that infuses all things in the world) then there will be no more resonance of any one thing as participant with the unknowable totality within every thing'. In other words, all things would be deprived of their relationship with the world in its unknowable totality, and in its place the human self would be centred with his or her desire to represent (word) the world and control it. The bellbird in this reading is simply another metaphor for all participants in a worlded reality. If the world is instead worded, then all those participants are similarly worded - impoverished and fragmented from the world as a whole.

The bellbird hence issues here a warning to humanity who wants to impose their will upon a world that is meant to world. Our quest for a more worlded meaning of the proverb takes a different turn with a return to some terms that we mentioned earlier - ‘mea’ and ‘world’ - which are by happy coincidence also components of the proverb. ‘Most important thing’ translates as ‘te mea nui’: ‘of the world’ as ‘o te ao’. If we take to these terms, and then to the overall meaning of the sentence and then reinterpret the entire saying, in the context of that renewed worldedness, then we can reword even its denotative meaning so that the human self is no longer ascendant. Te mea nui may be reconsidered as ‘that important declaration in its (unknowable) totality’ and o te ao as ‘participating in the fullness of that which constitutes all things’. Understood with this reconfiguration, this part of the proverb when completed becomes ‘what is that important expression/declaration in its (unknowable) totality that participates in the fullness of that which constitutes all things?’ ‘People’ become a mere saying of (unknowable) totality - and indeed an important saying - but in that acknowledgment of importance people are in fact reduced in significance because they are put in their place as a strong declaration that is not from the human self. To put this simply: the strong saying of the human self is in fact an indication of the strength of that human self’s indebtedness to that saying. We have effectively amplified the ‘saying’ (‘worlding’) which has diminished the hitherto superiority of the human self. Humankind as an important declaration expressed by the world is now rendered the most humble within the world, and the proverb, in effect, now says the opposite of its popular representation.

Beyond but amongst the present terms: A discourse of nothingness

The imposition of the world and its insistence that it form the mainstay of a Maori discourse analysis continues with a consideration of phenomena that do not necessarily concern the visible terms and their meanings. This approach is far broader than those above and responds to a deeper issue at work in all statements that must be accounted for when this type of discourse analysis is being enacted. Reminiscent of Derrida’s absence, this understanding signals that there is an unknowable totality of the world constituting a statement beyond that statement’s visible and hearable components. Unlike Derrida’s absence, though, Maori often attribute first causes to it, to the extent that it forms the negating basis for all successive life (see Jones, 2013) including the human self. In Maori metaphysics and cosmogony, the term for this primordial start of all things, ‘te kore’, is often translated as a ‘nothingness’ or ‘void’ (in traditional cosmogony), but it can also refer to all phenomena of the world that are not ‘there’ (i.e. the fullness of the world). It is important to note about te kore that it always-already comprises all things, and to that extent it signals a Maori form of différance. Thus, one segment of the proverb that is particularly vulnerable to a Maori worlded discourse analysis is ‘what is the most important thing of the world’, for various reasons. To begin with, as we signalled above, the statement as a whole is only possible because of the world that is not immediately ‘there’ or perceptible as components of the sentence with their meaning. ‘What is the most important thing of the world’ can hence only be uttered in the first instance because of the absence of the world, thus immediately diminishing the alleged importance of the human self. Both declaration and the real human self are depreciated to the mere visible. Totality - the full unrepresented unknowable given force in an unexpected way through the statement - is, in that same instant, amplified.

An additional form of nothingness that characterises Te Kore (in its own full materiality) heralds itself in an experience with nothingness through a thing in the world, such as through our current proverb. Much traditional Maori ceremony revolves around acknowledging this first stage of

creation, in a way that references nothingness as a galvaniser of all things. In the case of the proverb, the primordially of Te Kore calls to be acknowledged not as a signalling of an absent and hence another denotative meaning or a substance that allows something to be said (as we have discussed above) but as an existential reality. All things in the world form an opening to this abyss, and the proverb, like all other things in the world, discloses nothingness. In Maori thought, the next stage of encounter is then one of complete uncertainty. This ‘next stage of encounter’, incidentally, is indeed equivalent to the next stage of Maori cosmogony that comes after Te Kore, which is ‘gloom’ or Te Pouri (Mika, 2013). What is also disclosed alongside nothingness is a degree of vulnerability through a gloominess and a fallibility that is not dependent on a process of deconstruction, being much more all-encompassing than a human act. It is in this immediate experience of nothingness, though, that the proverb is again emphasised in light of its privileging of the world rather than simply the human self, for Te Kore responds within the proverb and draws the human self towards his or her own limitations around such themes as epistemic certainty, logocentrism and so on. Te Kore as a blunt force de-centres the human self and forces the human self to a secondary position also within the proverb.

To briefly summarise this section: through simply responding to the orthodox translation of one proverb - and its import of an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic worldview - we have dethroned the human self to fit with a metaphysics of worldedness and unknowable totality. The proverb, then, denotes that people, more than any other thing in the world, need to become aware of their worldedness, or their constitution by the world. Without this worldedness (which now replaces the people who were formerly interpreted to be removed from the centre of the flax plant), the bellbird (including the human self and all other things) does not have a place to sing because the sense of interwovenness has been removed. If nothing else, the proverb delivers a stark warning that “you too are worlded”, both in its visible components and its engagement with nothingness.

Conclusion

When we were asked to imagine the task of decolonizing discourse studies, two responses emerged. One suggesting the need for ‘digging deeper’ into modernity-coloniality and its effects within a worlded world, another indicating the need for ‘relating wider’, for un-numbing or des-immunizing our senses to a worlded/ing world, a task that is not an intellectual endeavor but an act of affective disinvestment in the perceived entitlements, pleasures, safety nets and satisfactions of separability and the authority and entitlements it confers. Both tasks are somewhat impractical (and unappealing to many) because they undermine the security of the world as we know it, in particular, the academic world and its traditional task of wording the world.

Perhaps, in relation to the first task, a baby step that is doable through academic writing, would be the acknowledgement that the worlded/ing sensibility has been rendered unintelligible and that it has indeed been largely absent from academic thought. Ahenakew (2016) proposes that, in order to avoid the instrumentalization of Indigenous knowledges within the modern-colonial grammar, rather than trying to make visible what has been made invisible by modernity-coloniality, a more ethical task would be “to make what is invisible noticeably absent” (337). This can be done by acknowledging the limits, partialities and inevitable complicities in harm of the pervasive wording of the world in both coloniality and in well intentioned attempts to overcome it. This acknowledgement de-universalizes the claims of wording the world, creating perhaps a disposition of onto-epistemic humility before the unknowable totality of the world that could interrupt self-

congratulatory and innocence/virtue signaling tendencies in academic decolonial efforts. It could also have the potential to create a generative space of emptiness/nothingness where something is missing and is missed: a crack where the nothingness-fullness of the world can erupt, on its own terms.

A second moment of ‘digging deeper’ would likely inquire ‘What would discourse studies look like if it infused non-anthropocentric, non-anthropomorphic, non-dialectic, and non-teleological manifestations of language and being in its practice?’ However, in order for this question to be possible and legitimate, a few other questions would have to have been at the table beforehand. We list here some examples (borrowing from the ‘Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures’ collective):

How has the modern-colonial conditioning trapped us in ‘conceptualizations of’ [...] that restrict our horizons and what we consider to be possible / intelligible? What restricts what is possible for us to sense, understand, articulate, want and imagine?

What could engender a visceral sense of care and responsibility towards everything in ways that could override affective investments in modernity-coloniality and would not be dependent on meaning, knowledge, identity or understanding? What, beyond convictions, can offer an antidote to indifference?

How can we engage and be taught by different systems of knowledge and being (including those that are part of modernity), struggles and attempts to create alternatives, (a)cutely aware of their gifts, limitations, and contradictions, as well as our own (mis)interpretations, projections, idealizations, and appropriations?
(<https://decolonialfutures.net/compass-questions/>)

The second task of “relating wider” is even more complicated. ‘On difference without separability’, Silva (2016) states that “an ethico-political program that does not reproduce the violence of modern thought requires... the end of the world as we know it” (58). She argues that this would demand that we “release thinking from the grips of certainty and embrace the imagination’s power to create with unclear and confused or uncertain impressions...without the abstract fixities produced by [Kant’s] Understanding and the partial and total violence they authorize against humanity’s cultural (non-white/non-European) and physical (more-than-human) ‘Others’” (59). She also distinguishes between an Ordered World (of the European enlightenment) that is worded, and the worlding World as a Plenum, which she describes as “an infinite composition [of entanglement...] beyond space and time” (ibid). For Silva, the Ordered World is sustained by three ontological pillars based on notions that can be traced back to Kant and Hegel: sequentiality (historicity), determinacy, and separability. Silva proposes the principle of “non-locality” (64) as an orientation to existence that can allow us to imagine sociality without linear temporality and spatial separation, assuming that beyond our temporal physical conditions, at a sub-atomic level, we exist entangled with everything else (which resonates strongly with our worlded/ing world). Through the interruption of separability, sequentiality fails to explain the path of human progression, determinacy loses purchase since being cannot be reduced to knowing, and difference is no longer “a manifestation of an unresolvable strangement, but the expression of an elementary entanglement” (65). However, what Silva is calling for is an act of collective onto-genesis, something that exceeds what can be done through academic discourse.

Therefore, we acknowledge that our questions may be viable, but our suggestions are probably impractical in academic contexts. Drawing attention to Burman’s (2012) concerns about the limits of what is possible within university settings created to universalize modernity-coloniality, we

conclude by echoing his suspicious warnings: “There is no way we are going to intellectually reason our way out of coloniality, in any conventional academic sense. There is no way we are going to publish our way out of modernity. There is no way we are going to read our way out of epistemological hegemony” (117).

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Descolonización del conocimiento, globalización y posmodernidad

Los estudios del discurso y el desafío de la identidad

Laura Pardo⁶

Resumen

El presente trabajo es un ensayo crítico sobre la colonización del conocimiento y de la ciencia. El eurocentrismo que rige a quienes investigan y enseñan, así como a las instituciones en América Latina. La necesidad de un pensamiento crítico a la hora de utilizar teorías y métodos que, la mayoría de las veces, no se asustan a nuestras necesidades lingüísticas y/o sociales. También se reflexiona sobre el concepto de ciencia en la posmodernidad, así como sobre la colonización tecnológica en los países en vías de desarrollo. Por último, se brindan una serie de propuestas para realizar investigaciones con conciencia teórica, metodológica y crítica.

Palabras claves

Decolonización, conocimiento, lenguaje.

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Introducción

La globalización, entendida como una etapa del capitalismo y de la posmodernidad, nos enfrenta con el ya conocido tema del eurocentrismo en la vida académica. Buscamos más profundamente nuestra identidad como investigadores y científicos cuando la sentimos amenazadas. Nadamos entre aguas muy confusas ya que a veces no distinguimos a que nos enfrentamos cuando empezamos a cuestionarnos sobre el eurocentrismo o mundo principalmente anglo al que somos sometidos, siendo por otra parte, muchos de nosotros, paradójicamente, hijos de esos mismos europeos en razón de las migraciones subsiguientes.

Muchos de los pueblos originarios fueron sometidos y exterminados en razón de las diferentes colonizaciones, aunque casi todos tenemos también una mezcla de etnias en nuestro pasado. Podríamos casi decir, que una parte de América Latina, padece, no solo en cuanto al conocimiento, de una colonización estructural. Entendiendo por colonización estructural, que gran parte de nuestro continente Latinoamericano sufrió algún tipo de colonización, exterminio, persecución de algún tipo por parte de pueblos ajenos a América Latina, predominantemente o totalmente europeos. Esto no solo ha influido en nuestra forma de conocer, sino en nuestra forma de ser también.

Pero, como ya sabemos a estas alturas, es inevitable que, ante esta situación, bastante asfixiante, por cierto, distintos sectores reaccionen tomando conciencia de los problemas que la homogenización capitalista y globalizadora acarrea, en este caso, nuestras investigaciones, nuestras creencias sobre la ciencia, el intelectualismo y más específicamente, en lo que hace a este trabajo, a los estudios del discurso.

Como suele suceder muchas veces, la defensa de un punto o varios relacionados con el cómo conocemos, también puede llevarnos, en vez de a crear teorías y métodos y repensar los que usamos, a reforzar nuestros lazos con una forma de ver la ciencia más ligado a la posmodernidad que a la defensa de su propia identidad, en este caso, latinoamericana.

El tema de la descolonización del conocimiento tiene largos años de estudio, aunque con énfasis puestos en distintos problemas (Dussel, 1998; Mignolo, 1998; Jameson, 1998, Castro-Gómez y Mendieta, 1998; Pajuelo Teves, 2001). Como ya lo he señalado, en el área de los estudios del discurso y en la Lingüística en general estas reflexiones son más recientes (Pardo, 2010) y aún más en América Latina. La descolonización en lo que refiere al conocimiento alienta el pensamiento crítico hacia la propia investigación y, por ende, a la creación y aplicación crítica de teorías y métodos. Una real conciencia de qué teorías usamos, qué métodos, qué etnografía para dar cuenta de una problemática y de un contexto particular. Hasta dónde las teorías, en este caso del discurso, pueden dar cuenta de modo universal de los fenómenos lingüísticos, cuando entendemos el discurso y el lenguaje en contexto.

Es por esta razón, que preguntarse por la colonización del conocimiento no solo implica un cuestionamiento acerca de si las teorías nacidas, especialmente en el mundo anglo o francés, pueden aplicarse tan libremente a otros contextos, sino que también acarrea un fuerte cuestionamiento epistemológico hacia nosotros mismos como investigadores. ¿Cómo investigamos? ¿Cómo las teorías y métodos que aplicamos dan cuenta del uso del discurso en el contexto latinoamericano? Y dado que el contexto está en juego, asumir que ya no es posible, si se

quiere realizar un estudio discursivo o crítico manejarse con las reglas del positivismo. En el plano del significado, donde la sinonimia ya no existe y, por lo tanto, no hay variación lingüística (Cf. Lavandera, 1975), mantener una postura positivista o incluso un anclaje discursivo de ese tenor, suena, precisamente, inapropiado.

Pero pensar en la descolonización, es, obviamente, pensar también en la colonización. Y los movimientos colonizadores tienden a la hegemonización económica y cultural. Y si bien la ciencia es concebida como universal, somos conscientes de que existe el contexto, lo que borra esa pretensión y da paso a estudios que deben tener en cuenta las especificidades propias de cada contexto en particular. Se puede teorizar sobre el discurso de la pobreza universalmente, pero el discurso sobre la pobreza toma rasgos muy diferentes si se tiene en cuenta su contexto.

La idea principal de la colonización eurocéntrica u occidental es que una vez generadas las teorías y los métodos de análisis, estos deben ser “aplicados” en otros países. Así sucedió con la Sociolingüística Laboviana, con la Antropología Lingüística y con algunos trabajos del Análisis del Discurso. Esto es lo que sucede en gran parte del mundo y Latinoamérica no ha estado ni está exenta de esto. Las corrientes lingüísticas o discursivas anglo-europeas se “aplican” en nuestro continente, como un molde al que debemos someter nuestros contextos. También es importante notar que muchos de los teóricos sociales y lingüistas son hombres. Aparecen como teorías androcéntricas que se diseminan en el mundo como si las mujeres estuviésemos ausentes. Sin embargo, frente a esta situación es que surgieron las teorías decoloniales (Mignolo, 1998) y la epistemología crítica (Grosfoguel, 2007) al igual que los estudios raciales (véase Van Dijk, 1987) y de género en la ciencia (Curiel, 2007).

Obviamente, el conocimiento científico aparece ejercido por un grupo étnico determinado, los europeos o americanos, por una lengua franca como es el inglés (con algunas excepciones como el francés, el alemán y el italiano), en términos de Grosfoguel (2013) nos encontramos con una colonización (epistemología) racista y sexista. En nuestra América Latina, al menos tenemos muchas mujeres que se dedican a los estudios del discurso y a su perspectiva crítica (Resende, 2020; García da Silva, 2003; Pardo Abril, 2007; Barros, 2015; Oteiza y Pinuer, 2019).

Otra cuestión fundamental, es qué temas abordar. La reproducción de temáticas que poco tienen que ver con nuestras realidades, dentro del Análisis Crítico del Discurso, también es una forma de colonización. Las problemáticas de nuestros países son muy diferentes a las de Europa o Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, nuestras revistas están repletas de esta clase de artículos e investigaciones (Orozco Silva, 2010; Deepak, 2008).

La lectura de una bibliografía completamente europea o estadounidense es otro de nuestros problemas. Por eso es importante incluir en nuestras lecturas a autores especialmente latinoamericanos, pero también de aquellos que comparten realidades similares. Para una temática como el discurso político, por ejemplo, en Argentina, la mayoría de los autores o son franceses o ingleses, por lo que nuestra historia y nuestros procesos culturales no parecen importar a la hora de investigar. Si bien ahora nos leemos un poco más entre latinoamericanos, es muy difícil encontrar trabajos con referencias bibliográficas que hagan al caso bajo estudio. Todos son libros y artículos de revistas que colonizan nuestro pensamiento y las aulas están repletas de profesores que repiten estos modelos, una y otra vez. Es un círculo muy complejo de romper. De cualquier modo, ya hace un tiempo, que han comenzado a surgir corrientes descolonizadoras dentro de la academia como

las mencionadas anteriormente, pero son escasas en el área del lenguaje, y del Análisis Crítico del Discurso (Martínez Guillem y Toula, 2018; Resende 2018; Pardo, 2010: Shu.xu, Prah y Pardo, 2016).

Las librerías tampoco ayudan a la descolonización ya que allí solo encontramos libros de europeos o de habla inglesa, es casi imposible encontrar trabajos de Brasil, México, Colombia o de cualquier otro país latino o no anglo. Como cualquier emprendimiento, las librerías y editoriales responden al mercado y al lector. Los lectores piden libros europeos o estadounidenses, también porque esas lecturas son las que le exige la academia y, en consecuencia, las librerías responden a esas solicitudes y así como un perro que se muerde la cola ejecutan un ejemplo de colonización.

Como hemos dicho muchas veces, no se trata de tirar por la borda el conocimiento adquirido, ni se trata de no usarlo, sino de despertar un pensamiento crítico y una acción que nos lleve a generar teorías y métodos propios, así como a una revalorización de nuestro propio quehacer. Como señala Resende (2017:1) aunque tenemos un gran desarrollo en los estudios del discurso, todavía nos falta creatividad teórica y metodológica:

“Em que pese uma tradição já consolidada dos estudos discursivos na América Latina, com posição destacada nos programas de pós-graduação da área de Letras e Linguística e um pulsante calendário de eventos anuais da área, pode-se dizer que há muita aplicação do saber importado e pouca criatividade teórica ou metodológica local”. / *Pesa ya una tradición consolidada en los estudios del discurso en América Latina, que tiene una posición destacada en los programas de posgraduación en el área de Letras y Lingüística y en un pulsante calendario de eventos anuales del área, donde puede decirse que hay mucha aplicación de saber importando y poca creatividad crítica o metodológica local*⁷.

La descolonización nos enfrenta a varias preguntas y cuestiones, fundamentalmente, con nosotros mismos, la primera de ella y la más conocida es: ¿por qué creemos todavía que lo que producimos desde la ciencia aquí es peor que cualquier cosa que pueda producirse fuera de América Latina? (Cf. Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997b).

Nacidos no solo de esta colonización del conocimiento sino de las que colonizaron nuestra cultura toda, no parece extraño que no tengamos confianza en nosotros mismos. Desde pequeños se nos enseña que existe la civilización y la barbarie, donde lo no europeo (lo gauchesco, lo nativo), es la barbarie y lo europeo, la civilización⁹. Mignolo (1998:33-34) señala que esta dicotomía se transformó en un canon cultural en Latinoamérica. Además, esto justificó una suerte de colonialismo doméstico (Pardo, 2010:184) por el que se genera también una fuerte dicotomía dentro de las mismas naciones, que toma diferentes formas de discriminación por la etnia, el color de la piel, el pelo, la riqueza, el género, etc.

Aún creemos que el Sol está del otro lado, y el Sol sale para todos como dice el refrán. No se trata de cuestionar las teorías y métodos aprendidos del mundo europeo o anglo, pero sí de observar

⁷ El subrayado es mío.

⁸ La traducción es mía.

⁹ El término responde a la oposición generada por Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, escritor y político argentino, que escribiera en 1845: *Facundo o civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas*.

cómo y por qué repetimos teorías y métodos en vez de crearlos y sin pretender tanto, que al menos se haga un uso crítico de unos y otros, de animarnos al desafío que esto implica. O al menos de cuestionar si su aplicabilidad en estos contextos es tan simple como se la usa.

