# Shades of Decolonial Voices in Linguistics

**GLOBAL FORUM ON SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES**

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GLOBAL FORUM ON SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES: 2

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Edited by
**Sinfree Makoni, Cristine Severo, Ashraf Abdelhay, Anna Kaiper-Marquez and Višnja Milojičić**

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# Dedication

Atila,

How and where are you now, dearest friend? What do the newer horizons drawing your core to action look like this time? We miss you here, in this plane of reality that is currently under fire.

You were a force of mad lucidity driven by the very pulse of the Earth. When we met at that gathering, it was as if we instantly recognized a mutual hunger in one another: the urgency to translate fateful dreams of change into action. You introduced yourself as a seventy-something-year-old academic farmer from Brazil. Your energy was volcanic. The aura of your stories reflected an ineffable depth that bore the stain of the times you faced violence while defending the forest against man-made predators.

You were incarcerated, you told me, between lettuce bites, and you mentioned something to do with 'imposed dictatorship problems;' which has become a common code between people from Latin America. I suggested that we talk more, so we walked over to the edge of campus on College Ave, CC, you and I, and, as we spoke we became swallowed by a torrential conversation involving everything that we cared about and the issues we desperately wanted to change for the benefit of all. What we shared resonated in each other's hearts and we let ourselves become inebriated by its effects.

The three of us sitting at that table might as well have been from different planets. We all shared differences in age, race, ability, gender, nationality, height and class, among other things, but we were all moved by the same prospective dream: liberation from capitalism as a system of global domination. We longed for a life free of the fear for the unknown that we all have within and that we are taught to project as hate for others.

It was then that you told us of your work in the Amazon in the 1970s when you witnessed the interventions made by the World Bank on small farms, affecting the territories of the Indigenous Paiter Suruí people due to the presence of the military government. You went through graduate school and used the resources you found there to develop a working model that you called the 'Cacaio Project,' and that worked as a 'backpack of survival tools for populations at risk.' Your PhD thesis, in reflection of your life's mission, was dedicated to raising awareness about the violence that young people in vulnerable conditions are subjected to in the context of favelas around Río de Janeiro and in your beloved Petrópolis.

You gave those of us who were lucky to have met you the most precious of gifts: the heartfelt knowledge of how to grow your own food in reciprocal collaboration with the Earth. In a world ruled by money, where agonism, greed and inequality are ever-increasing, it is pressing that people teach each other to become self-sufficient

in ways that re-connect them with the sources of life that all of us are meant to care for. In that we agreed.

I told you about my work as a community artist in Chiapas and Zambia and how I created dialogic drawing exercises as a means for people to open themselves to the wonders that anti-colonial forms of sensibility grant to those who dare to feel deeply in connection to everything. Empowerment for us involves dealing with the inferiorization that is particular to Latinxs. It is a hellish limbo of constant uncertainty that we are forced to navigate.

We also spoke about our transnational collective, Bruxas Bruxas and the mycorrhizal ecologies of care that we conjured within the prison system of Pennsylvania while teaching art. As community artists we sought to connect experiences of subaltern alterities with hegemonic discursive formats through which we could repurpose the fine art gallery setting to work as a platform from which to raise awareness against the structural causes behind police brutality and labor-based exploitation.

After we said goodnight, the vibrant residue of that encounter compelled us to stay in touch. You traveled back to Brazil and carried on with your workshops for building vegetable gardens with children from local schools. We emailed often and started an action group with your students Andressa and Roberto and my colleague Megan from rural sociology