No hay casi académico latino que no sepa inglés o francés o alemán, además de español, claro y/o portugués, sin embargo, es casi imposible encontrar académicos europeos que hablen otra lengua que no sea el inglés y la de su propio origen. Si vamos hacia Europa o si vienen a América Latina somos nosotros los que debemos adaptarnos y hablar o entenderlos en inglés. Las opciones de idiomas en nuestras Universidades son el inglés o el francés, por qué no, por ejemplo, el portugués. Esto limita las posibilidades de intercambio entre los académicos, de esta limitación, dicen, tenemos nosotros “la culpa” porque no hemos aprendido el inglés...A nosotros nos interesa escucharlos y entenderlos...a muchos de ellos no les pasa lo mismo con los académicos latinos (Phillipson, 2011, Pardo, 2010; Shi-xu, Prah y Pardo, 2016).

Las instituciones académicas latinoamericanas, tampoco, ayudan al cambio de paradigma ya que aún, por ejemplo, consideran que publicar en inglés y en revistas internacionales en esa lengua es mucho más importante que hacerlo en prestigiosas revistas en español o portugués o en otras lenguas no anglos. Además, estas deben estar indexadas según los cánones que plantea la occidentalización. Nuestros pares nos evalúan con estos valores colonizadores. De la misma forma, los formatos de tesis, de proyectos, programas, etc. siguen atados a evaluaciones, por un lado, de tipo cuantitativo y, por otro, de una gran similitud con los formatos estadounidenses. Otro punto importante es que no se valora la calidad sino la cantidad de producción (Albornoz, 1996). Lo que importa es cuánto y no cómo se hace un trabajo científico y si este tiene un resultado de aplicación en lo social, lo que como sabemos, viene de la mano de un interés económico y de una visión posmoderna del conocimiento científico. Como sostiene Diéguez (2006: p.4).

De este modo, el criterio de la aplicación técnica se convierte en el elemento para juzgar toda la investigación. Es así como, por ejemplo, deciden los políticos repartir los fondos destinados a la subvención de la ciencia. Esto tiene efectos importantes sobre la práctica científica. Por un lado, favorece el trabajo en equipo y la interdisciplinariedad, en la medida en que éstos contribuyen a abaratar costes y a fomentar la eficiencia. Pero también conduce a un proceso de mercantilización en la ciencia: “[e]l saber es y será producido para ser vendido” (Lyotard 1979/1984, p. 16). La relación entre los científicos y la sociedad se convierte en una relación de productores y consumidores, perdiéndose con ello la posibilidad de juzgar a la ciencia mediante el criterio tradicional de la verdad o falsedad de sus enunciados: “el laboratorio mejor equipado tiene mejores posibilidades de tener razón” (Lyotard 1986/1987, p. 75). La excelencia científica la dicta el valor en el mercado.

Pedirle a la ciencia que sea útil es una forma de mercantizarla. Pensar que hay una disociación entre teoría y práctica es otro de los problemas. En la teoría marxista, esto se conoce como valor de uso y valor de cambio. Una ciencia puede tener un valor de uso y no de cambio (valor mercantil) y viceversa, (Marx, 2013) Aquí su valor de uso está condicionado a su valor de cambio. La ciencia se torna así una mercancía (Echeverría, 1998). Conocer, saber, crear, construir es a la larga algo que siempre da frutos, es una manera de liberación, es un modo de salir de toda enajenación.

La ciencia en la posmodernidad

Globalización y posmodernidad son sinónimos de colonización. La primera apunta al mercado, la segunda a la cultura, a la filosofía que acompaña al capitalismo. Si bien la posmodernidad, ha traído en algunos casos, y como modo de resistencia hacia ella, una apertura de la ciencia hacia nuevas formas de conocimiento, también hay que repensar cada paso que damos en este camino, para tener una mirada muy crítica sobre lo que la posmodernidad postula.

Pensar en la ciencia o en el conocimiento científico es algo difícil de aceptar para muchos en esta globalización que nos iguala y nos separa todo el tiempo. De pronto, todos los saberes son iguales, cumpliendo con el postulado máximo del capitalismo tardío: todo vale. Cualquier método, cualquier teoría, todo vale a la hora de un Análisis Crítico del Discurso (ACD, de aquí en más), y esto es lo que nos torna muy a-metodológicos o científicos con lo que postulamos. Los métodos y teorías lingüísticas o discursivas entran en una suerte de presencia sesgada frente al problema social que se pretende estudiar. Incluso este problema se puede ver más allá del tema eurocentrismo y en vinculación con el ACD o el AD. La falta de rigurosidad metodológica, donde todo vale, da como resultado una proliferación de publicaciones que poco aportan al área del ACD.

Los megarelatos de la ciencia moderna no son ya estimados en la posmodernidad (Forster, 2002). De ahí, la importancia del relato de la historia de vida, del relato que narra la cotidianidad de los grupos discriminados. El auge de los estudios de las llamadas minorías (que no siempre lo son) tienen hoy un espacio privilegiado dentro de los estudios del discurso, y en su perspectiva crítica, lo que no sucedía hasta hace muy poco tiempo¹⁰.

Si hay un camino complejo es el de la multidisciplina y muy especialmente cuando se trabaja con sectores que no tienen las mismas prácticas que la ciencia. De uno y otro lado, el trabajo es arduo. Sin embargo, no hay traducción posible de un conocimiento a otro, es la práctica discursiva y social la que debe cambiar para que el cambio discursivo se realice. No se trata de “bajar” el lenguaje que usamos ni de “subirlo”, se trata de aprender conjuntamente, de poder enriquecernos con quienes co-creamos un conocimiento y un discurso nuevo. Solamente la instalación de nuevas prácticas sociales y discursivas acerca del conocimiento puede dar lugar a la construcción de conceptos, formas, teorías y métodos nuevos y relevantes para los diferentes grupos que participan en la investigación. Para los analistas del discurso crítico es el discurso es el que cambia la realidad, lo que es su eje y fundamento. El trabajo multidisciplinario y entre saberes diferentes se construye en una nueva práctica social y discursiva, en la que participativamente se crean nuevos significados, definiciones y estrategias discursivas, en una investigación. La participación de grupos sociales diferentes, en Congresos, Jornadas y proyectos de investigación vinculados al discurso y a una perspectiva crítica son en sí mismos constructores de nuevos saberes, capaces de desafiar la imposibilidad que ha demostrado la ciencia muchas veces, de co-construir conocimiento científico en el campo social y, especialmente, en el discursivo en el que el Análisis Crítico del Discurso se mueve.

Esto de algún modo, cumpliría el deseo de Feyerabend de una ciencia más humana, menos cerrada. Sin embargo, la multidisciplina, también es un desafío al interior de cada disciplina. Así como hace

¹⁰ En el año 2003, en uno de los Congresos internacionales de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso, en la ciudad de Puebla, México, Luisa Martín Rojo habló por primera vez de “dar voz a los sin voz”. Esta frase muy utilizada hace referencia a una apertura en la ciencia, en la que, precisamente, esta abandona su megaretrato para dar paso a otras voces, que hasta ese momento no habían tenido ningún espacio en la investigación científica.

unos años Wodak (2000) se preguntaba si la lingüística o los estudios del discurso necesitaban de una teoría social, hoy la pregunta parece invertirse: ¿lo social necesita de una teoría lingüística y discursiva para atender a sus problemáticas? Esto aún es un punto débil en los trabajos multidisciplinares de hoy. Parecería que, en los estudios de Análisis Crítico del Discurso, se busca borrar toda huella o uso de la gramática, de las estrategias y los recursos lingüísticos en pos de un análisis de contenido que no necesita de un saber lingüístico, como si analizar el discurso fuese solo un comentario textual apartado de las formas que hacen a las lenguas y al lenguaje.

La ciencia vive en un cambio permanente y ajusta sus teoría y métodos a lo que aparece como viable o aceptado social e históricamente. Y, de más está decir, a las posibilidades que le permite cada etapa filosófica, económica, cultural y política. Aún hoy, el mismo Diéguez (2006) sostiene que la ciencia continúa siendo demasiado moderna.

Ciencia y tecnología: una nueva colonización

La brecha digital

Quizá el avance tecnológico más importante, en esta etapa de globalización, sea la aparición de la Internet (Rubio, 2019). Para muchos, internet es un sinónimo de avance, de posibilidades de información y conocimiento, de superación de problemas graves como el de la pobreza, la educación, etc. Para otros es una forma más de homogeneización cultural y una nueva forma de colonización. La primera reflexión acerca de Internet nos lleva a preguntarnos quién tiene acceso a ella. Acceder económica y culturalmente. Por supuesto, hay que poder tener una pc, un abono a algún servicio de internet y un conocimiento acerca de su funcionamiento. De alguna forma, requiere de una alfabetización especial a la que no todos los estudiantes pueden acceder. Como sostiene Tello Leal (2007:2):

“La brecha digital alimenta otra mucho más preocupante: la brecha cognitiva que acumula los efectos de las distintas brechas observadas en los principales ámbitos del conocimiento, el acceso a la información, la educación, la investigación científica, la diversidad cultural y lingüística, que representa el verdadero desafío planteado a la edificación de las sociedades del conocimiento.”

Contrariamente a las promesas globalizadoras de una integración social y de una educación para todos, es sabido hoy que todo ha sido una falsa promesa. Hay una brecha internacional entre los países desarrollados y los que no, y una brecha doméstica que separa a un país entre ricos y pobres o excluidos. Uno de los sectores más desprotegidos y con menor acceso a la Internet es el de los pueblos originarios. Tello Leal (2007:2) afirma:

“La brecha cognitiva (knowledge divide) apunta a una sociedad donde los conocimientos empiezan a ser parte del dominio de sólo un segmento de la sociedad, mientras que las mayorías se encuentran excluidas del mismo, lo cual hace referencia a la existencia de una pronunciada brecha cognitiva que puede generar un escenario de conflictos y de mayor inequidad.”

Si a esto le sumamos lo que sucede con el conocimiento universitario y/o científico, la cuestión no es más fácil, pero tiene algunas diferencias. No es que la brecha no exista y que la situación de las

Universidades sea muy diferente. Muchos centros investigación de países no desarrollados, como suceden en algunos de América Latina, no cuentan con laboratorios de computadoras para estudiantes, ni con bibliotecas digitales, y hasta no tienen acceso libre y gratuito a internet (Pineda, 2009: Alva de la Selva, 2015).

Academia y tecnología

Como hemos visto otra forma de colonización sistemática es la que se lleva a cabo a partir de las nuevas tecnologías. Además, de la universalidad de las plataformas o sistemas de nuestras pcs o de sus componentes, software, hardware, etc., las redes sociales son también una nueva forma de colonización. Facebook, Instagram, Tinker, y tantas otras. Si bien estas herramientas pueden ser útiles a la hora de difundir información, por ejemplo, académica, las plataformas, y todo cuanto allí se dice no escapan a la lógica capitalista del mercado. Inmediatamente, aparece la publicidad de aquello que se relaciona con lo que hemos escrito en el estado o en un comentario o con las búsquedas que realizamos.

“Ambos recursos (la información y el conocimiento) son valores de uso, que tienen una utilidad definida en el trabajo material y mental. Pero ahora tienden a convertirse también en valores de cambio con precios proporcionales a su aporte a la valoración del capital.” (Katz, 2000:3).

La socialización del conocimiento que pueda darse en lugares como Academia.edu, Researchgate, Dialnet, aparece como una forma de resistencia ya que el conocimiento como bien puede reproducirse fácilmente, sin gastarse, sin sufrir deterioro, es al revés que otros bienes materiales, algo que, al ampliarse su uso, se vuelve mejor y más potente.

Sin embargo, existen muchos y serios problemas con el copyright. Los libros y las revistas más leídas y buscadas por los investigadores no permiten que los artículos se suban a esas bases de datos. Con lo que las lecturas más importantes siguen estando vedadas para la mayoría de los estudiantes e investigadores.

Esto también lleva a un cierto descriso acerca del uso de materiales encontrados en estos espacios o en el *google scholar*. Esta presuposición, que sin duda en muchos casos no es cierta, lleva a muchas Universidades o centros a desestimar su uso. Por otra parte, la mayoría de los académicos publican sus trabajos en estas bases a menos que tengan problemas con el copyright. Sin embargo, algunas ya han empezado a dejar de ser gratuitas. Academia.edu requiere hoy en día un pago anual o mensual para que el académico pueda “acceder” a toda la información sobre su trabajo: ¿Quién lee lo que escribe?, ¿De qué Universidad es? ¿Quiénes de los que te leen te citan? Saber más sobre las repercusiones del propio trabajo tiene un costo extra. Esto limita las posibilidades de contacto con otros académicos interesados en los mismos problemas.

Conclusiones o ¿qué podemos hacer?

Creo que debemos ampliar nuestros horizontes académicos, en primer lugar, debemos aprender más entre nosotros. Es algo muy dicho, pero poco practicado. Nos debemos discusiones ricas entre nosotros, ya sea dentro de cada país como regionalmente. Luego necesitamos mirar hacia otros horizontes. Nuestro trabajo con el paradigma oriental como lo denomina Shi-xu (2009), es un camino más que interesante de investigar. Este paradigma incluye a América Latina, África y China y tenemos muchas cosas en común, aunque a simple vista no lo parezca. Compartimos una historia

que nos divide entre los pueblos originarios de un país y los inmigrantes venidos de Europa, que ha dado lugar a un discurso racista y clasista. Tenemos un pasado y un presente neocolonial en todos los países de Latinoamérica, con sus variantes y especificidades. Nuestro pasado ha sido objeto de dictaduras militares, violaciones a los derechos humanos, y crímenes de lesa humanidad, seguidos de experimentos de neoliberalismo extremo desde la década del 90. Una situación socioeconómica caracterizada por la pobreza en muchas zonas de nuestros países, con una gran brecha entre ricos y pobres, baja industrialización, serios problemas en los sectores de la salud, la educación y una gran corrupción, (Pardo, 2010; 188-189).

Podemos continuar con nuestras investigaciones teniendo una mirada crítica hacia las teorías y métodos que utilizamos. Observar si las teorías y métodos que usamos fueron hechos para análisis de textos o si han sido realizados para análisis oracionales, si han sido pensados para contextos como los de nuestros países o no. Ser creativos y muy específicos a la hora de aplicar un método etnográfico. Dado que el ACD muchas veces analiza situaciones sociales que considera problemáticas, ser muy cuidadosos con esto. No debe darse esto por sentado a priori, lo que para algunos puede ser un problema para otros no. Por ejemplo, es el caso del embarazo adolescente, que para muchos constituye una problemática mientras que para muchas madres de esa edad no lo es. Esta constitución de problemáticas a priori debe ser muy revisado para no ser prejuiciosos ni jueces. Hacer trabajo de campo es fundamental para una investigación multidisciplinar que persiga un estudio crítico del discurso.

También debemos tener en cuenta que el discurso es nuestra prioridad y que, si no cambia el discurso, es imposible cambiar lo social. Es importante también no reproducir conductas posmodernas ligadas a la homogeneización y al desvalor de la ciencia como el ser a-metodológico y creer que todo vale.

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Defusing Master Narratives: Decolonial, Insurgent, Gentle Moves in a Con-Text of Teacher Education and Educational Research

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Abstract

This article intends to share a very particular perspective on teacher education and educational research while asserting the inevitability, inescapability, of such local epistemological bias¹³. It discusses the hermeneutic, narrative, decolonial and performative turns and their interplay with the

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¹³ It must be noted that this positioning has implied an explicit rejection of the use of passive voice and the (impersonalized) third person in writing this article. The choice of the pronoun “we” constitutes in itself a political gesture—an exercise of rhetoric prerogative, in the terms Segato (2019), Walsh (2011), and Yedaide (2017) propose—. In addition, we affiliate to the thesis which claims that separating the personal and the political constitutes a modern technology: a culture of the non-culture (Haraway, 1997), that is to say, a maneuver that conceals the *necessary* political bias present in all social products, even and especially when these are self-presented as merely technical. As to our use of English in writing—though apparently contradictory with the epistemic authority we defend—it must be read simply as a gesture manifesting willingness to engage in productive dialogue with peoples who do not speak Spanish.

geocultural and political conditions in a con-text¹⁴ which is acknowledged as highly productive (and strongly conditioning) of social meaning. On the basis of teaching and research experience, some insurgent, gentle moves have been designed as ethico-onto-epistemological gestures to experiment on concrete possibilities of fluidity and instability for master narratives. Far from naïvely believing in the “fall”, “end” or “breaking down” of these narratives, defusing them involves instead a positioning on language, narrative and discourse capable of devising provisional and changing patterns of contingent intelligibility which allow for greater exercise of civic sovereignty. Critical, decolonial and queer pedagogies actually constitute the core beliefs which—subjected to the constraints of contingency—are asked to perform this double role of both structuring and shattering grand narratives.

Keywords

Master Narratives; Critical, Decolonial and Queer Pedagogies; Teacher Education; Educational Research.

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¹⁴ The choice of splitting the word “context” as “con-text” aims at raising awareness regarding the decisive influence that any setting exercises in meaning-making (a site should not be taken as merely ornamental or as landscape/ background but rather as an agent, productive in the construction of meaning, we argue.

Introduction

Much has been discussed lately—especially as a result of the growing sophistication and depth in the realm of Critical Discourse Analysis (Rau et al., 2018) but also as a consequence of epistemological disruptions created by social movements and parallel academic activism—about the conflicting and unsettling relations between grand narratives (also known as master narratives and big fables, among many other terms) and the actual possibilities for the exercise of (personal, collective) civic (narrative) sovereignty. Critical theory and particularly critical pedagogies have been paramount in the exploration of such tensions, but other productive social agencies have recently joined in with complementary and also rival theses. The discussions shift emphasis in organizing their arguments around language, discourse or narrative, and the three terms seem to find a common ground in the critical and decolonial pedagogical fields precisely due to their shared interest in the productive and political dimensions which define the “knowledges”—understood as dynamic, impermanent by-products of our experiences in the world—which are actually feasible in the semiotic territories we inhabit (Yedaide, 2017). The relationships between master narratives and the other tales (we use the adjective ‘other’ since there is no way to conclude whether they constitute counter-narratives in a political, explicit, sense) are at the heart of the critical and hermeneutic turns, and currently defied by queer perspectives and decolonial cosmogonies. This article will partially address this contention.

In an attempt to avoid dominant, normative epistemologies (Denzin, 2018), we begin by exposing the biases that condition the academic production in our regional settings (which are Latin American but strongly signified by closer and more local references as well). A description of the scenarios which co-produce our semantic options is deployed, as we refrain from engaging in modern, “modest witnessing” (Haraway, 1997) but still exercise agencement (Manning in Nordstrom, 2018). The choice of the word “defusing” in the title indicates the humble character of our intentions. No fall, end or final (absolute) breaking down of master or grand narratives must be expected; instead, some theses will be asserted on condition they are operating in a fluid, impermanent and unstable semantic fabric. They are thus operationally useful while contested as soon as they become fixed, essentialised instances of (totalizing, absolute) Truth.

After the characterization of the meaning-productive con-text, the article addresses these grand narratives which our practice community provisionally holds on account of their authenticity—a form of validity which is consonant with our stance (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2012). There we delve into some of the interwoven relationships in the ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad, Taguchi in Kuby and Christ, 2018) which defines our (provisional) standpoint. We also discuss the dimensions in decolonial and queer epistemological-political claims that defy critical and hermeneutical positions on account of their strong ties with western Humanism.

Finally, some minor, gentle insurgent moves are proposed, in an attempt to fulfill the promise of defusing the very foundations of our academic endeavors. We will argue that such moves matter on account of the pedagogic force of teaching and researching. After all, the point is to approach the political traffic of the ontologies we favor, rather than look beyond or beneath our core beliefs (Stoler in Gerrard et al., 2017).

A meaning-making con-text

In the spirit discussed above, it is clear that describing the arenas of our daily work as teachers and researchers here must be the first step into any honest discussion of master narratives and the possibility of defusing them. That is so because we believe knowledge is embodied, local and performed/performing experience and enactment (Denzin, 2018¹⁵), rather than a product or necrotic sediment of (other) social/cognitive practice. Knowing is an instance¹⁶, but it is one highly conditioned by geocultural forces that have established certain provisional patterns of the intelligible and the knowable (Grimson, 2013; Angenot, 2012). Recognizing these planes of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari in St. Pierre, 2018) fulfills the post (and anti) humanist intent to upset the social and epistemological power abuse of modern, European, male and scientific Truth (Haraway, 1997). We thus rely on “agential realism”, as we situate any knowledge claims in local experience (Denzin, 2018, p.13).

Needless to say, we are aware of our resorting to some (own, shared) master narratives as we write, and yet feel their treatment may pierce the toxic positivity of contemporary life (Ehrein in Halberstam, 2018). This is so because we rely on epistemic authority—in the meanings Lorena Cabnal¹⁷ ascribes to the phrase—and define the value of academic productions in terms of authenticity rather than truthfulness. We thus proceed to offering con-textual clues that provide the (meaning- productive) background of our core beliefs.

To begin with, we should say that teacher education in Argentina is disputed among two institutionalized options: universities and teacher- training colleges. This fracture is historical and decisive in terms of social authority and prestige, as it interplays with many other gender, class (and lately, ethnic) heterarchies¹⁸. Universities enjoy the greatest status while they are the most-detached from school-related phenomena and culture, since they tend to emphasize disciplinary rather than pedagogic knowledges and practices (Yedaide, 2017). In such contexts, teacher training is weak and teacher education¹⁹ enforced in everyday (discursive and non- discursive) rituals. Thus, the kind of work that we are impelled to do needs to de-naturalize and disclose not just the narratives that “say” teachers and education but also the social practices that “mean” these in other—often contradictory—terms.

¹⁵ Even if we are indebted to Norman Denzin for the category “performed experience”, we exercise discursive prerogative (a category we will discuss later on) and invest it here with the meanings inspired by Eve Sedgwick’s discussion of performativity as something overflowing the domains of language (Austinian and post Austinian views) and affecting all social practice (Sedgwick, 2018).

¹⁶ Also after Denzin, 2018, with some self-indulgence for reinterpretation.

¹⁷ Lorena Cabnal is a Mayan, Guatemaltecan feminist. In a Workshop held at Mar del Plata State University in March, she introduced herself and asserted such identity granted herself the epistemic authority to discuss only meaning pertaining women like her (indigenous, Mayan, Guatemaltecan).

¹⁸ Cairo and Grosfoguel discuss “heterarchies” as the full set of binary, hierarchical symbolic and material structures embedded in the modern and colonial power pattern (Cairo and Grosfoguel, 2010).

¹⁹ We have defined a difference between “teacher training” and “teacher education” (formación / educación docente in Spanish), as it is well documented in many other articles. Teacher training is useful to refer to the institutional intentions, while the word education signals the immanent, ubiquitous processes of reconstruction of the self and professional teacher identity in the wider realm of culture. Addressing teacher education in our contexts implies acknowledging the force of social meanings constructed elsewhere and throughout people’s lives.

The teaching experience we have devised for this particular setting²⁰—which is also characterized by the unrestrictive access and free-tuition policy of State Universities in our country—has consequently relied on appealing to auto-biographical writing, artifact analysis and performance. In a course which is introductory to the master narratives in the field of educational science, and which is then concerned with the discussion of pedagogical traditions, resistance is exercised in the invitation to live, enact (rather than read and discuss), critical, decolonial and queer pedagogies. The students are asked not just to question but to find own ways of resisting, disrupting and re-existing (Walsh, 2013) the modern/colonial narratives and their associated non-discursive practices²¹. Hybrid narratives²² (Porta & Yedaide, 2016) and performance pedagogies (Denzin, 2018) are encouraged, as we oscillate between forces that draw us into the core domain of higher education rituals, and some other rival forces that seek to address “outside” social institutions and constructions. In the process, certainties for us Professors are dissolved, and the provisional theses stemming from critical decolonial and queer pedagogies strained and revised. We thus inhabit a highly volatile territory when it comes to relying on master narratives.

Research work has not been simpler. The Research Group²³ originally addressed a very specific topic in the field of educational sciences—namely good teaching, in the light of Fenstermacher (1989) and Fenstermacher & Richardson (2005) and under the scope of a New Agenda for Didactics (Litwin, 1996, 2008) – in a very traditional manner. Back in the early years of the millennium, the intention was to identify and analyze good teaching, a process which eventually resulted in the recognition of ‘memorable professors’ and implied a new interest in targeting these people’s beliefs and professional lives as sources of clues into their success in teaching. Thus, semi-structured interviews became the privileged methodological technique. The dialogues thereby produced led, in turn, to unsettling findings as to the intimacy between personal and professional experience, rational and emotional insights, ethics and aesthetics. Driven by such findings, several new analytical lines were added to aid interpretation, and to specifically understand the dissociated character these dichotomies had /have acquired in the realm of educational sciences. These new

²⁰ We refer to “Problemática Educativa”, an introductory course for all the Teacher-Training programs at the School of Humanities, Mar del Plata State University, Argentina.

²¹ As it may become clearer later, the central thesis of the Decolonial Turn implies that Modernity and Coloniality are two sides of the same phenomenon which resulted from the conquest of America in the 15th century. Coloniality can thus be understood as an on-going civilizing force which fulfills its aim by subjecting the non-western peoples to a Eurocentric, provincial, ontological and epistemological matrix which presents itself as the one and only Truth. For more on the Modernity-Coloniality Research Program, its origin, core tenets and legacies, Bidaseca (2010) constitutes an excellent source to consult.

²² “Hybrid narrative” is a phrase coined in this particular pedagogic setting to refer to student texts (or productions in alternative languages) that interweave common sense knowledges and perceptions with theoretical theses. The students are asked to depart from whatever they know (that is to say, what they have learnt, often unconsciously, in culture throughout their lives) and make it dialogue with conceptual categories that address the same educational matters. This usually results in challenging and desacralizing the bibliographical corpus, and fosters an attitude favorable to joining in composing new, better-fitted theses.

²³ Research Group on Education and Cultural Studies (GIEEC). CIMED, School of Humanities, Mar del Plata State University, Argentina.

conceptual frames resulted in a growing interest in critical, pedagogical and then queer pedagogies, on the one hand, as well as in socio-critical and decolonial research, on the other.

Much of what is discussed in the next section can be regarded as an outgrowth of our response to these concerns.

Core-beliefs: local, contingent and provisional master narratives that define the ethico-onto-epistemological bias in the con-text described above²⁴

As it has been already discussed, these core-beliefs can be understood as a privileged ethico-onto-epistemological choice—one among many possible others. The ontological and epistemological dimensions are closely related in such stance, since we assume that reality is not independent from the conditions for the production of knowledge. In fact, even if we are prone to believing in the existence of something real beyond our capacities to (semantically) grasp it, there is consensus now (in discourse rather than in actual scientific practice, though) that our encounters with this “world” are inevitable mediated by our interpretative, cultural lenses (Ryan, 1999) and that “We come to know by being and doing in the material world” (Kuby & Christ, 2018, p. 294). This means that we (collectively, regularly, over time and in most occasions unconsciously) create the matrixes that condition what we can know. As to the relationship with ethics, this must also be explained in the intimacy between the ontological and epistemological dimensions: our co-participation in reproducing and/or defying the narratives that define the worlds we inhabit implies, as we will discuss further ahead, greater responsibility for our choices. From this perspective, then, research and teaching should be situated in the juxtaposed (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2017) semiotic territories that stretch between the traditional critical categories of structure and agency.

We have come to particularly define research as a meaning-making practice which is invested with social legitimacy, stressing both its performative (Gerrard, et al., 2017) and pedagogical force (Sedgwick, 2018). The colonial use of modern research and science—acutely described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 2005) and Rita Segato (2015) among many others—has raised questions regarding the nineteenth-century intentions and social uses of all scientific disciplines as biopolitical technologies, but also in relation with traditions that have ever since consolidated and are very much alive in academic circles nowadays (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It might be sensibly argued that coloniality of knowledge and the self (Mardonado Torres, 2007)²⁵, continuing civilizing forces, are currently exercised by means of power regimes such as editorial arbitration and research founding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These research practices, which have become a solid arsenal of biotechnology, are fortunately actively contested nowadays. Resistance has taken the form of

²⁴ Needless to say, perhaps, our local, provisional and contingent view embraces all kinds of contributions, welcoming Eurocentric as well as other rationalities in the analysis. As in research itself, the techniques are measured against effects and consequences, and these must be justified ethically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Technologies, after all, have always served our intentions; ideological clarity as to which these are provides an unmistakable trajectory in our case.

²⁵ Within the scope of the Decolonial Turn, Anibal Quijano’s “coloniality of power” soon triggered the construction of related categories (such as coloniality of knowledge and the self) which have helped identify, and dispute, the civilizing forces which are still operational in education (understood in the broadest possible sense, as pertaining to all social life) and operate as repertoires of references to decide what good knowledge and good people are.

rejection but also has resulted productively in the design of new forums and devices for alternative scientific work²⁶.

In this disputed arena, radical, decolonial research practices have come to question objectivity, generalization and validity as preferred targets for the dismantlement of coloniality of knowledge and being. Objectivity is not only conclusively ruled out on account of the ontological-epistemological stance described above, but also signaled as a perverse practice of dehumanization, since the concealment of the subject/s deprives the audience of a fair assessment of their (political) intentions and frees them from assuming responsibilities for their research products (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2012). The epistemology of the zero point (Castro Gomez, 2005) indeed seems to work as a technology for the transformation of a truth into the Truth—a specific politics of representation (Denzin, 2018) —.

The modern pretense of generalization also depends on the relative independence of knowledge and subject. As Donna Haraway extensively describes after Shapin and Schaffer (in Haraway, 1997), objectivity was/is made possible possible by the emergence of three related technologies (material, literary and social) which defined, in early Modernity, what counted as knowledge while endowing the “modest witness” with both social and epistemic power and invisibility— suppressing thereby his²⁷ responsibility for addressing ethical concerns—. Besides being modern, the inertia to universalization and abstraction is also colonial; it is actually intimate with one of the founding myths of the modern/colonial narrative: the interpretation of all human experiences in a linear frame that transformed the non-European into pre-European (Lander, 2001). The univocal appeal to essentialism constitutes a Western trademark (Galcerán Huguet, 2010), and explains much of the current exercise of hegemony worldwide. In scientific research the demands of generalization and abstraction are still strong especially, though not exclusively, in positivist and postpositivist paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 2012).

Finally, validity has been exposed as an endoconsistent technology and has yielded—at least discursively—to some degree of defiance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012)—. Its role in defining regimes of truth and justifying arbitration policies as dividing practices (St. Pierre, 2018) is still fully operational in the academic field, but its legitimacy is gradually eroding. Instead, the value of research is by some measured in terms of authenticity. When this sort of authorized knowledge production is interpreted as public pedagogy (Denzin, 2018) what matters most is its capacity to trigger change and enhance self- awareness and social consciousness—what has been defined as catalytic and educational forms of authenticity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2012).

In more practical terms, these beliefs have transmuted in our immediate context into on-demand research, flexible methodological designs and a wide array of strategies for securing academic legitimacy without bending to norms which violate the principles we (provisionally) hold. On-demand research refers to a form of emphasized co-participative epistemology (Llamazares, 2013); it is a construct which has been manufactured after Rita Segato’s proposal to turn anthropology

²⁶ Our refusal to avoid the first person plural in writing can be read in these political and epistemological coordinates.

²⁷ The use of the male pronoun follows Haraway’s denounce of the role of European patriarchy in the construction of these technologies.

into a practice that is subservient to a people's needs and emancipatory empowerment (Segato, 2015). In research it implies collaborative work not only in "producing" data but rather from the very definition of the research topics and objectives (Yedaide, 2016). Then, the adoption of flexible designs responds to a deflation of methodological constraints in favor of emphases on attaining catalytic and educational authenticity. It also makes room for our eroticism (understood as human creative energy and potential) as we are motivated to engage in imaginative work and create the devices that best respond to the particular needs. Finally, the strategies to preserve academic authority include heavy reliance on solid bibliographical support for our decisions, and the promotion of relationships with scholars worldwide who are also committed to escaping the modern/colonial technocratic rationale.

Turning now into teaching, the core beliefs we hold can be explored through the contributions of the three pedagogical perspectives which converge in the present analysis. Since critical pedagogy is well-known in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis and many other related domains, we will emphasize the contributions that decolonial and queer pedagogies add to the political, insurgent, counter-hegemonic and activist notes of the critics. However, we must start by acknowledging that there is no "decolonial pedagogy" (or "queer pedagogy" for that matter) but rather a number of social endeavors and loose practices which are usually clustered under such labels. Though this is also probably true of all taxonomies, the explicit rejection of a unifying tag is consistent with the refusal to go by modern/colonial truth regimes. Instead, multiple pedagogical experiences are thought to exhibit traits that may speak of them as partial, incomplete and singular expressions of the decolonial or queer realms.

In the case of the (instrumentally-called here) decolonial pedagogies, the name is granted to those experiences with are grounded on the belief in the colonality of power (Quijano, 1997), as well as the theses associated to this original category, and defined by the *loci* of enunciation (in the Global South, by the Global South and for the Global South). The geocultural location is paramount: cosmogonies seem to act as atmospheres (the afore-mentioned planes of immanence) made up of certain enduring consistencies (thickenings in the terms St. Pierre proposes after Deleuze and Guattari in 2018) which radicalize difference. Adopting the decolonial turn thus implies recognizing and respecting competing and conflicting rival master narratives, as it also indirectly demands the imperative of epistemic authority. In practical terms and in the awareness of the fact that experience *does* us (Nordstrom, 2018) these beliefs bring the exploration of the dialogues between structure an agency to an irremediably local level.

In our teaching con-texts, pedagogies are understood as practices which discretionally distribute social legitimacy (over some particular choices in saying, being, living and believing) in an attempt to discipline subjectivity. Decolonial pedagogies, particularly and in contrast, are thought as those practices which redistribute, self-arrogate and arrogate discursive and other kinds of authority (Yedaide, 2017). This working definition orientates teaching in the direction of culture—drawing attention to common sense, immanence and ubiquity in educational practices, as it has already been developed—and of enhancing students' performance in creating conditions for re-existing (Walsh, 2013).

Queer pedagogies—rather the random practices that we enroll under this name tag—have brought about a dislike for the static, a recovery of the erotic, an interest in dissidence as a means to radical epistemic opening (Flores, 2017; Britzman, 2016; Halbertam, 2018). They reify being instead of

having/owning, as they awaken the senses and rely on emotions and feelings not only as complementary dimensions of humans but mostly as foundational and central to all forms of rationalization—even what counts as ignorance (Sedgwick in Britzman, 2016)—. If, as Teixeira Cohello (2009) has asserted, modernity has induced the suffocation of desire, performing along the lines of our personal (sensitive and sexual) powerful creative energies can be read as a clear case of political resistance. If pleasure and imagination have also been cast under the spell of coloniality (Ferrera Balanquet, 2015), decolonial detachments—defined as the “active abandonment of the forms of knowledge which subject us and actively model our subjectivities in the modern fictional fantasies” (Mignolo 2015, our translation)—are important to guarantee grammars of possibility (Halberstam, 2018).

In critical pedagogies, language (a term which is often used without much rigor interchangeably with discourse and narrative) is a contested domain. Likewise, in pedagogies that have been queerized and/or attracted to the decolonial turn, it is defined as an opportunity for semantic reinvestment. The political operation of words can be activated to meet our needs and desires (Flores, 2017) and empowerment exercised through a politics of naming (Walsh, 2011). Though not limited to the discursive domains of human experience, these pedagogies try to grasp what is *inessentially* common (Britzman in Nordstrom, 2018) for a people, understanding narratives constitute strategic enactments nailed to a concrete territory and only partially and momentarily prone to defiance.

Defusing master narratives: a political gesture of insurgency

In the light of the profound influence that master narratives exercise in our encounters with “the world”, insurgent moves are necessarily tiny but nonetheless precious. One of these consists in turning academic attention to whatever happens beyond the verbal bias of the modern/colonial paradigm. In research, it might mean to resort to, for instance, observations of gestures, body language, and the arrangement of people in space. As Bourdieu and Wacquant have extensively discussed (Bourdieu, 2008; Wacquant, 2005 may serve as references), much social meaning is embodied and inscribed in rituals and social practices which are either non-verbal or pre-discursive. Even if language is a common means for making sense—and the only way of securing contestation of the hegemonic—we need to acknowledge, after Grimson (2013) and in response to Spivac’s ‘Can the subaltern speak?’, that the subaltern may be saying something which cannot be ‘heard’ in the matrixes of intelligibility that discourse has constructed. Unintelligibility, as Halberstam claims after Scott (2018), is often a reliable source of political autonomy. Research and teaching as public pedagogies may want to resort to the study of other signs and modes of expression in their attempt to defuse –or at least destabilize, provisionally and partially—big fables.

Another related move consists in re-humanizing teaching and researching by developing an aesthetic mode which fosters the exposure and production of beauty as a policy of civic intervention (claiming agency over our bodies, our walls, our public spaces) but also as a means to engaging us in feeling hatred, awe, inspiration and other passions which force us to committing to the common ground and to reconnecting with the self (Han, 2015). Desire needs to be awoken, as it is capable of erotizing ourselves and re-ligate us to other beings (human and otherwise). Empathy and responsibility over all that lives can only result from an affected subject; respect for radical

difference (that which is cosmogonic and conflictive, as we have asserted) cannot exist without them.

A third related, gentle move away from the pervading influence of master narratives is closely related with performance pedagogy (Denzin, 2018). Clearly, acting, moving our bodies, raising our voices to chant, to sing, etc. are means to exploring, creating and recreating conditions of existence which are ruled out of the academy but can generously feed our desire for expanding comprehension—which is always, in the end, some sort of understanding about who we are (becoming). Engaging in performances is highly educational and paves the way for reconnecting with the desire for social change, thus fulfilling the two significant types of authenticity which Kincheloe and McLaren (2012) have recommended for research.

In this inventory of minor tales and practices to pierce the master narratives, alternative cosmogonies may be profoundly inspirational. Even while exercising epistemological surveillance—to avoid losing sight and track of epistemic authority—contact with foreign traditions and beliefs constitutes a precious reminder of the locality and contingency of the noosphere²⁸ we inhabit. While it would be foolish and perverse to replace the Western, modern view by a new one (even if it represents a closer geopolitical choice, as in the case of the indigenous peoples in *Abya Yala*), opening up to the array of human expressions in regard to their understanding of (divine) relationships with life and the universe can shatter our confidence and reinsert us in an ever mobile stage.

As Deborah Britzman says, as she discusses Valerie Walkerdine (Britzman, 2016, p. 43, our translation), “Pedagogy does not only produce particular kinds of knowledge but also the subjects that allegedly know”. We have defined (critical, decolonial, queer) pedagogies as the practices of (self) awarding prerogatives to produce and legitimize meanings—those which foster hospitality and make lives livable—. If something needs to be taught and some knowledge must be produced in our academic con-texts, they might as well go in the direction of creating conditions for authorship and authorization of otherness. We might fulfill the teleological urge in teaching (Burbules, 1995; Steiner, 2007) by proposing inten(t/s)ionalities (Kuby and Christ, 2018), that is to say, instances of remaining intentional while relationships among concepts are kept in tension. It looks, after all, very much like the organizing principle of critical pedagogies, which advocates for the virtuosity of questions as a routine of destabilization and interruption.

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²⁸ We use this term in the sense Edgard Morin does in *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future* (Unesco, 1999).

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Pathways and Crossroads of the Decolonial Option: Challenging Marx and Zeus with a *Rabo de Arraia*²⁹

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Abstract

This essay uses the expansion of decolonial studies in the so-called Decolonial Turn as a starting point to discuss a few recent significant criticisms against this project – notably those arising from decolonial feminism and counter-colonial thinking. The first criticism of the decolonial option refers to its rapid expansion, with a somewhat mythical portrayal of the Modernity/Coloniality project, thus risking the radical quality of initial ideas. Additionally, there is the pertinent criticism of the treatment initially given to the gender issue, which was not addressed by scholars considered to be precursors of this line of thought. Other powerful matters arose as decolonial thinking spread to different social science fields, including questioning the very possibility of criticism from academic circles. These criticisms generate profound reflections on this movement that intends to bring radical transformations to conservative academic knowledge production. Assuming that coloniality is constitutive of the present, we take these criticisms to look at decoloniality in the field of language studies. On that ground, we maintain that any epistemological breach must start from the contradictions of modernity. We believe that critical discourse studies improve understanding by situating intertextuality and interdiscursivity as inevitable aspects of every discourse, including academic theories and practices.

Keywords

Decoloniality, decolonial feminism, contra-coloniality, critical discourse studies.

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²⁹ *Rabo de arraia* is a type of roundhouse kick and one of the most common techniques of *capoeira*, one of the cultural symbols of Afro-descendent resistance in Brazil.

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Introduction

A crossroads can be a meeting point where two roads are joined, but it can also be a place where roads diverge, and new paths and possibilities can be chosen (Nascimento e Santana Junior, 2019: 68)

The decolonial turn, or decolonial option (Palermo, 2013), appeared over two decades ago and has spread like wildfire (or “like a plague,” in the words of one of its more sensitive theorists³²) across various academic fields in the humanities. The project, led by Latin American intellectuals, has imposed itself in research centers throughout the world, both in the global South and North. It has also infiltrated the funding agenda, and there are more than a few programs and research centers in the Global North with titles such as “Global South Studies,” some of which do follow the decolonial option. In contrast, others somewhat adapt, with contradictions, in order to fit into the new lines of funding.

Despite being championed by Latin American intellectuals, the burgeoning youth of decolonial researchers, who seemed to have helped the initial push for the decolonial project, were working in research centers in the Global North, specifically in the United States. Out of American institutions, from the colonial and imperial North, the so-called powerful decolonial criticism first gained ground beyond the Rio Grande, especially in former Spanish colonies, and then reached the former Portuguese colony only after it had already invaded the old continent. It is not the first time nor, alas, does it seem to be the last, that a warm current is only felt in Brazilian lands after sweeping the Mediterranean, rotating past the Baltic Sea, and mixing with icy Arctic currents.

It does not seem out of place to regret, once again, the fact that we are eternally looking up to the North, turning our backs on our neighbors in the South. In Brazil, whoever attended undergraduate classes in Social Sciences in the 1980s and 1990s are well aware that Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, or Orlando Fals Bodas were not names that could be easily found on the course catalogs of the mandatory subjects. It seems that today this has changed, but this has only occurred in the last decade, and it is a welcome change.

About five years ago, the first conferences on decoloniality in Brazil were seen as unique opportunities in Brazilian universities. It is the case of the pioneering initiative of the sociology department at the University of Brasilia, which brought to Brazil, for the first time, Latin American intellectuals who were being read as the founders of decolonial thought. Mostly men and a few women who still do not feature as stars at the conferences. A colloquium and publication carried out in 2016 are the result of this pioneering work by the University of Brasília (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel, 2016). In the specific field of language studies, the Center for Language and Society Studies has also been holding colloquiums and decolonial study cycles since 2017 and introduce increasing momentum to critical discourse studies carried out at the University of Brasilia.

³² Because the observation was proffered in an informal conversation, we chose not to name the author.

In 2013, Luciana Ballestrin published an article presenting Decolonial Studies to the Brazilian public. The text renders an account of the Modernity/Coloniality project, erected to the mythical place of origin of Decolonial Studies. It includes a review of the supposedly main authors writing about the new-fangled and powerful line of research: nine Latin American men, two of whom are based in the USA, and one Portuguese man, one Latin American woman, and one American woman based in Ecuador, as well as an important American scholar, Immanuel Wallerstein, whose World-systems theory was raised to the condition of the theoretical substratum of decolonial thought along with Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation and Quijano's Coloniality of Power (Ballestrin, 2013).

Aiming an accurate picture of the speed of the "Decolonial Studies expansion" and the issues surrounding its spread across the world, we may compare it to Cultural Studies, the previous academic trend that capitalized on the hope of revolutionary transformation in the production of academic knowledge. Coined in the late 1960s, Cultural Studies took over the world and remained for the following three decades, imposing itself, for example, in Latin America only during the 1990s, just before the advance of Decolonial Studies, and in the USA about a decade earlier. According to the narrative of one of its main authors, the predominance of men also marked the trajectory of Cultural Studies, leading to internal criticisms and internal rupture initiatives that culminated in the publication of *Women Take Issues* in 1978, when Cultural Studies also dictated agendas for research in the Global North (Hall, 1992).

1. Decolonial Feminism and Other Criticisms

The expansion of Cultural Studies and the massive increase in funding sources led to reflections regarding its revolutionary potential. The spread of the decolonial option also brought along the first critical assessments, which becomes implicit in the characterization of the expansion of the decolonial option as a "plague." A plague spreads over the surface, and does not leave deep roots - thus runs the risk of losing its radical quality.

However, also like Cultural Studies, the object of the first criticisms was not only the dissemination and institutionalization of the decolonial option, nor these criticisms were the most important. The initial reflections on the imbrications between gender and race were criticized by authors who would come to propose decolonial feminism. The very gestation of Decolonial Studies, dominated by male intellectuals, was criticized by militant intellectuals, mainly from Caribbean women's movements. Some of the male intellectuals of the Modernity/Coloniality project were taken as "spokesmen" for decoloniality. Albeit involuntarily, they could be repeating a pattern of male oppression, which, through the monopoly of speech, increases the silence of several decolonial movements led by black and indigenous women in different places in Latin America. This is the tone, for example, of the criticism proffered by the Dominican intellectual and activist Ochy Curiel against the elitist and androcentric tendencies of currents of subordinate studies conducted by the main scholars of the Modernity/Coloniality project as well as the theoretical bases of Decolonial Studies. Citing Curiel:

Neither Fanon nor Césaire address categories such as sex and sexuality. Contemporary Latin Americans also do not write about these topics (Mignolo, Quijano, Dussel). Though they place race as a criterion for classifying populations that determine positions in the sexual division of labor, they only mention *en*

passant the relationship between sex and sexuality. Moreover, they do not refer to the contribution of many feminists in this line of thought. (Curiel, 2007: 93).

Curiel proceeds to argue that, even without using the term coloniality, racialized feminists have, since the 1970s, deepened feminist criticism from their understanding of the imbrications of the diverse systems of racial, classist, sexist and heteronormative domination. However, even if the contribution of these racialized Afro-descendent and indigenous feminists had not denied, their names did not appear in the bibliographic references of recent decolonial reflections, thus the operation of silencing voices through discursive strategies of the unsaid. Even more radical is the criticism of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, who points to the construction of “a small empire within the empire” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010: 58). She extrapolates the criticism of silencing by denouncing the appropriation of ideas, especially in the analyses she proposes of the “world upside down,” by Waman Poma, and about internal colonialism and the epistemology of oral history.

The year 2007 seems to be a starting point for more gender-centered reflections within the modern/colonial system. Even though Curiel’s criticism is broader, María Lugones’ criticism of Quijano’s coloniality of power is more often cited (Lugones, 2007). Later, she extends the criticism to Mignolo’s concept of colonial difference, and to Maldonado Torres’ coloniality of being. She develops then her idea of gender coloniality and of decolonial feminism (Lugones, 2014).

Lugones uses coloniality of power as a starting point but proposes to overcome a view that she considers narrow regarding the modern/colonial construction of the gender dimension based on patriarchal control of sex and its sources and resources, a view that is shared by Quijano (Lugones, 2007: 189–90).

In other texts, Lugones proposes a reflection on the construction of decolonial feminism, backing both her affiliation and her criticism of Quijano made in 2007 and, supported by the coloniality of being and colonial difference, proposes the idea of gender coloniality, defined as

concrete, intricately related exercises of power, some hand to hand, some legalist, some inside a room where indigenous uncivilized-female-bestial women are forced to weave day and night, others in the confessional. Differences in the concreteness and complexity of power that are always circulating are not understood as levels of generality; corporate and institutional subjectivity is equally concrete (Lugones, 2014: 948)

Emphasis on the discursive aspect of gender coloniality, since the clash of dominance/resistance of racialized women is also perpetuated by force of law and religion and by undervaluing these bodies, points to the relevance of discursive-oriented analyses that unravel the many forms of upholding and perpetuating the exercise of power.

Following Lugones’ criticism, Curiel proposes a reflection upon the need to engage in deeper discussions regarding the practices, pedagogies, policies, and methodologies that prevent the decolonial option from being limited to merely epistemological criticism. Curiel wonders “to what extent we reproduce the coloniality of power, knowledge and being when race, class, sexuality are converted only into analytical categories” (Curiel, 2019: 45), and proposes the path of constructing

a colonial feminist methodology that begins with the recognition and legitimization of “other subordinated knowledge”. Curiel warns, however, that this recognition and legitimation:

They cannot be inputs to clear epistemological guilt, nor is it just a matter of citing black, indigenous and impoverished feminists to give a critical touch to research and the knowledge and thoughts that are constructed. It is about identifying concepts, categories, theories that arise from subordinate experiences, which are generally produced collectively, which have the possibility to generalize without universalizing, to explain different realities to break the collective imagination that this knowledge is local, individual and are unable to be communicated (Curiel, 2019: 46).

The separation between scientific knowledge - produced in academic institutions - and traditional, or popular, or practical knowledge - produced by people living their lives and facing their daily routines - imposes a powerful challenge to achieve Curiel’s proposal to build categories and concepts from subordinate knowledge. This is because we are trained in universities to recognize the legitimacy of epistemological construction only in very restricted areas of the full range of human knowledge. Construction, in this case, as in many others, assumes the prior and attentive effort of deconstruction.

Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso, another prominent Dominican theorist and activist, follows Curiel and Lugones’ proposal to decolonize feminism from the understanding of European white feminism as part of coloniality. She also maintains the need to develop decolonial criticism in a deeper level, beyond a merely epistemological exercise. To this end, Espinosa seeks, through contributions from black and indigenous racialized feminisms, the radicalism of criticism and decolonial praxis.

Even though she shares the criticism of and recognizes some initial absences of Decolonial Studies concerning gender, Espinosa believes in the potential of the decolonial option to “advance in a counter-hegemonic epistemology attentive to Eurocentrism, racism and coloniality” (Espinosa Miñoso, 2014: 7). She emphasizes, however, that this can only be achieved in practice when relations between epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies are not lost. According to her:

Although for this approach, I resort to contemporary philosophical production and contributions from decolonial criticism, what moves me are not merely theoretical goals – if there is such a thing – but urgently practical goals. I do this because of my conviction that all action is based on interpretations of the world, which are simultaneously prescriptive of the world. Therefore, I am interested in unveiling what has supported our feminist practices and the contribution of our political practices. To the world, we are making possible through our actions. (Espinosa Miñoso, 2019: 2009)

Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso also draws our attention to the relevance of language, thus discursive studies, in the field of decolonial feminist criticism, by sustaining the generative relations between the interpretations of things in the world and the possibilities of political action in the world. In her most recent publication, Espinosa Miñoso reaffirms her ties to the decolonial option and its theoretical foundation traced to authors such as Quijano and Santiago Castro-Gomes. Furthermore, she includes a genealogy of experience in her methodological proposal by revisiting authors framed in the canons of colonial critical theories, such as Michel Foucault. She considers that, if the Foucaultian genealogical contribution can propose an anti-enlightenment criticism in the context

of coloniality, perhaps it can also help reveal the commitment of European feminism to coloniality. However, it is necessary always to be cautious of the implications that the use of the genealogical method could have on radical anti-racist and decolonial criticism (Espinosa Miñoso, 2019).

Other more recent criticisms of the decolonial option are more skeptical of the revolutionary possibilities of Decolonial Studies. They do not seem willing to make any concessions to any critical thinking within the framework of coloniality. For these more recent criticisms, Decolonial Studies cannot be revolutionary, as they share the same colonial epistemology; they possess the same methodological assumptions about the production of knowledge. Only a radically different epistemology could produce the kind of radicalism needed to break with coloniality.

One of these new trends has been presented as counter-colonial and not as decolonial, because, according to one of its thinkers, it can only decolonize whoever has colonized, so for colonized people, the option that remains is counter-coloniality and not decoloniality. Nascimento and Santana Júnior mention the ideas of counter-colonialist Nego Bispo in order to argue that:

we can understand that to be decolonial is to be colonial, because combatting knowledge that is said to be universal with the same epistemology means to attest to its superiority, its hegemony. It also implies revering this form of certified synthetic knowledge. (Nascimento e Santana Junior, 2019: 69)

However, although apparently a rupture, even the incipient and sharp counter-colonial criticism does not break the central assumptions of decoloniality. Apparently, it is also seeking to surpass, in this case, synthetic knowledge overcome by organic knowledge. The call for other epistemologies, centered on philosophies of Afro-Pindoramic civilizations, does not sound strange to the criticism based on the idea of the coloniality of knowledge. It is not far removed from the appeal for epistemologies of the South, which is part of the decolonial option, notably in the powerful texts by Ramose (2010, 2018), but also in Cusicanqui's indictments (2010, 2018).

Criticisms of Decolonial Studies are concurrent with their dissemination; even though, in academia, they did not reach the same audience and popularity that Decolonial Studies achieved, when they emerged, as myth, from the Modernity/Coloniality Project. However, in the criticisms, there is no denial of the relevance of decoloniality and its central theses on coloniality. In general, the criticisms highlight the need (or the (im)possibility, depending on the nature of the criticism) to overcome some aspects of coloniality within the very decolonial option linked to that project, as this would bring in some contradictions.

On the other hand, if we assume that coloniality is constitutive of the present, it is in its entrails, we will have to admit that all criticism, all deconstruction, and every break will have to start from these contradictions because there is no other way to overcome them. Here, also, critical discourse studies provide a deeper understanding by portraying intertextuality and interdiscursivity as inevitable aspects of every discourse, including theories. A critical theoretical practice that is admittedly interdiscursive will have to assume the limits of criticism coming from academia only and, as a result, guided by the need to build deeper partnerships. In the words of Santos:

On the day universities learn that they do not know, on the day universities choose to learn indigenous languages – instead of teaching them –, on the day universities choose to learn about indigenous architecture and choose to learn about the uses

of plants from the *caatinga* in the Brazilian Northeast, on the day they are willing to learn from us, just as we have learned one day from them, then we will have a confluence. A confluence of knowledge. A balanced process between the diverse civilizations of this place. A counter-colonization. (Santos, 2018: 51)

2. Decoloniality, worlding and wording

Although initial criticisms of the decolonial project often refer to questions about its expansion and the initial treatment given to the gender issue, other potent issues have been emerging with its spread across different disciplines. These criticisms provoke more reflections within the movement that is still emerging as a revolutionary light in the conservative field of academic knowledge production. Vanessa Andreotti's paper is an excellent example, in every way, of opening another front of issues that the decolonial option will have to face if it succeeds in maintaining its initial revolutionary intention (Andreotti, 2020). As an excellent example, the article serves not only to provide us with its reflections but also to lead us to others that, in large part, guide the writing of this essay.

The call for decoloniality in the field of Discourse Studies in the Latin American context was raised by the vice-president of the Latin American Association of Discourse Studies (Associação Latino-Americana de Estudos do Discurso - ALED) at the opening speech of the entity's international conference in 2017 (Resende, 2017). Following this same path, Andreotti proposes a division between two distinct orientations about language: one that considers language as the entity that constitutes the world (wording the world) and the other that considers language as another entity that constitutes and is made up of other entities in the world (worlding the word). For the author, from a discursive perspective, Decolonial Studies would be tied to the view constituted by coloniality, which understands language as an entity that constitutes the world as it represents it (wording the world). The only option that would have been developed until now by Decolonial Studies would be to explain the world in order to transform it through explanation, hence through language. Thus, Decolonial Studies would be imprisoned, themselves, in a worldview that is founded by and a founder of coloniality.

As a counterpoint and example of another view of the relationship between language and the world, the author offers us a sensitive interpretation of language perception, within the Maori people's worldview, as an entity among others that conform to themselves and the world (wording the world). According to her, among the Maori, language and human beings are two entities engaging in a non-hierarchical coexisting relationship, which illustrates a paradigm of a language that, instead of writing the world, is itself part of the world. Language speaks when we speak the language; language allows us to be in the language, and be the language.

The example of the Maori worldview is useful to the author as a counterpoint and anchor for her objective in the article, as she conducts a crucial point of reflecting on the revolutionary limits of Decolonial Studies as a whole and, more specifically, as a revolutionary option for Discourse Studies. The question is asked, in a thought-provoking manner, by the article itself, when the author admits to the paradox of only having the option of presenting a world view founded on *worlding the world*. The path of the word, that is, the path of *wording the world*, is the only one possible in the academic production of knowledge. It is precisely in this paradox that we find the crossroads

of the decolonial option, around which our reflections, always open and unfinished, are guided in this essay.

There are many contradictions (some obvious, others not so much) in academic movements that wish to revolutionize, especially when they assume that academia is a structuring part of the inequalities and injustices to overcome. It seems to be more influential in Decolonial Studies, which declare the university as a central gear in the process of the coloniality of knowledge and, therefore, of the coloniality of being and power. How to overcome this founding contradiction seems to be the question that is searching for an answer.

The paradox that Andreotti’s text (in this volume) mentions is agonizing, and precisely for this reason, it seems to put us in a dilemma, a trap from which we cannot escape. The questions posed are disturbing because they open up many others, including the matter of whether the questions posed by the author are the best or the most urgent to ask, and why we believe that answering them in the context of academic research may be in any way relevant.

Critical discourse studies aspire to be able to substantiate critical explanations of particular social issues based on language, precisely owing to the relationship that language shares with other social elements – with the world beyond language; with subjectivities engendered in language and in embodied constitutive mobility; with the relationships between people and people with the non-human entities that surround them. Understanding language as both part of the social world and the result of the social world is what makes this effort complex, and discourse becomes an elusive object. Andreotti’s criticism is disturbing not because of the nature of the discursive studies – since wording the world and making the word mundane are aspects of language recognized in this field – but because of our assumed place as human beings in this complexity. We cherish the illusion that we are the ones who word the world and that we are the ones who render the word worldly. However, many traditional peoples – like the Maori, in the example mentioned, but also the Krén (Krenak, 2019), the Yanomami (Kopenawa, 2015) and several other peoples (Munduruku, 2008) who live in the territory now known as Brazil – call our attention to our illusory centrality, and to how much we lose in possibilities of understanding and imagination and creation when we put ourselves in the center - “in the image and likeness”.

Conclusions (or better yet, Enquiries)

Is there nothing in coloniality that can be used in the decolonial rupture? Is coloniality a historical process without contradictions or rough edges capable of bringing its ruin? A yin without yang? Would a movement born from coloniality not be able to break from it? Thinking in terms of colonial tradition, wouldn’t Cronus be able to dethrone Uranus and, in turn, be dethroned by Zeus? Wouldn’t any historical formation carry the germ of its demise?

Should we expect revolutionary propositions that do not have their paradoxes? Are we not always waiting for a new orthodoxy, and what would be the advantages and issues of a new orthodoxy? Or, in decolonial terms, is it not the case of taking on the challenges of Euro-American modernity from the outside, from otherness, from other places that bring new solutions that incorporate and overcome modernity in other terms? (Dussel, 2016). Or, still, in counter-colonial terms, relying on the words of one of its most revered scholars, it is necessary to “use the enemies’ weapons for our

defense, lest we turn our defense into a weapon. Because if we turn our defense into a weapon, we will only know how to attack. And if you only know how to attack, you will always lose” (Santos, 2018).

In short, it seems that we are really at a crossroads and we have to decide where to go from this point. Among the many paths possible, criticisms seem to point to at least two: one suggests that the only possible radicalism must involve the negation of everything that is in any way related to coloniality. As a methodology and as an epistemology, this path leads us necessarily to the negation of the principles of contradiction and totality, which is largely present in the philosophy and art linked to the modern world and, therefore, the colonial world, and are mainly found in philosophies and critical arts. Following this path seems to lead us to have to invent a *new hubris from ground zero*, or a new and diverse hubris from multiple grounds zero, if the multi-universal intention is achieved. Criticisms that intend to be detached from Decolonial Studies point to this path. However, they are not able to follow it, because this is a path of *wording the world*, which was paved by the epistemologies of coloniality, as Andreotti brilliantly reminds us. This path seems to lead us, then, to a labyrinth, from which we could not leave with Ariadne’s help. We would have to find a new way out.

Yet another way is to refuse giving up anything that can be useful for us to overcome coloniality, not even colonialist weapons. This path could lead us, for example, to not renounce the principle of contradiction and the perception of transience present in all historical formation, including coloniality. This path is what decolonial feminism seems to follow, which, through its radical criticism, has challenged and overcome the initial propositions of decoloniality in its terms, without renouncing the foundations of decolonial criticism, by incorporating it into racialized feminisms. It is also not a path unknown to counter-colonial criticism, which also points to the need to appropriate colonial weapons. It seeks to capture, with a *rabo de arraia*, Zeus’ lightning bolt, while still benefiting from Marxist analogies of capitalism, thus overcoming both of them with decolonial (or counter-colonial) experiences that have accumulated ever since the colonial enterprise appeared and the modern world-system was formed.

Almost two decades ago, Jean Godefroy Bidima introduced a dossier with articles aimed to overcome a paradigm of identity on which the African philosophies of that time were based. He proposed that the crossing should take place from the combination of objective historical possibilities given, and from new subjectivities that push historical subjects to other places. Therefore, he maintained that at the crossroads between objectivity and subjectivity, something new could arise (Bidima, 2002: 12). For Bidima, the emergence of what is specifically human, in the experience of the world, according to Ernst Bloch’s proposition, appropriated by Bidima in the following quote.

World experience means that the world is thought-proof like thought is world-tested. For thought, the book of world experience is open to everyone. However, it happens that African philosophical discourses are required to prove their originality, their purity, their adamic stage where they would not have been contaminated by anything else. (...) an African philosophical discourse that refers a European philosopher for example would be inauthentic, an awkward reflection of what has been said so well. (...). In this approach, we limit the field of experience of the African philosopher. If it is admitted that the African

philosopher shares the same humanity as the others, the experiences of others can therefore serve him and especially the books of the world are also open to him. (Bidima, 2002: 13)

Bidima’s proposition for contemporary African philosophies helps us think about the necessary passage of coloniality towards a decolonized world. It is hard not to be reminded of Dussel’s Transmodernity (Dussel, 2016) when we use Bidima’s text to think about decoloniality. Wouldn’t Transmodernity emerge from what is specifically human from the colonial and decolonial experiences of the world? Would Transmodernity not be a Tupinambá arrow or a Mapuche spear to cut the fabric of modernity, starting from non-modern experiences that drag with it what stuck in modernity towards another world?

The questions posed point to possible paths, and many questions challenge and will challenge the decolonial option. Perhaps it is more urgent to find the right questions, whose answers can keep the decolonial project as a revolutionary option, as yet another entity among others capable, perhaps in communion, perhaps in confluence, of guiding us to another world. Because what seems more likely is that a decolonized world cannot be the same world that was once the world of coloniality.

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Non Thematic Section

Migration and (de)colonization in the Mexican government migration policies, 2018-19

Rodolfo Soriano-Núñez³³

Abstract

This essay reviews the context of the Mexican 2018 election; with a special consideration to migration to Mexico and the country's role in the then Caravans Crisis. It features the significance of the Caravans Crisis in the 2018 presidential campaign and debates, and the steps the new government seemed to be willing to take to address the issue. Later, it discusses the implications of actual decisions made when appointing the head of the Mexican migration authority and how they are related with the promises made by current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on decolonization of Mexican migration policy and the respect for the human rights of foreign migrants in Mexico.

Keywords:

Migration, Racism, Human Rights, Neocolonialism, Mexico, Mexican politics, US-Mexico border, Catholic Church, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Decolonization.

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Introduction

On June 14, 2019, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, then speaker of the Mexican House of Representatives, made this statement in a radio interview:

Where is our ambassador in China? Where is our ambassador in Moscow? Where is our ambassador in Berlin? We must inform other countries. They are turning us back into a colonial state, because we cannot talk to others and others cannot come in if they are not approved by the US. Which is what the Spanish crown used to do here. We are going back into a colonial status and we are accepting it (*Aristegui Noticias*, 2019).

The day after Muñoz Ledo raised his indictment of the changes to Mexican migration law and policy, Tonatiuh Guillén López, a professor at the El Colegio de la Frontera Norte college in Tijuana and the then recently appointed head of the National Institute of Migration (INAMI), resigned his post. Almost immediately, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), the current Mexican president, appointed Francisco Garduño Yáñez as the new head of INAMI, the authority dealing with migrants coming to Mexico. Garduño, a former manager of prisons in Mexico City (Anonymous 2019), embodied the 180 degree change in Mexican migration policy, criticized by Muñoz Ledo and tailored to appease Donald Trump. A few weeks before, Trump had issued a threat to impose a progressive 5% tariff on goods traded with Mexico. In the eyes of people like Muñoz Ledo, this change, tantamount to Mexico agreeing to become a Safe Third Country, was a betrayal of the hopes AMLO raised during his third run for the presidency. Far from decolonizing domestic and foreign policies, and also far from the idea of Mexico as a sovereign and free nation, Mexico has turned, as Central Americans frequently put it, into “The Wall”. The process of Mexico turning into “The Wall” began over 20 years ago. It started with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As a consequence of the 2018 election, there is no foreseeable chance of change.

The 2018 Mexican presidential election was charged with hope for reasonable change on key issues. One such area was migration. Mexico has been, since the second half of the 20th century, in a difficult position that has been described as a “labor frontier country”, that is to say a country that is considered upper-lower income with mass migration, falling birth rates, and a deeply rooted emigration tradition (Kimball, 2007: 2-3). It is a country sending large groups of its population to the US; so much, that little more than eight percent (12 million) of the total population of Mexicans, roughly 139 million in the late 2010s, lives in the US (Canales and Rojas, 2018: 15; Pew Research Center, 2018). As a “labor frontier country”, Mexico is a country of transit; a country where many individuals seeking entrance into the US go to prepare their trip, whether as documented (as in the case of people seeking refugee status) or undocumented foreign nationals. On its own, Mexico is a country of destination for at least 120 thousand nationals from Central America (CA) and Haiti (Pew Research Center, 2018).³⁴

Even if reform of the migration and refugee laws was not a major issue of the election (and there was no social appetite for such changes), the four candidates made plenty of promises to address the issue. Such promises appeared to be closer to fruition when Guillén López was appointed. His replacement, an expert in jail management, proved instead how far Mexico’s current leaders are from addressing the issue. It also proved the fragility of the new

³⁴ Thirty thousand from Guatemala; 20,000 from Honduras; 10,000 from El Salvador, and similar figures from Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Haiti (Pew Research Center, 2018).

government's narrative about Mexico becoming a more sovereign and independent nation after the 2018 election, and the lack of a vigorous civil society able to drive change on issues like migration. AMLO's narrative about change on migration had been built over the residues of Mexican anti-US sentiment that, even if weakened by 20 years of economic integration through the original 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), resurface every now and then when the right mix of bilateral issues surface. In AMLO's case his call for a new approach on migration, trade, and development had been laid down in a book originally published in Spanish as *Oye, Trump* (Hear this out, Trump), published in English as *A new hope for Mexico. Saying no to corruption, violence, and Trump's wall*. The book contains 38 references in 30 different positions in its e-pub edition to migration (López Obrador 2018).³⁵ Even if the Spanish title could be misleading, its framework comes straight out of John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, and the late 1980s approach behind NAFTA (Gutiérrez Haces, 1990: 38). AMLO's book raises some critique of the original NAFTA, but with no real or veiled attempt at putting an end to it. Its aim was to convince Trump of investing in development in Mexico and CA, to inoculate migration and it places the bulk of responsibility on corruption when explaining Mexico's plight, migration included, than it does on criticizing US neocolonial practices, interventionism or neoliberal policies.

In the coming pages, I will first review the context of the 2018 election; with a special consideration to migration to Mexico and the country's role in the then Caravans Crisis. I will feature the significance of the Caravans Crisis role in the 2018 presidential campaign and debates, and the steps the new government seemed to be willing to take to address the issue. Later I will discuss the implications of actual decisions made when appointing Garduño Yáñez as head of the migration authority.

1. The socio-economic and political context in the region

As Donato et.al. (2010) put it "Mexico-US migration represents the largest sustained migratory flow between two nations worldwide". This happens despite the pressure to enforce the ever-restricting US migration laws. Such pressure has forced Mexico to enforce its very anti-immigrant legislation (Hawley, 2010; Meyer and Isaacson, 2019). One consequence of such double enforcement of ill-designed migration policies has been the pushing of people trying to cross Mexico from all over the world to secondary roads. Ultimately, this has incentivized the operation of so-called Coyotes, relatively small and informal "firms", dedicated to smuggling people. This already perverse setting got worse when then president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa decided, in 2007, to launch the "war on organized crime" (Calderón, 2007; Espino, 2019; Ramírez, 2019).

The worsening was a function of the ties these "firms" have with drug trafficking bands and groups kidnapping people either unable or unwilling to pay the Coyotes' smuggling fees, while "sharing knowledge" with the lower ranks of Mexican law enforcement agencies, whose agents face impossible choices. They must decide whether to enforce an arcane, brutal legislation while making no additional profit from it or helping the Coyotes/drug lords syndicate for additional income (Langner, 2016; Reyez, 2017; Rodríguez, 2018; Vera, 2018), while keeping down the number of undocumented foreign nationals. In both cases, the undocumented migrants

³⁵ *A new hope for Mexico*, merges two of AMLO's books in Spanish: *La salida* (The Getaway, 2017) and *Oye, Trump* (2018). The epub edition of the book has a total of 246 positions.

face a bleak outlook, while the drug lords and Coyotes keep a tight grip on smuggling routes, maximizing the returns on their knowledge of the Mexican geography (Reina, 2019).³⁶

On top of it, the US law incentivizes going to the Mexican border to seek refuge (Bier, 2019; WSJ Editorial Board, 2019). It used to do it with the US-Canada border, until Canada accepted, in 2004, to become a “Third Safe Country” (Government of Canada, 2016). Had the people seeking refuge been able to follow the procedures in their country of origin, through the US consulates, there would be no need to be at the points of entry in the US borders. Additionally, there is a problem of a backlog in asylum applications, totaling 320,000 cases by the end of June 2018 (Meissner and colleagues; 2018: 2).

The decision of the Mexican government to launch a “war on organized crime” also created perverse incentives for undocumented migration, since it followed many of Richard M. Nixon’s hypothesis and mistakes when he originally launched in the 1970s the “war on drugs”. Something is deeply out of balance with the high rates of incarceration, costs of incarceration, and highest rates worldwide of drug abuse. The mistake is not exclusive of the US. Overall, the most egregious mistake is the inability of the US, Mexico, and other countries committed to this war to avoid learning from failure (Ferreira, 2015: 266-9) and the rather blind adherence of them all to the so-called “punitive paradigm” (Plume, 2012).

The Mexican government’s decision to launch the “war on organized crime” along the lines of the Nixonian “war on drugs”, lost sight of the side effects of such policy. The almost immediate effect in Mexico has been, for the last 14 years, a spike in violent assassinations, massacres and the massive “disappearing” of persons. In Mexico alone, from 2006 through 2019, 61,000 persons have disappeared (López, 2020). In the same period, 252,538 persons have been murdered³⁷ or died in drug-related activities (Domínguez, 2019). The impact of the policy is more relevant since violence is a key driver of forced migration, (Arceo, 2012; Semple, 2019). Those with relatives in Mexico City or other large cities, could try to settle in those places, but many lack such contacts or see such attempts as a waste of time, since cities have sustained, over the last two decades, ever increasing levels of violence, so they seek refuge in the US (Maydeu-Olivares, 2016; Cheatham, 2019).

Over the last 30 years, CA has been facing a similar relationship between the global “war on drugs” and migration of people seeking refuge. Violence has been rampant in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras since the late 1990s (Demombynes, 2011; Leggett, 2012; Metaal and Velde, 2014). This has been happening due to a combination of factors. First, there are ill-performing markets and the concentration of wealth and income (Hammill, 2005 26; Gindling and Trejos, 2013; Amarante et. al., 2016: 29). Then, the ever-growing pressure to “get tough on crime”, the so-called “punitive populism”, as if longer sentences or the death penalty were enough to eradicate crime.

Other drivers of migration include the effects of large-scale ecological devastation, mostly in the form of massive deforestation (Canales and Rojas, 2018 39) and open pit mining (Working Group, 2014; Tetrault, 2015). Such effects rage from threats to human and animal health (Birn et. al., 2018) to damages to the environment (Bastidas-Orrego and Colleagues, 2017: 51),

³⁶ This story from the Spanish Newspaper *El País* explains how coyotes and drug dealers benefited from the increased surveillance in both Mexican borders in the earlier months of the Trump administration, but the patterns have existed, at least, since the mid-aughts.

³⁷ See Vilalta et. al. (2016) for homicide rates at the city level.

gentrification (Loayza and Rigolini, 2016), and drought (Báez and Colleagues, 2016). All these factors increase the pressure to migrate from rural areas of CA to the US as a way to find relief. Ecological devastation in Latin America is also coupled with violence, a major driver of migration. In Honduras, violence against environmental activists was the cause of Berta Cáceres's homicide (Malkin, 2017; Lakhani, 2020), as it has been in many countries in the region (Fonseca, 2016; Sierra Praeli, 2019; Angelo, 2020). Moreover, Haiti, a major contributor to the now existing refugee camps in both Mexico and the US, has faced over 30 years or so of crisis, both political and economic, and natural disasters (Canales and Rojas, 2018: 39). People fleeing Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, and Mexico itself are not just looking to earn more money in the US, as it was before. They are fleeing a variety of effects of violence and ecological devastation, lack of basic social services (schools and health care), among other pressing issues, closely associated with the prevailing ideas of markets with little or no regulation, and other features frequently associated with neoliberalism. It was in this context that the so-called Caravans emerged by the end of 2017 as an unsettling phenomenon.

1.1. Impact of racism on migration policies in Mexico

Mexico has a mixed history when it comes to issues of race, ethnicity, and discrimination. Racism is historically tied to migration policies in Mexico. There is a deep disconnect between the reality of Mexico, as one of the world's largest beneficiaries from both documented and undocumented migration, and the daily attitudes of Mexicans towards migrants from other countries living in Mexico, almost always tainted by racism. Back in the 19th century, Mexico did its best, as other Latin American countries did, to lure Europeans with mixed results. Such efforts fall squarely in the colonial mindset that was still craving for European virtues, while dismissing the locals' attitudes towards work. As Katz notices, Mexican attitudes towards migrants have oscillated over time and at different points have been impregnated with many of the same racial prejudices that existed in Europe and the US. He quotes a report from the Mexican Interior ministry labeling Eastern Europeans and Middle-Easterners as "undesirable", with Jews singled out "for special discrimination" (Katz, 2000: 2). Once again, a reflection of a colonial mindset in the minds of the Mexican legislators and policymakers.

During the Porfirio Díaz regime (1877-1911), Mexico actively sought to benefit from Japanese migration. Japanese nationals willing to come to Mexico received assistance and guarantees, as part of an agreement between both countries. From 1890 through 1910, little more than ten thousand Japanese nationals arrived in Mexico (Ota, 1983: 35-62). However, there was not such good will when dealing with Chinese nationals. Quite the opposite. While Europeans and Japanese migrants enjoyed a good reputation in Mexican media, a reflection of attitudes in the US and Europe, Chinese nationals have been the target of racist campaigns (Rabadán, 1997; Treviño Rangel, 2005; Velázquez Morales, 2010) up until the early 21st century.³⁸ To do so, Mexican media have used stereotypes and tropes, feeding narratives interlacing at least five features: frequent metaphors associating Chinese nationals to animals (locust, ants, drone flies, octopus), and biased generalizations regarding their morals, physical appearance, hygiene, and attitudes towards sexuality (Rabadán, 1997: 83-9).

In the 19th century, Mexican media mirrored the animosity behind the US Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. When that law was passed, China sought an agreement with Mexico to secure

³⁸ Zhenli Ye Gon is a Chinese national naturalized Mexican. In 2007, 207 million dollars were seized at one of his properties. He was extradited to the US, found guilty and, in 2016, extradited back to Mexico to be trialed again here. His accent became the source of frequent mockery of him and Chinese people at large.

refuge for its nationals already living in the US. The subsequent passing of the Geary Act (1892) made this need more pressing and since Mexico was already looking for labor to build railroad lines, a deal was reached. Mexico agreed to pay 35 silver pesos for each Chinese worker, while paying 65 silver pesos for each European worker (Ham, 2013: 21-2).

Mexico has been unwilling to address the most negative aspects of such history, while highlighting episodes of solidarity, such as the arrival of Spanish refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), (Ojeda-Revah, 2002: 280) and its support for Jewish people in Western Europe in the early days of the second World War (Bloomekatz, 2008). Later, in the 1970s, Mexico received political dissidents leaving Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and other South American countries. However, growing up in the 1970s, I have vivid memories of friends of my parents, all of them employed in relatively stable jobs, lamenting their arrival. They did it despite the fact that such wave of migration was rather small, short-lived, and many of the refugees were brilliant academics who improved the quality of Mexican universities. Later, during the 1980s, Mexico received refugees from CA fleeing the civil wars there. Unlike the 1970s wave, the Central American refugees were members of displaced rural and indigenous communities who settled in Southeast Mexico, in difficult circumstances, with little support to settle or relocate.

1.2. The church

On top of the Mexican government and elites’ colonial mindset and their unwillingness to cope with racism, despite episodes of true solidarity with refugees, one must notice the lack of Mexican advocacy groups to support migrants. They exist when dealing with Mexicans living abroad, especially in the US (Gurza and Macías, 1986; Ortiz, 1990), but when it comes to immigrants living in Mexico, there is a clear lack of non-profit organizations willing to help migrants in transit or trying to settle in Mexico. The Roman Catholic Church, the largest religious denomination in the country, also has had a mixed record on the issue. During the 1980s, when Guatemalan peasants settled in Southern Mexico, Caritas, the local equivalent of US Catholic Relief Services, played a role in helping them (Sesín, 1985). Since then, there was an effort to build a network of refuges to assist in-transit migrants, with the support of the US bishops (Anonymous, 1986). Such a network was already in place when the war on drugs victimized migrants in transit. However, during the late 1990s and up until the election of Pope Francis in 2013, the Mexican bishops lost interest in advocating for undocumented migrants. Mexico saw such advocacy increasingly falling in the hands of one single priest who was willing to denounce the abuses migrants were facing on their way to the US.

Father Alejandro Solalinde Guerra was doing so, however, without support from the bishops, and often times he ended up in media brawls, denouncing the unwillingness of said bishops to assist the migrants. At different points in the last two decades, Solalinde was barred from using Catholic churches in Mexico, and during a much storied tour of the US, in 2013, advocating for migration reform in both Mexico and the US, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta barred him from using the churches under their care.³⁹

Sadly, when the 2018 election was over, Fr. Solalinde decided to stop criticizing Mexico’s mistreatment of migrants in transit, even after Garduño Yáñez’s appointment. In a 2019 interview with Salvadoran Newspaper *El Faro* Solalinde said: “migrants are very important,

³⁹ It did so on a memorandum from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, dated May 4, 2013. Can provide copy on request.

but Mexico comes first” (Martínez, 2020). That interview marked the end of a 15-year career as an activist to promote the defense of foreign migrants in Mexico. The abandonment of such advocacy by the bishops in Mexico during the Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations, meant that after Solalinde’s decision to accept Mexican current policy, undocumented foreign nationals in Mexico have lost their only voice supporting them at the national level. Other priests develop their own advocacy, but Solalinde came to be the voice of undocumented migrants. The Mexican bishops’ abandonment of advocacy efforts by the late 1990s, came after they opted to privilege their relationship with the then-current governments. Their priority was to promote an anti-abortion agenda. In the state of Veracruz, a key point in undocumented migration in Mexico, the church closed some of its refugee houses since the early aughts (Carrera, 2004; Lira, 2017), while crackdowns on undocumented migrants were on the rise. Later, amid the silence of the bishops of Veracruz on migration, an anti-abortion bill was passed in the state congress and was signed into law at a ceremony in a Catholic elementary school (Ordaz, 2016).

In that respect, both the bishops and Solalinde have followed a similar pattern: when confronted with a choice between supporting the undocumented migrants and their ties with the Mexican government, their political preferences eclipsed their religious duties. In the bishops’ case, the change to a renewed concern with the migrants’ plight in Mexico, came after Pope Francis’s election and was stressed by a 500,000 USD grant from the pontiff, to support the Mexican church relief efforts (Redacción, 2019).

1.3. Mexican public opinion on migrants

The final point in the socio-economic and political context in Mexico must include the fact that attitudes towards migrants have been, for the most part, unsupportive of major changes in Mexican migration law. A 2015 national poll by the National University (UNAM) found that 22.8% of Mexicans over 15-years-old supported the idea of building a wall in the Mexican Southern border; 37.9% supported deportations of undocumented foreign nationals; and 55.6% supported enhanced controls in the Southern border. (See Table 1.) Even if there was no candidate in the 2018 election adopting a xenophobic discourse, there are groups and newspapers who, from time to time, voice proposals echoing Trump’s discourse regarding the construction of walls (*El Mañana*, 2016). And even if there is no clear support for migration reform in Mexico—and there is no advocacy in the Mexican government to do so—one can find complaints about alleged benefits for migrants when talking with people living in the proximity of migrants’ refuges. So much, that in 2012, as it happened before in Veracruz, the Catholic Church shut down one of its refuges in Lechería, near the Mexico City cargo train station (Chávez González, 2012).

Table 1. As far as the undocumented migrants coming to Mexico, do you think the Mexican government should or should not...?

	Should	It depends	Should not	Do not know	Do not answer
Enhance border controls	56.6	28.6	11.2	2.8	0.8
Have a program of temporary workers	45.8	35.3	15	3.1	0.8
Deport them to their country of origin	37.9	38.6	20.01	2.2	1.2
Allow them to come through without obstacles	25.7	32.3	38.4	2.8	0.8
Build a wall in the Southern border	22.8	24.2	49.1	2.8	1.1

Source: National Migration Poll, UNAM (Caicedo and Morales Mena, 2015: 62).

A 2018 report by the International Crisis Group found similar attitudes. The section “Local Resentment” of the report stresses how:

Resentment of efforts to protect Central Americans is also spreading in districts along the southern border that are home to such shelters. Poor neighbors of the Albergue Belén shelter in Tapachula have repeatedly requested its relocation, arguing that the shelter exposes them to the predations of Central American gangs (ICG, 2018: 16).

Even if the resentment is not representative of the overall attitudes of Mexicans towards undocumented foreign nationals, one can notice a major change in attitudes towards them. An October 2018 national poll showed overall support (51.4%) to allow migrants free pass to the US-Mexico border, and support (50.7%) for AMLO’s propositions of giving them work permits (Consulta Mitofsky, 2018). However, a July 2019 poll found that 57% of Mexicans supported AMLO’s decision to use the newly created National Guard to arrest migrants (Moreno, 2019). A January 2020 poll raised similar questions and confirmed the shift in attitudes. (See Table 2.) Moreover, it found similar levels of support in Mexico for the very restrictive migration policy enforced by the Trump administration.

Table 2. What are your feelings when you see...

	Anger	Sadness	Joy	Approval	Indifference	Other/DK
...Central Americans arrested by the Mexican National Guard?	4.4	25.7	1.4	46.4	6.5	15.6
...Mexicans arrested by the US Border Patrol?	13.8	28.2	3.1	33.6	7.5	13.8

Source: Consulta Mitofsky 2020.

If one wants to explain this shift, one needs to look at the data from the same poll where 61% of the interviewees supported AMLO's decision to change Mexican migration policy to avoid Trump's threat of tariffs (Consulta Mitofsky, 2020). These paradoxes of Mexican public life are more striking in the case of the Mexican entrepreneurial elite. In mid-July 2020, Mexican media reported media mogul Ricardo Salinas Pliego's political contributions of more than half a million dollars to Trump's reelection campaign and the Republican Party since January 2016. Salinas is the owner of TV Azteca, the second largest TV network in Mexico, and a close ally of AMLO (Tourliere, 2020).

2. Framing the rhetoric of the 2018 campaign

Even without the migration crisis that exploded by the end of 2017, the 2018 Mexican election was axial. It was in the sense that it was perceived as a chance for a major redefinition of what was acceptable and what was not in Mexican politics. Such redefinition touched the issue of migration but, it did, as it has been stated already, from an approach copied from the Alliance for Progress, that only issued every now and then de-colonization tones when AMLO wanted to rally support from his base. That was the case back in November, 2016 when, as a leader of his party, he said, within the context of the defense of Mexican undocumented nationals in the US that he would defend them (López Obrador, 2016), and then later that year on December 10, when he said:

We do not address social issues with walls, crackdowns, the militarization of the border, or deportations. We are going to convince them that if there are jobs in Mexico, if there are jobs we address the migration issue, because people who are crossing the border do it out of need, not because they want to do so... If it is required, we will come to the border to protect the migrants, to defend the Mexicans, but we must not overstate our fears, we must remember that it is because our forefathers, your forefathers, here at the border, that Mexico is a free sovereign, independent country. We are not the colony of any foreign country (Redacción, 2016).

He also did so when addressing the corruption of his predecessor. At a rally on April 7, 2017, AMLO said in Xalapa, Veracruz: "I am going to defend the people of Mexico and I am going to make Mexico's independence meaningful; we are not the colony of any foreign country, Mexico is a free and sovereign country". Later, in Catemaco, he raised his tone. After bringing back the issue of the disastrous invitation issued back in 2016 to Trump as candidate to visit

Mexico, AMLO said: “since then the government assumed a servile position, Peña never talked again about defending migrants, he does not talk about that. That is why Mexico was unwilling to go to the United Nations to denunciate the US government for the two (executive) orders issued by Trump, to build the wall and to persecute our fellow countrymen” (Zavaleta, 2017).

AMLO had been already a candidate back in 2006 and 2012, after an eventful run as mayor of Mexico City (2000-5). The 2006 election was marred with allegations of fraud, stemming from the way a coalition of business tycoons, journalists, and politicians, launched a fear-mongering campaign calling him “a danger to Mexico” (Anonymous, 2010; Gutiérrez Vidrios, 2007). That phrase was the centerpiece of a massive, US-styled, mudslinging, fear-mongering campaign that never offered evidence to prove its point. One of the ads, still available at YouTube, shows footage of one of AMLO’s aides filling a portfolio with money. By the end, a male voice says: “López Obrador allowed these crimes to happen. We cannot trust him. López Obrador is a danger to Mexico”⁴⁰.

The campaign fell squarely with a controversial essay entitled “El mesías tropical”, The tropical messiah, written by Enrique Krauze, a historian and public intellectual, who published the piece in his own magazine (*Letras Libres*). Even if Mexico is located near the tropic of Cancer so it is all “tropical”, its use is rather derogatory; either in the sense of something that has been poorly adapted to local circumstances, or as something wild, exotic, primeval. The *Diccionario del español usual en México*, (Dictionary of the Spanish in use in Mexico) defines “Tropical” as related to the Tropics, but also, as something that is “warm, exuberant, alive, joyful and prone to fantasy: tropical character, tropical ideas, tropical rhythms” (Lara 2009).

Even if there was no reference in dictionaries to tropical, Krauze did his best to render tropical as something less than suitable for democratic rule. Out of eight times he uses the word tropical in the Spanish version of the essay (Krauze, 2006a), only one is positive; when he says AMLO lived a “tropical, free, and happy childhood”. That reference is not included in the English version of the essay. The opposite to a reference of AMLO’s days playing baseball. In the English version of the essay, Krauze says:

“He used to fight someone, beat them, and wind up with that teasing little ‘I-beat-you’ smile,” says one. He was very good at baseball, although, according to another, “when his team lost, he would get furious.” According to some reports, he once threw a ball at a fellow player’s head in anger, causing permanent damage” (Krauze, 2006b).⁴¹

In the Spanish version of the piece, there is no reference to the alleged accusation of “causing permanent damage” to another player. The next reference to tropical is neutral: when talks about AMLO’s native state of Tabasco as “the most tropical” region in Mexico. The other six are less than positive even if one of them was provided by AMLO himself during a conversation they had in 2003. In that one, AMLO quotes Carlos Pellicer, a Mexican poet who wrote: “the Tabascan should control his passions”. The fourth reference is about Tabasco as “the land of ‘tropical power’”. Later, Krauze quotes Graham Greene saying “Tabasco ‘was like Africa seeing itself in a mirror all across the Atlantic Ocean’”, and then Andrés Iduarte, a Tabascan essayist who killed a male after becoming “hostage to ‘tropical passion’” and then decided to self-exile in New York City. The English version of the piece makes no reference to such “tropical passions”, when writing about Iduarte, even if both versions talk about “tropical

⁴⁰ AMLO actually prosecuted his aide. The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZnrM8GeIKA>.

⁴¹ The English version of this essay was first published in *The New Republic*, June 19, 2006.

passion” when dealing with the death of AMLO’s brother José Ramón. The last reference to tropical in the Spanish version of the piece, again expunged from the English one, is a quote of Gustavo Rosario Torres, a Tabascan politician who has been tied to drug dealers since 2008 (Méndez y Ramón, 2008; Redacción, 2011). Krauze identified Rosario Torres “a perceptive Tabascan, a psychologist of the Tabascan people”. On that last reference Rosario Torres drives the idea of AMLO being hostage to “tropical passion”. Krauze has published several books including this essay and has published variations on the theme of AMLO as a messianic populist threat, both in Spanish and English. The most recent iteration of this series on AMLO as a messiah was published in early July by *The New York Review of Books* (Krauze 2020).

The 2006 mudslinging campaign had little or no effect when one considers that Felipe Calderón Hinojosa won with less than one percent of the total vote. Additionally, the way the election was managed by the authority prompted massive mobilizations and protests seeking a recount that was not legally possible under the then existing laws.

After a second unsuccessful attempt (2012), AMLO won the presidency in 2018 with a comfortable margin. He won with a campaign centered on criticizing the corruption of then ruling party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) and its predecessor, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). He heralded a vague call for major reforms in Mexican politics. Even if migration was not a major component of the presidential campaign and of López Obrador’s proposals, the issue was a part of the conversation, along the lines sketched in his book already referenced. However, as the appointment of Garduño Yáñez proved, migration reform was not a priority.

Little less than a year before the beginning of the presidential campaigns, in March 2017, AMLO, at the time the leader of his party, the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena), toured New York and Washington, DC. In New York, he met with Mexican migrants. In an interview in *The Spokesman-Review*, AMLO chastised Trump’s “‘campaign of hatred’ against Mexican immigrants, accused him of violating human rights laws, called his border wall a ‘propaganda’ tool and said he couldn’t wait to handle the renegotiation of NAFTA himself. Peña is too quiet. And Donald Trump speaks very loudly. One doesn’t beg for liberty; one seizes it”. AMLO added Trump’s “campaign of hatred has no justification. It is not only inhumane, it’s irresponsible”. Not surprisingly, the story warned:

“It could be a foretaste of clashes to come. Mexico and the US have enjoyed a cooperative relationship for decades. Trump has changed the dynamic. He’s gotten Mexicans so mad that, if the polls are right, they’re ready to elect a fiery nationalist of their own, a politician who’s spent years denouncing the way the economy is run in the interests of foreigners—in some ways, a Mexican anti-Trump” (Cattan and Rodríguez, 2017).

AMLO’s blitzkrieg continued the next day in Washington, DC, where he filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) regarding two of Trump’s usual attacks on Mexico and Mexican immigrants.

AMLO’s fiery rhetoric in the US was pretty much the same as it had been in Mexico since 2016, when Trump’s attacks had become a staple of his presidential campaign and remained unchanged during the Mexican presidential campaign. During that process, AMLO’s criticism of Trump and his complaint at the IACHR were the source of criticism towards him, since it

was assumed that he was putting the US-Mexico trade relation at risk.⁴² This perception of risk associated with a possible win of AMLO was a frequent topic in news stories in both Mexican and US media before, during, and after the presidential election of July 1, 2018, up until June 2019.

2.1. The language of the political parties' manifestos

Throughout the campaign neither the rights of Mexicans living abroad or foreign nationals living in Mexico were a major source of debate or concern. In the manifestos of the major political parties there are few references to migrants and migration. None of the references address the issue of the challenges Mexico confronts as a “labor frontier country”. It is as if for the main political parties in Mexico back in 2018, transit migration from other countries was not an issue. Both PAN’s and PRI’s manifestos acknowledge the need to address the plight of Mexicans abroad, but none of the manifestos address the plight of foreign nationals living in Mexico or trying to reach the US-Mexico border. This, despite the media stories about such plight, especially after the 2010 San Fernando massacre⁴³.

The San Fernando massacre is key to understand how much migration came to be defined by illegitimate violence against undocumented migrants in Mexico. In the tenth anniversary of it, Pope Francis issued a stern condemnation of the massacre and the implicit unwillingness or inability of the Mexican government to address repeated pleas by the families of the victims to verify the identity of the remains delivered by the Mexican authorities to the victims’ relatives (Fundación 2020). After the Angelus prayers in Rome, Pope Francis said, on Sunday August 23 2020:

Tomorrow, 24 August, is the tenth anniversary of the massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando, in Tamaulipas, Mexico. They were people from various countries who were looking for a better life. I express my solidarity with the families of the victims who today are still asking for truth and justice regarding the events. The Lord will hold us to account for all of the migrants who have fallen on their journey of Hope. They were victims of the throwaway culture (Pope Francis 2020).

In AMLO’s party (Morena) 2018 election Manifesto, there is one single reference to migration. Under the “Combat on Poverty” heading it says:

There is an undeniable causal relation between the scarcity of material resources affecting the vast majority of the population, and the growth in insecurity, violence, forced migration due to circumstances, political and institutional decomposition and the mediocrity of the overall economic performance (Morena, 2018 5).⁴⁴

⁴² The US is, by far, the most important trading partner for Mexico. US goods and services trade with Mexico totaled an estimated \$610.2 billion in 2018. Exports were \$265.9 billion. Imports were \$344.2 billion (US Census Bureau, 2020).

⁴³ The San Fernando massacre (22 -23 August, 2010) involved the assassination of at least 72 persons, later buried in clandestine digs at rural areas of the San Fernando municipality, less than 150 km (90 miles) from the US-Mexico border. (Pérez Salazar 2015). Mexican officials have blamed a faction of the Los Zetas (Redacción 2020) cartel, but nobody has faced charges for the massacre (Granados 2011). San Fernando is the “largest single mass execution in the history of modern North America” (Moore 2011). After the massacre, Mexican authorities located the remains of somewhere between 193 and up to 600 additional corpses, disposed in clandestine graves, only in that municipality.

⁴⁴ Mexican Spanish used in political speech, often called “burocratol”, a portmanteau of the Spanish words for Bureaucratic and Spanish, is notoriously verbose. I have done my best to retain the verbose, obscure, bureaucratic nature of their original Spanish writing.

The right-of-center PAN party 2018 Manifesto made nine mentions to migration related issues in seven paragraphs. Under the “Economic Development” heading it proposes “to enact policies to protect the rights of returning migrants” (p. 44). Under the “Strengthening the position of Mexico in the World” heading calls to “include in the free trade agreements (...), especially those with the US, clauses dealing with the migratory flux, workers’ rights, and environmental issues” (p. 54). It talks about lobbying “the US congress to promote the Mexican national interest on sensitive topics such as migration policy, security and free trade” (p. 54). On page 55 it advocates “to strengthen the defense of the human and labor rights of migrants of Mexican origin (...) based upon the World Pact on Migration”. It also talks about empowering “Mexican communities in the US, supporting their agendas and strengthening their contribution to Mexican interests and to promote actions to support the legalization of the so-called dreamers”, and it talks about assessing and designing “new programs to support Mexican migrants as to identify uncovered areas, with special consideration to legal support and advice”. Finally, it talks about developing “policy to benefit the return migration as to facilitate a wholesome social, economic, and labor re-insertion and to help them access social programs, especially those aimed at improving their economic capacities; and in order to acknowledge migrants as a ‘group in a vulnerable situation’” (p. 55).

The then ruling PRI party included in its 2018 Manifesto eight references to migration over five paragraphs. Under the heading “Axis 4: Inclusive and Solidary Mexico”, it proposes promoting “conditions for the legalization of individuals and to facilitate access to social programs allowing them a successful participation in the communities where they live and (help) their employability, and an overall improvement of the quality of their lives” (p. 42). Under the heading “Axis 5: Mexico open to the world” the manifesto says: “when protecting Mexicans abroad, the directive will remain to bring their rights closer to those of the citizens where they live (p. 44). Later it says: “With the Mexican community abroad (...) we must continue reinforcing the means of legal defense to guarantee the respect of their human rights and those of their families. Likewise, we must promote conditions to secure the legalization of their migration status at the personal level” (p. 46).

When talking about multilateral bodies it says: “Mexico must participate in decisions made in multilateral organisms, since it is there where we have a chance to balance out the most radical positions against integration. Some spaces where it is possible to boost the national interests are: the implementation of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda, (...) the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, (...) peacekeeping operations, a new paradigm in fighting the World Drug Problem, (...) a new governance of international migration through the Global Pact on Migration, and the active participation in decisions taken at the G-20” (p. 46-7). Finally, under the “Transversal Cause no. 3: A Bet on Young People”, PRI talks about migrants as one of many groups with whom “we commit to protect their rights and to seek their permanent participation in the national life” (p. 60).

Morena’s manifesto makes no reference to CA or the Caribbean or to the relation of Mexico with the countries in those regions. There are two references to Guatemala and one to Honduras as part of broader comparisons. The PAN’s manifesto makes no reference at all to CA, to the Caribbean, or to any country in those two regions. PRI dedicated half of one paragraph to CA, and the other half to the Caribbean, but no specific mention of any country in those regions (p. 42).

2.2. Presidential debates

This silence of the main political parties was reflected before and throughout the formal period of political campaign (90 days, March 30 through May 27, 2018). Foreign migrants were, for the most part, treated as ghosts, while there was a clear interest in the candidates in rendering themselves as allies of the Mexican migrants in the US. There was no similar acknowledgment of the plight of foreign nationals in Mexico. The most noticeable exception to the silence of the Mexican political establishment regarding foreign nationals in Mexico, happened during the second of three national presidential debates.

The debate was set for May 20, 2018, at Tijuana, the largest Mexican city in the US-Mexico border. AMLO’s and his rivals’, José Antonio Meade Kuribreña (PRI), Ricardo Anaya Cortés (PAN), and Jaime Rodríguez Calderón (the independent governor of Nuevo León), remarks on the duties of the Mexican government towards Mexicans living in the US were all positive. As far as the foreign nationals living in Mexico, there was a question. Local resident Teresa Mercado raised it at minute 75 of the 91-minute debate:

It is outrageous how migrants crossing Mexico are treated. Going back to the San Fernando massacre in Tamaulipas, the treatment they get from the migration authority. Their plight traveling in La Bestia⁴⁵ and, more recently, the kidnapping at the hands of the organized crime. My question is: How are you going to help the migrants crossing Mexico, African, Haitian, Central American, alike, so we can have the moral standing to ask for a dignified treatment for the Mexicans living in the US?

Mrs. Mercado’s question was followed by context provided by León Krauze, the son of already cited Enrique Krauze, one of the two hosts of the debate:

I would like to add some data to provide some context to understand the caliber of the humanitarian crisis Teresa is talking about. Mexico deports more Central Americans than the US, according to Amnesty International. 84% of them said they do not want to go back to their country out of fear of being killed. Two thirds of the Central Americans crossing through Mexico had been victims of some kind of violence. A third of the females had been sexually assaulted on their way in our country. A third...

Krauze’s data was debunked in February, 2019, when Trump himself used the same data to justify the changes to US migration and refugee policies on January 19, 2019. Glenn Kessler of *The Washington Post* gave Trump’s data regarding sexual attacks on migrant females a “Four Pinocchios” in The Fact Checker scale of that newspaper since the one third of females being sexually assaulted turned out to be “a bad case of academic telephone... (since the actual) percentage of women who reported rape is about 10%, similar to the Mexican National Institute of Health study (Kessler 2019).

Krauze’s use of that quotation in the Mexican Presidential debate is relevant because, on top of his role as host of the debate, he is the anchor of one of Univisión’s major Spanish-language newscasts in the US. Moreover, even if Krauze was concerned about the plight of the

⁴⁵ *La Bestia* (The Beast) is the colloquial name given to a series of freight trains running from Tapachula, the Southernmost city in Mexico, to the US border towns of Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Matamoros. It is not a single route.

undocumented foreign nationals, he did it at the expense of fueling the same racist narrative Trump has been pushing forward since 2015.

In answering this question, none of the candidates played an openly nationalistic card. But none of them were willing to go deeper into the issues that, one year after the 2018 election, were behind the radical enforcement of Mexican migration law at Trump's request. On a follow up question, Ricardo Anaya went as far as to say that migrants must be received with "open arms" and he said he would be willing to reform the extremely rigid Mexican laws and procedures to help them achieve refugee status here. Only José Antonio Meade tied the presence of foreign nationals to the risk of increased activities of organized criminals (min. 85:30):

Lots of this migration has implicit (ties) also to organized crime. Lots of this migration implies the laundering of funds, implies human trafficking, implies abuses, implies also attacking our own security. That is why, we must find a good equilibrium between the migrant coming here in good faith, with good will, seeking hope and opportunity and the migrant coming here violating our own security, the migrant who entices criminal gangs, that make them the victims of human trafficking.

None of the other candidates nor any of the two moderators, questioned the validity of Meade's assertions, despite the fact he never offered evidence to support them. After this, the debate moved into other issues.

2.3. Morning pressers: The significance of the framing to the political outcomes for foreign migrants in Mexico

One of AMLO's contribution to the Mexican political lexicon and praxis is the so-called "Mañanera", a morning (mañana) press conference hosted by the president himself. This daily routine usually starts at 7 am and it can run for two or three hours. AMLO uses the time to share his thoughts on issues, but also to share the dais with key members of his cabinet. As far as migration is concerned, during the first weeks of his administration, AMLO seemed to be invested in changing the approach. Hence the appointment of Guillén as head of the National Institute of Migration, and the promises made at that time. So many, that up until May 2019, foreign media was talking about "AMLO's risky bet on migrants". The Spanish language BBC service summarized such bet on two issues. On the one hand, the commitment to respect the human rights of the undocumented migrants going through Mexico, as compared to the practice of the previous two presidential administrations, that pretty much left migrants at the mercy of the Coyotes/drug lords syndicate (Nájar, 2019). On the other hand, AMLO's original idea of offering them working permits to let them get jobs in infrastructure projects. The idea was contentious because, even if unemployment in pre-pandemic Mexico had been officially low, around 4%, there are questions regarding the methods to calculate that figure. On top of such questions, there are issues such as the stagnated and low wages, and the size of the informal economy, reaching—in September 2019—around 57% of the workforce (García, 2019). In that respect, the very idea of Central Americans getting jobs from the government, even if temporary, became unbearable, and the source of criticism. Things got worse when Trump issued his tariffs ultimatum (Wagner and Ries, 2019). The threat implied a monthly 5% increase on all goods shipped by Mexico to the US. If by April 2018, Mexicans were still willing to help the migrants' caravans (Reuters 2018), by May 30, 2019, the good will had turn into anxiety and anger after Trump issued his threat (Paletta et.al., 2019).

Consequently, during the third week of June, 2019, after the negotiation with the Trump administration was over (Rascoe, 2019), the Mañaneras were dedicated to different aspects of the deal and its impact on migration. On June 12, AMLO announced Mexico and the US had reached a deal to avoid tariffs. He did so insisting that this was his choice, not an imposition from Trump; that it was a “Mexican way (...) to prove that we can address migration if there is development, if there is wellbeing and that peace and tranquility are the fruits of justice” (min. 4:26 AMLO, June 12, 2019). He went on to explain the details of the deal (Ballhaus et.al., 2019).

The next day, AMLO had as guests at his daily conference representatives of the government of Spain, and some members of the Spanish families that came to Mexico in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. The Mexican foreign affairs minister, Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, and AMLO did their best to render the migration deal with the US as the outcome of a long standing Mexican tradition of offering refuge to people facing difficulties. Irene Lozano, the secretary for global affairs of the Spanish government, said, when talking about the welcoming of the Spanish refugees, that it was “an example of solidarity, coherence and bravery, at a dramatic moment for freedoms, not only in Spain but in all Europe, and for democracy in the world” (min. 13:14, AMLO, June 13, 2019).

The next day, June 14, AMLO and Ebrard shared the dais with the governors of the Southern states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz (ruled by Morena), and Campeche and Oaxaca (ruled by the PRI party). These states have been the most affected by the Caravans and all of them with very high levels of poverty. All the governors, praised the agreement as a way to prevent a tariffs war with the US.

Despite the celebratory tone of the president’s Mañaneras, the previous day, the then speaker of Mexican House of representatives, elected as a member of AMLO’s party, expressed displeasure at the deal with the US. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, as it has been established already, explicitly framing the issue in colonial terms.

A journalist attending the June 14 press conference, raised Muñoz Ledo’s assertion as a question to Ebrard (min 42:42, AMLO, June 14, 2019). The Mexican foreign minister dismissed Muñoz Ledo’s critique by raising, as it was the standard answer of the Mexican government to any criticism of the agreement, the issue of tariffs:

I will be talking with him later. We must think first what would have happened had Mexico entered a trade war dynamic with the US. We have not finished this negotiation yet but, at least, there is no more threat of tariffs upon us (...) and we have not accepted what they wanted, so I do not understand (Muñoz Ledo’s) take.

When Ebrard said “we have not accepted what they wanted”, he was talking about Mexico accepting to become a Safe Third Country, as Canada did back in 2004, and as it was actually forced down on El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in the context of this crisis (Narea, 2019; Ibe, 2020). The degree to which Mexico is, after June 2019, a de facto Safe Third Country is still up for debate. Additionally, experts do not share the Trump administration’s enthusiasm on the effects of these deals on migration (Fratzke, 2019; Gzesh, 2019). Finally, the next day, Tonatiuh Guillén resigned his position as commissioner of the National Institute of Migration with a two-paragraph letter.

3. Decolonizing migration

The general election offered a chance, as AMLO himself said at different points during his campaign, to change the nature of the US-Mexico relation by affirming its sovereignty and, more specifically, to change the way Mexico deals with foreign nationals trying to reach the US. Even if López Obrador never explicitly claimed that his was a decolonizing approach, he adheres to a nationalist discourse, emphasizing the idea of Mexico being a “sovereign nation” and—in that respect—being a nation free to set its own course, to make its own decisions, in the pursue of its own interests. It is, in that respect, a discourse with elective affinities with the decolonization approach, especially when we see it as an attempt to replace Western interpretations with local, non-Western approaches to the issues, in ways that dismantle structures perpetuating the status quo and address unbalanced power dynamics (Cull et. al., 2018: 8).

A decolonial approach regarding migration between Mexico and CA is more relevant when one considers the ties that existed before the arrival of Hernán Cortés between areas of contemporary Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. That is not to say that there were no relations of subordination. Those existed and the Mexica (Aztec) empire was especially aggressive in pursuing its own interests, with little or no regard towards other nations. The Mexica-Tlaxcalteca relation in pre-Columbian Mexico is the best example of such dynamics. Sadly, those power dynamics remain as features of the contemporary Mexico-CA relation in ways that mirror and amplify the US-Mexico relation. To put it simply, “colonial relationships continue to condition social relations in the Americas” (Taylor, 2012: 389).

The post-9/11 world gave new legitimacy to very intrusive approaches of US national security. Such approaches were legitimized during the Bush and Obama administrations and radicalized after Trump’s election in 2016. More so after the unfolding of the Caravans’ Crisis in the Northern and Southern Mexican borders, allowing for an increased centrality in Mexico of US concerns, with little or no respect for other nations’ needs. Mexico and Canada have to bear the brunt of such increased centrality. Such process has disturbed the US-Mexico relation over the last 20 years. During this period, Mexico has been forced to adopt a more restrictive approach toward its relation and border exchanges with Belize and Guatemala. Mexico, as many Central Americans say, has turned into “The Wall”. Up until June 2019, the Mexico-Guatemala border had a very loose enforcement policy. That world of relative equality ended when, in order to avoid the threat of tariffs, Mexico adopted a very rigid approach when dealing with foreign nationals, Guatemalans and Belizeans included, while keeping a very generous approach when dealing with US, Canadians, and Western European tourists and visitors. It has happened with the criteria for issuing visas and for dealing with foreign nationals. In some cases, Mexico has forfeited the Mexican visas for foreign nationals already holding a US visa (Secretaría de Turismo, 2014). In some other cases, even before the Caravans’ and Coronavirus crises, Mexico adopted more stringent migration policies than the US.

The unofficial explanation has been to render it as a process to avoid potential conflicts with the US government in case a terrorist attack happens. This narrative fits squarely with the very frequent trope of Mexican politics that says “We Mexicans (unlike *gringos*) are not a racist folk”. The implication is that, even if the policies are race-based, ultimately, it is not up to Mexico to decide them. They are a mechanism of sorts to prevent a potential conflict with the US. However, there is plenty of evidence about how deep racism runs in Mexico (Van Dijk, 2003; Moreno Figueroa, 2010; Sue, 2013; Navarrete, 2016; Pérez López, 2017; Ortiz et. al., 2018, among others). It would be naïve, to say the least, to assume that the shifts in Mexican public opinion and the very attitude of policy makers towards those shifts are free from racism. Also, it is necessary to acknowledge that the consequences of such racism are not limited to the

relations between Mexicans; they inform relations between Mexicans and foreign nationals, especially those in disadvantage.

The 2018 general election offered a chance to decolonize Mexican foreign, migration, and law enforcement policies; it was axial in the sense of freeing such policies from undue influence from the US, especially on how Mexico deals with undocumented migration. It was also a chance to decolonize in the sense of freeing Mexico from colonial, racialized and racist discourses that still inform debates on domestic and foreign policies. Those discourses emerged during the Caravans’ Crisis in 2017 and 2018, and even more during the current coronavirus Covid—19 global pandemic. Instead, what has happened is the opposite. Mexico, if one accepts Muñoz Ledo rationale, is going back into a colonial state. Even if Muñoz Ledo’s was nothing but fiery rhetoric, there is evidence of a large scale alignment of Mexican migration policy, that is hard to believe will fall back to what existed in October 2016, regardless of the outcome of the US 2020 general election.

Central American governments need to address issues of their own, but it is hard to believe that will happen when one considers the quashing of efforts to address deep, structural, corruption in Guatemala and Honduras in the last couple of years. There is an abundance of evidence of the benefits of having international bodies as the now disappeared CICIG (International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, Witte 2019) driving the anti-corruption reforms in that country. The Trump administration has been implicated in the elimination of CICIG (Blitzer, 2019).

As far as Mexico is concerned, the Morena coalition was too loose. It incorporated people from PAN, PRI, and other parties from the left. As such, they lacked the necessary cohesion to drive major change to migration law and policy. Also, Mexico lacks a civil society vigorous enough to raise awareness of the migrants’ plight in Mexico and way too eager to align itself with the priorities of the government, as Solalinde’s shift suggests. Instead of the kind of changes that AMLO sketched in his books, his campaign and in the first six months of his six-year term, Mexico turned into the enforcer of US foreign and migration policies in CA. Meanwhile, social media informs on an almost daily basis of new murders or deportations of Haitian and Central American refuge seekers, as the Twitter account of professor Wilner Metelus (<https://twitter.com/wilnermetelus>), chair of the Citizens’ Committee in Defense of Naturalized and Afro Mexicans, attests. The situation indicates the short the gaze of the new Mexican government and its inability to seize opportunities to infuse politics, both in Mexico and North America, with a dosage of ethics and coherence based on Mexican sovereignty. In this sense, the statement made by Muñoz Ledo about Mexican sovereignty still applies: We are going back into a colonial status and we are accepting it (*Aristegui Noticias*, 2019).

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Book Review

**Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race:
Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning of Latinidad. By
Jonathan Rosa. Oxford University Press, 2019. 312 pp.**

Reviewed by Sarah Glessner⁴⁶

Jonathan Rosa's book is the result of an extensive ethnographic project he conducted between 2007 and 2010 at New Northwest High School (NNHS), a predominantly Latinx school in Chicago, a mid-west city, which is the third largest city in the U.S., where Blacks and Latinx people make up about 60 percent of the population. This text, adopting a "raciolinguistic perspective" (Rosa and Flores, 2017), argues that what Rosa calls the "co-naturalization of language and race" (2019: 2) is an integral feature of colonialism and control resulting in why his student subjects come to *look like a language* and *sound like a race*. Rosa argues that language is generally viewed as being "racially embodied" (2019: 2) in the Latinx community, meaning race and language are inextricably linked. Race, therefore, becomes influenced and defined by linguistic practices and vice versa. Ideologies surrounding forms of English and Spanish communicative practices within the Puerto Rican and Mexican Latinx subgroups at NNHS determine the relationships and perceptions of similarities and differences between these student populations. Rosa analyzes these ideologies alongside links between language and race as a way to prove how co-naturalization of these identity markers influence individuals' perceptions of themselves in educational as well as broader social contexts.

The book is divided into two parts, the first of which is entitled "Looking Like a Language: Latinx Ethnoracial Category-Making." This section is focused on how students' Latinx identities are viewed and controlled by the school's administration, whose goal is to mold its students into "Young Latino Professionals," which is consequently constructed as a response to the idea that Latinx students otherwise become "gangbangers and hoes" (Rosa, 2019: 33). The first chapter explores how these "gender stereotypes about Latino criminality and Latina promiscuity" (Rosa, 2019: 34) are central concerns of the school's administration that govern how the school attempts to socialize its students. Rather than question the implications of

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certain norms of behavior assumed to be “professional,” Dr. Baez, the controversial principal of NNHS, encourages students to view themselves as Young Latino Professionals and adopt traditional—i.e. middle/upper-class; steeped in colonial attitudes—behaviors and dress in an attempt to help them merge into the mainstream and be favorably viewed by society at large. The book’s first section also considers how the Mexican and Puerto Rican students at NNHS view themselves and how students navigate complicated relationships between their racial identities and their language practices in order to relate to one another or distinguish themselves from their peers based on perceived ethnoracial standards of difference.

The book’s second part, “Sounding like a Race: Latinx Raciolinguistic Enregisterment,” highlights how a deficiency model of multilingualism dictates how language is perceived and governed at NNHS. Rosa shows that Latinx language practices are often marked and judged as inadequate. The bilingual Latinx students examined by Rosa are regarded as speaking neither English nor Spanish correctly. This devaluing of language practices renders them without language, or “languageless” (Rosa, 2019: 127). In the case of the individuals at NNHS, being bilingual is not necessarily regarded as an asset, but a hindrance. By describing the linguistic insecurities of NNHS students and Dr. Baez, Rosa makes clear the racism and classism inherent in how society judges language use and multilingualism. Regarded as an impressive asset in some (white) individuals, bilingualism becomes a barrier to success for the Latinx students and administrators in Rosa’s text. Language can be seen as a resource or deficiency depending on context (Rosa, 2019: 142).

Rosa is a gifted storyteller, and a major strength of his project lies in how he writes his student subjects and narrates their identities and experiences. For an ethnographic project reliant on the experiences and vulnerabilities of young human subjects, this storytelling is key. For a book that is (especially in the Introduction) highly theoretical and dependent on intersections between complex sociological concepts, it is also deeply human, practical, and sympathetic in its approach. In chapter 5, “Pink Cheese, Green Ghosts, Cool Arrows/Pinches Gringos Culeros”: Inverted Spanglish and Latinx Raciolinguistic Enregisterment,” Rosa highlights five students in order to further investigate the language practices of NNHS students and to show how labels such as “monolingual” and “bilingual” are inadequate descriptors. Rosa highlights how the students label their own language practices (“English-dominant bilingual,” “bilingual,” “monolingual”), how the students’ races are inherently tied to their language practices (speaks “both Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish”), and the ways the students perceive the value of their language practices (Puerto Rican Spanish is “cool” while Mexican Spanish is “correct”) (2019: 154-157). Through this in-depth analysis of particular students’ beliefs and practices surrounding their language practices, Rosa shows how in the U.S. context “bilingual” and “multilingual” labels are misleading (2019: 159). Rosa shows how students often draw on both of their languages and that bilinguals don’t always use both languages equally. Through individual student portraits, Rosa pushes us to consider a “translanguaging” framework instead. The translanguaging context can “unsettle the boundaries between and within objectified languages” (2019: 159) and provide a new lens through which students can understand how they embody and navigate between languages.

Rosa’s book asks readers to question their assumptions not only about racial identity and language use, but about the function and value of writing in general. A teacher at NNHS claims the school has a writing problem, but fails to notice the writing students constantly produce within and outside the school’s walls: texting, writing rap lyrics, poems, jokes, and tagging abound. Rosa asks us to consider what happens to a highly literate person when that person’s literacy is criminalized. NNHS student Rigo, who spends time with Rosa telling of his

Book Review: *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning of Latinidad*. By Jonathan Rosa. Oxford University Press, 2019. 312 pp.

experiences with gang life and his tagging crew, explains how even the creation of “meaningful tags” (2019: 192) results in a racialized and “negative valuation” (2019: 186) of the types of writing he produces and the literacy practices in which he is highly skilled. Through descriptions of conversations with Rigo and other students at NNHS, Rosa demonstrates how students can be affiliated with both “street” and “school” identities and literacies and are often masterful in how they can navigate between the two.

This book asserts that educational spaces could benefit tremendously from a reevaluation of the linguistic boundaries that separate and limit what students can achieve through full embodiments of their identities. It is crucial to pay attention to and constantly interrogate what it means to be literate and therefore successful in accordance with the mainstream. In his final chapter, Rosa asserts that “racial capitalism” is consistently legitimized through how institutions such as NNHS regard mobility and raciolinguistic hierarchies. One way to undermine these values and the “colonial power relations” (Rosa, 2019: 213) that shape self-perceptions and social relationships within such institutions is to adopt a raciolinguistic perspective in an attempt to understand the relationships between race and language and prioritize abolishing inherently racist markers of success in favor of more equitable structures. Rosa’s book is a must-read for students and educators interested in scholarship that foregrounds race and interrogates racial categories. It is also an exceptional example of an ethnographic study that analyzes the formation and naturalization of Latinidad in the United States.

Reference

Rosa, J., & Flores, N. (2017). Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society*, (46)5, 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000562>

**Facteurs socio-éducatifs et la puissance douce du langage-
Le déluge de l'anglais en Pologne et au Portugal. By Anna
Odrowąż-Coates, Lexington Books, 2019. 198 pp.**

Kamel Lahmar, PhD.⁴⁷

L'auteure (Anna Odrowąż-Coates) est une sociologue polonaise. Elle est professeure associée à l'Université de Varsovie et titulaire de la chaire UNESCO de pédagogie sociale. Elle est aussi membre du conseil exécutif du Conseil de recherche 25 «Langue et société» de l'Association Internationale de Sociologie.

Je trouve qu'il est important de révéler aussi que l'auteure de cette étude est née à l'époque du «rideau de fer», avec un fort héritage patriotique, mais qui a parcouru le monde et a bénéficié d'opportunités mondiales. Je trouve aussi que ce n'est pas une position neutre, mais profondément enracinée dans le sujet. Les similitudes et les différences dans la politique de la langue anglaise et ses résultats ont révélé un domaine prometteur de l'enquête interculturelle, c'est ce qui a proposé une visite d'affaires à l'Université Nova de Lisbonne et un certain nombre de discussions informelles avec des universitaires portugais qui a été conclue par ce travail.

Le présent ouvrage vise un certain genre de lecteur, il joue le jeu de l'interdisciplinarité et intéressera un large public en sciences sociales. Il n'est pas possible de signaler toutes les pistes développées; nous en retiendrons six, qui parcourent l'ouvrage dans son ensemble: arts du langage et disciplines, linguistique, sociolinguistique, sociologie, sciences sociales et théorie sociale. Toutefois, l'ouvrage cherche à promouvoir une approche ancrée dans les sciences sociales qui laisse une place centrale au travail empirique, privilégiant une approche de combinaison originale et critique dans un cadrage postcolonial. Mais il devrait vivement intéresser ceux et celles qui se battent pour que l'hégémonie de l'anglais cesse.

Ce livre de première édition porte bien son titre car il s'intéresse à la perspective des inégalités socio-éducatives est le cœur du livre. Elle est axée sur les questions de relations de pouvoir et

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en particulier de «soft power», dans un contexte socio-éducatif de croissance de la langue anglaise, dans les systèmes éducatifs, dans les familles en corporation et dans la vie des gens «ordinaires». Le titre est à la hauteur des attentes qu'il crée chez le lecteur. Si vous conservez le titre à l'esprit lors de la lecture du livre, l'auteure, persuade une lecture non seulement informative mais aussi cohérente et, surtout, agréable à lire. Anna Odrowąż-Coates s'interroge: Qui est inclus ou exclu en raison de la popularité de l'anglais dans les espaces publics de Varsovie et de Lisbonne et comment? La connaissance de l'anglais peut-elle être considérée comme un déterminant croissant des différences de classe? Qui est le principal bénéficiaire? L'originalité du livre d'Anna Odrowąż-Coates est confirmée dans son contexte, pour de maintes raisons. Une de ses originalités consiste à contenir des données de recherche empiriques uniques en Pologne et au Portugal, cette démarche est soutenue par l'offre d'une approche non linguistique basée sur le néostructuralisme de l'acquisition du langage, axée sur le positionnement structurel et ses aspects de la façon dont la langue est utilisée pour employer l'idéologie. L'apport principal de cet ouvrage est en effet de nous faire entrer de façon très vivante et très précise dans le questionnement de la raison de la popularité de l'anglais dans les espaces publics de Varsovie et de Lisbonne

L'un des aspects importants de ce livre consiste dans la capacité de capturer les représentations cachées du pouvoir et leur conditionnement socioculturel, qui repose sur l'élargissement et la redéfinition des discours du pouvoir symbolique, pour capturer des catégories stimulantes liées au langage en tant qu'outil de communication avec une catégorie révisée de stratification sociale. Un autre intérêt de cet ouvrage se situe dans les différents niveaux de l'analyse qui permettent d'abord de questionner des hypothèses habituellement considérées, dans le cadre de la théorie standard, comme évidentes ou allant de soi.

On doit aussi à cet ouvrage le mérite d'aborder avec pertinence et qualité les questions fondamentales qui traversent actuellement le domaine de la sociolinguistique. Ce livre rend compte très justement des conséquences de l'uniformisation du modèle linguistique, représenté par l'anglais, qui est ici dénoncée. Cet ouvrage propose une réflexion fondamentale et nécessaire sur les limites de la théorie libérale dans ce domaine. Les premiers chapitres de l'ouvrage sont certainement les plus convaincants. À ce titre, le livre est particulièrement stimulant.

L'objectif principal présenté dans cet ouvrage est d'identifier et d'exposer les mécanismes multidirectionnels responsables du langage en cours d'évolution des espaces publics en Pologne et au Portugal. Dans une vision équilibrée, l'auteure reconnaît les aspects habilitants de l'acquisition de la langue anglaise ainsi que les aspects défavorables. L'un des principaux objectifs de l'étude était d'identifier les principaux bénéficiaires de l'utilisation répandue de l'anglais à travers l'Europe. De plus, l'auteure visait à distinguer les aspects habilitants des aspects déresponsabilisants de ce changement de langage en même temps avec les moyens de reproduction du positionnement du langage, suivi des critères d'auto-positionnement, dans le cadre du «soft power».

Le projet d'Anna Odrowąż-Coates est donc ambitieux car il propose de revisiter les diverses formes du changement de langage. Il s'agit donc de repenser ensemble l'identité personnelle et nationale. Les informations sont données dans une optique précise. La sociolinguistique est le cadre théorique sous-tendant de cette étude présentée dans le livre. Les trois piliers majeurs sur lesquels repose l'étude sont: la théorie du positionnement surtout, l'Habitus et le pouvoir de J. Bourdieu, et enfin la «gouvernementalité» Foucauldienne, le tout combiné dans la notion de pouvoir. Les idées principales que présente Anna Odrowąż-Coates dans son livre

montrent que l'anglais, en tant que langue d'intégration européenne et de communication, est devenu un élément de statut social.

Dans les groupes sociaux privilégiés, sa position est passée d'une langue étrangère à une langue seconde, ce qui démontre un changement linguistique aux conséquences à long terme. 'Facteurs socio-éducatifs et la puissance douce du langage' examine de manière critique les implications culturelles et individuelles de ce phénomène dans le contexte d'une étude de terrain en Pologne et au Portugal.

L'auteure utilise l'ethnographie institutionnelle avec une combinaison de constructions théoriques, y compris la puissance douce «soft power» et la «théorie du positionnement», pour examiner les preuves de l'anglais en tant que nouvel outil de stratification sociale et son effet sur les politiques linguistiques ainsi que la manière dont il affecte la vie des gens et leurs opportunités. L'argumentation de l'auteure est que pour les gens de la classe ouvrière et de la classe moyenne, la langue anglaise est devenue une condition préalable à l'inclusion sociale dans le monde de l'économie mondialisée et de la science mondialisée.

Les difficultés méthodologiques et techniques rencontrées au cours de la recherche sont décrites dans cet ouvrage pour assurer l'honnêteté scientifique et comme source d'informations complémentaires sur les questions culturelles et le processus de recherche. Tout en critiquant les dimensions néolibérale, néocoloniale et impérialiste de l'hégémonie de la langue anglaise, Odrowąż-Coates plaide pour une perspective sexospécifique de l'anglais comme langue d'opportunité, d'inclusion et d'autonomisation.

Elle se concentre sur les discours qui se révèlent être les produits et les créateurs des aspects matériels du langage. Utilisant un impératif éthique non seulement pour remettre en question, mais aussi pour participer aux structures de pouvoir existantes afin de changer la dynamique du pouvoir, Odrowąż-Coates soutient que les choix linguistiques ne sont pas nécessairement motivés individuellement mais sont plutôt institutionnels.

L'auteure avance que lors de la rédaction de son livre, plusieurs choses étonnantes se sont produites. Bien qu'elles représentent son expérience individuelle, elle voit qu'elle est convaincue que ceux-ci peuvent indiquer un phénomène répandu. La partie empirique de l'étude a consisté à tester l'hypothèse suivante: «La connaissance de la langue anglaise est devenue un facteur de production et de reproduction de la structure sociale», ainsi a parlé Bourdieu. L'ensemble des exemples montre la richesse de ce livre qui analyse avec beaucoup de précisions le fonctionnement des mécanismes cités et les difficultés à en décrypter les enjeux, y compris pour les acteurs qui en sont les principales parties prenantes.

Dans l'ensemble, le livre semble accessible et facile à lire, même pour les personnes qui ne sont pas familières avec les questions abordées dans le livre.

Le livre est organisé en petits chapitres interconnectés accompagnés de données empiriques. Les résultats de la recherche sont intégrés dans la pédagogie sociale, la sociologie de l'éducation et la sociolinguistique". La lecture de ce livre nous apprend énormément.

Concernant la méthodologie, le fondement théorique présente une combinaison originale d'Althusser, Boudon, Bourdieu, Faircough, Foucault, Harre, Marschall et Nye, qui a postulé pour une méta-analyse, accompagnée d'un cadrage postcolonial et d'une riche combinaison d'approches critiques, y compris féministes. L'auteure mobilise pour cela le cadre théorique d'une sociologie des capacités.

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Ce choix théorique est particulièrement adéquat pour le côté quantitatif. L'étude empirique est non linguistique mais une étude socio-éducative. Sa concentration principale est basée sur les perceptions personnelles de la langue anglaise dans la vie privée des participants à la recherche et dans l'espace public.

L'ouvrage est composé de deux parties composites qui présentent des enquêtes sous forme d'entretiens biographiques et de portraits sociologiques. Une enquête de terrain fournie tant systématique (en relevant notamment la composition des différents participants) que qualitative avec plusieurs dizaines d'entretiens semi-directifs effectués avec des membres des différents participants. À chaque fois, dans ces différents arènes, l'auteure cherche à dépasser les conclusions générales pour nous montrer comment en pratique s'incarne cette influence et les limites qu'elle rencontre.

Les données empiriques proviennent de deux capitales de l'Union européenne (UE), Lisbonne (Portugal) et Varsovie (Pologne).

Les données ont été recueillies au moyen d'une enquête d'opinion quantitative auprès de 564 participants sélectionnés à dessein et de 54 entretiens qualitatifs, qui étaient des entretiens d'experts également classés comme des entretiens complets (de compréhension). Celles-ci étaient accompagnées d'observations auto-ethnographiques impliquant sept couples de nationalité mixte. Sous l'égide des institutions d'ethnographie, les données ont été rassemblées. Les données ont été complétées par une ethnographie visuelle pour établir des paysages linguistiques dans la ville de Lisbonne et la ville de Varsovie, parce que l'espace public a une représentation spatiale. Le processus de collecte des données a duré quinze mois en 2017 et 2018.

La comparaison des données statistiques est fournie en tableaux et figures systématiquement pour les deux pays.

Les cadrages statistiques, la présentation des contextes institutionnels, l'historique des principales mesures en faveur de la conciliation en font un ouvrage très complet sur ce thème. L'ouvrage est très structuré et agréable à la lecture, joue le jeu de la collection «Repères» en posant de façon intéressante l'état de la question linguistique. Sur la forme, soulignons que le livre est écrit dans un style clair et fluide. Dans une introduction, bienvenue pour faire tenir le tout ensemble, Anna Odrowąż-Coates s'arrête à l'importance des approches, de l'analyse et des résultats. Elle donne un aperçu du livre dans l'introduction, fournissant au lecteur un résumé qui facilite le lecteur dans un sujet complexe et multiforme. Comme les questions abordées dans le livre sont plutôt complexes et imbriquées, les aborder sous forme de livre profite au lecteur, ce dont l'auteure est parfaitement consciente.

L'introduction est alors utile à toute personne qui a une connaissance limitée du sujet dans la société et la langue. Comme l'indique déjà le titre du livre, l'introduction montre qu'il "contient nettement une évaluation à jour de la croissance de la langue anglaise et son hégémonie dans un contexte européen contemporain, le public accompagnateur, les discours individuels, et les implications sociales liées à cette tendance".

Pour appréhender les ancrages, l'auteure propose d'abord le recours à quelques définitions de base relatives aux langues qui prévalent dans le texte, à savoir: langue native, langue maternelle, première langue naturelle que la personne parle (L1), deuxième langue (SL) ou (L2), langue étrangère (FL), langue cible (TL), anglais traité comme langue étrangère (EFL), anglais comme

deuxième langue (ESL), anglais comme lingua franca (ELF), enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère (TEFL) et enseignement de l'anglais comme deuxième langue (TESL).

Le style de l'auteure s'accorde bien avec l'approche choisie, ce qui rend le livre plus accessible aux non-universitaires. L'ouvrage se décline alors en neuf chapitres que nous allons brièvement présenter.

Le 1^{er} chapitre s'intéresse au «Positionnement linguistique en Pologne et au Portugal: languages in contact- historical influences and the language realm»

Anna Odrowąż-Coates, s'appuie pour cela sur le côté historique des deux pays, mais surtout celui de la Pologne. Elle considère qu'ils ont offert un abri à différentes confessions religieuses et dominations, pendant de longues périodes d'histoire, et cette politique a mis des personnes de nombreuses langues en contact direct et a attiré des colons internationaux.

Le 2^{ème} chapitre de l'ouvrage se penche sur "...l'égide de l'ethnographie institutionnelle"

En général, ceux qui connaissent déjà la sociologie, le néolibéralisme et/ ou l'étude de Bourdieu peuvent sauter les chapitres, tandis que ceux qui ne connaissent pas ces questions théoriques feraient bien de passer par ces chapitres, sinon le reste du livre pourrait s'avérer difficile à suivre.

Le 3^{ème} chapitre, plus bref et axé sur la "langue et les discours"

Il nous fait plus directement entrer dans le vif du sujet en nous plongeant plus directement dans le cœur de l'enquête. Anna Odrowąż-Coates y revient sur l'expérience des pays où les répondants sont les moins susceptibles de parler une langue étrangère; qui sont la Hongrie (65%), l'Italie (62%), le Royaume-Uni (61%), le Portugal (61%) et l'Irlande (60%). Les cinq langues étrangères les plus parlées au moment de l'enquête de 2011 étaient l'anglais en tête avec (38%), puis le français (12%), l'allemand (11%), l'espagnol (7%) et le russe (5%). (p. 41). Le sujet est obligé à acquérir une conscience critique, alors il est indispensable de participer au discours responsable de la reproduction et de la transmission du pouvoir afin de dévoiler les mécanismes de la gouvernementalité. Le rejet de l'oppression systémique peut être exprimé par une solution révolutionnaire qui est le manque à la participation. Toutefois, une telle solution est une arme à double tranchant, qui peut conduire à un certain genre d'exclusion.

Le 4^{ème} chapitre, tout comme les chapitres précédents 2, et 3, il couvre les "Luttes de pouvoir linguistiques"

Bien que familier avec ces sujets, j'ai trouvé que ces chapitres étaient bien formulés, élaborant de multiples concepts centraux, tels que le capital, l'habitus et la pratique, étant concis mais pas denses. Cela rend le livre accessible à quiconque s'intéresse aux questions relatives au genre, au néolibéralisme, à la distinction et au capital linguistique. C'est également dans cette partie du livre que Anna Odrowąż-Coates élabore son approche sur des sujets indiqués ultérieurement et son propre rôle vis-à-vis des participants à son étude. Il est louable que non seulement Anna Odrowąż-Coates mentionne son propre rôle dans le processus d'enquête qui met l'accent sur le rôle des participants, les laissant librement raconter leurs expériences plutôt que d'utiliser des extraits de leurs points de vue comme un simple assaisonnement, mais elle aborde également explicitement son rôle et les limites qui vont avec.

Le 5^{ème} chapitre porte sur la "Hiérarchie des langues - Hiérarchie sociale"

De plus, elle prend soin d'expliquer que l'enquête ne cherche pas à promouvoir sans critique les points de vue des participants, car les récits sont considérés comme des actes d'auto-présentation, véridiques ou non, plutôt que comme les expériences des participants en eux-

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mêmes. Ce chapitre fourmille de résultats intéressants, parfois inattendus, dont on n'a pu donner ici qu'un aperçu très partiel.

Le 6^{ième} chapitre vise le "Positionnement social et la diversification de classe"

La marque de l'ère néolibérale se voit quand les affaires dictent de nouvelles règles linguistiques. Alors, toutes les sphères de la vie, y compris les normes linguistiques sont impactée par les économies de marché. L'auteure précise que parmi 30 langues parlées, l'anglais est l'une des 11 langues nationales, parlée comme première, deuxième et étrangère. Mais, l'histoire de la langue anglaise en Afrique du Sud a divulgué la nature carnivore de l'anglais.

Le 7^{ième} chapitre revient sur la question du "Tournant linguistique?"

Anna Odrowąż-Coates y montre que la langue est un marqueur cognitif, émotionnel, conscient et inconscient de nos points communs et de notre individualité. Cela montre sa composante importante de notre identité. Elle remarque que la langue anglaise évoque des émotions contradictoires, exprimant le désir, l'opportunité, posant une menace, et la destruction tout à la fois. Elle critique la complexité du phénomène anglais qui comprend la potentialité, l'impuissance et l'opportunité d'une part, et le pouvoir, le contrôle et la destruction d'autre part. Par conséquent, elle propose une approche critique nécessaire pour construire une nouvelle compréhension, de nouvelles formes d'opposition, de résistance et de changement. Celles-ci impliquent l'appropriation accompagnée par l'interaction bidirectionnelle avec l'identité personnelle et nationale. Dans l'autre sous-partie du chapitre «l'imaginaire Social», l'auteure dénonce la «militarisation» du langage. Les deux pays concernés ont connu un virage linguistique récent, en Portugal du français à l'anglais dans les années 80 et en Pologne du russe à l'anglais en 1990. Elle juge que l'histoire coloniale entre les pays n'a pas conduit à des relations postcoloniales, mais à des relations néocoloniales. Le Portugal a rejeté la colonisation et la Pologne étant été un pays colonisé par les Soviétiques a rejeté l'héritage culturel oriental et russe. Les deux pays ont connu des liens profonds avec les cultures anglophones. Dans les deux pays la langue était souvent considérée comme une arme pour combattre l'opresseur.

Dans le 8^{ième} chapitre l'auteure revient sur l'importance de la "Lutte sociale et les données empiriques"

Anna Odrowąż-Coates a commencé par affirmer que cette étude ne représente ni la sémiotique ni la linguistique fonctionnelle systématique (SFL); la diversification de l'usage de la langue dans différents groupes sociaux est son lien comme intérêt commun avec la sociolinguistique. Cette étude relève du parapluie sociolinguistique; en raison de la nature pluricentrique de la langue anglaise. Toutefois, de part son point de vue, ce parapluie devrait être plus étroitement lié à l'anthropologie linguistique, par souci d'éclairer comment une langue influence la vie sociale, mettant en considération que l'anglais est non pas une langue en danger d'extinction, mais c'est une langue qui rivalise avec d'autres langues, y participe et entre en compétition avec elles, et gagne progressivement l'hégémonie.

Enfin, le 9^{ième} et dernier chapitre traite de la «Langue, aspects de genre et positionnement social"

Anna Odrowąż-Coates avance que la langue a une dimension sexospécifique et que l'avantage et l'autonomisation ne sont pas de simples processus à sens unique. En premier lieu, la violence symbolique, en termes de genre, est généralement associée à des moyens invisibles de domination sexuée à travers les rôles de genre, la stigmatisation et les stéréotypes. D'abord, le langage et les structures linguistiques peuvent être les moyens de la violence symbolique.

Puis, le concept de «gouvernementalité», comme pouvoir symbolique, en tant que reflet d'une influence sociale politique et idéologique écrasante, enrichit l'image des structures cachées des relations de genre. Enfin, l'aspect du genre dans la politique raciale et l'étude des mariages de la classe moyenne incarnent les relations de pouvoir entre les sexes qui sont souvent examinées par rapport au statut social, au niveau d'éducation et au pouvoir monétaire, et tous les autres facteurs.

Une approche féministe des relations de pouvoir conjugales est incarnée par le concept d'une relation d'exploitation unilatérale, qui, par le mariage, réduit l'action des femmes et la prospérité sur le marché du travail. Lorsqu'on pense au conjoint qui est le locuteur natif de l'anglais on trouve qu'il est traité comme un atout, comme un moyen de positionner le pouvoir au travail. L'auteure informe qu'une autre indication du langage et du pouvoir est perçue dans les cas des locuteurs natifs de l'anglais, car leurs épouses, occupant des postes prestigieux ou des postes plus élevés dans l'environnement de travail, estimaient que leurs maris soutenaient leur développement personnel - le développement de leurs compétences linguistiques - et renforçaient leurs compétences en anglais.

En conclusion, dans le résumé des résultats de la recherche, les conclusions avancées qui conduisent à spécifier au cas par cas l'influence réelle de l'anglais sont convaincantes car elles évitent les raccourcis trop souvent lus sur ces thématiques.

Pour conclure, nous avons tous des identités multiples et en lisant ce livre, je me suis surpris qu'il parlait à moi-même: je l'ai lu en tant qu'enseignant universitaire toujours à la recherche de meilleurs moyens de stimuler la motivation des étudiants intéressés par l'étude de la langue anglaise, pour rivaliser le français comme langue de colonisateur de l'Algérie.

Un beau débat est ainsi ouvert ou ré-ouvert, et c'est une bonne nouvelle. Lorsque le statut des individus passe des utilisateurs FL à SL, l'autonomisation vient du changement linguistique qui n'est pas un outil innocent, mais il a un prix symbolique inconsciemment payé par les utilisateurs d'ESL par le biais de la gouvernementalité. Il a également exprimée par

La colonisation est une représentation visible du prix symbolique à travers la domination culturelle et technologique, avec un potentiel explicite pour imposer l'exclusion sociale et la subordination linguistiquement contrôlée.

Pour délégitimer l'influence réduite de la complicité dans la distribution du pouvoir linguistique, il faut être constamment, mal à l'aise, conscient de son propre privilège.

Les côtés sinistres de l'anglais en tant que L2 dans les mondes sociaux de Lisbonne et de Varsovie sont révélés par ce livre.

Au regard de l'ensemble des apports généraux, cet ouvrage présente une analyse très riche et très documentée. Si on regrette dans de pareils ouvrages une certaine absence de prise de risque théorique de la part des auteurs Anna a été claire et brève sans équivoque. Cet ouvrage constitue une invitation à relier différents champs des sciences humaines pour répondre aux enjeux actuels que pose la question de l'hégémonie de l'anglais. On saisit alors le défi immense que représente une pensée ouverte et pluridisciplinaire sur le sujet. Le lecteur trouvera un grand intérêt à le lire le matériau extrêmement riche qu'il rassemble et analyse de façon très convaincante et stimulante. Malgré le caractère académique simple de l'ouvrage, la conclusion est très douce.

RC25 Awards

Since their creation, RC25 awards are linked to *Language, Discourse & Society*, as all published articles are eligible to be considered by the Awards Committee. Here is a record of the articles granted and the Awards Committee composition.

2012, Buenos Aires, Second Forum of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee

Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, University of Haifa
Viviane Resende, University of Brasilia
Sergei Riazantsev, Institute of Social and Political Research, Moscow
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, CEPS/INSTEAD, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Academic Excellence Award

Anders Persson (2012), "Front- and Backstage in Social Media", *LD&S*, 1(2), 11-31.

Graduate Student Award

Not granted.

2014, Yokohama, XVIII ISA World Congress

Award Committee

Nadezhda Georgieva, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
Corrine Kirchner, Columbia University, United States
Anders Persson, Lund University, Sweden
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

Academic Excellence Award

Raymond Oenbring and William Fielding (2014), "Young Adults' Attitudes to Standard and Nonstandard English in an English-Creole Speaking Country: The Case of The Bahamas", *LD&S*, 3(1), 28-51.

Graduate Student Award

Nassima Neggaz (2013), "Syria's Arab Spring: Language Enrichment", *LD&S*, 2(2), 11-31.

2016, Vienna, Third Forum of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee

Erzsebet Barat, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, CEU, Budapest
Irina Chudnovskaia, Department of Sociology of Communicative Systems, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia
Roland Terborg, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

Academic Excellence Award

Tiffany A. Dykstra (2016), “Assemblages of Syrian suffering: Rhetorical formations of refugees in Western media”, *LD&S*, 4(1), 31-48.

Graduate Student Award

Tomoaki Miyazaki (2016), “The Rhetorical Use of Anecdote in Online Political Discussion”, *LD&S*, 4(1), 49-61.

2018, Toronto, World Congress of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee for the Award for Academic Excellence

Eduardo Faingold (University of Tulsa – United States of America)

Christian Karner (University of Nottingham – United Kingdom)

Everlynn Kisémbé (University of Ghana - Ghana)

Chair: Cecilio Lapresta-Rey (Universitat de Lleida - Spain)

Award for Academic Excellence

Howard Davis, Graham Day, Marta Eichsteller & Sally Baker (20), “Language and autobiographical narratives: Motivation, capital and transnational imaginations”, *LD&S*, 5(1), 53-70.

Award Committee for the Language & Society Distinguished Career Award

Natalie Byfield (St. John’s University - United States of America)

Nancy Hornberger (University of Pennsylvania - United States of America)

Roland Terborg (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - Mexico)

Chair: Cecilio Lapresta-Rey (Universitat de Lleida - Spain)

Language & Society Distinguished Career Award

Professor Florian Coulmas (University Duisburg-Essen, Germany)

Past editorial boards

Language, Discourse & Society was founded by Federico Farini in 2011.

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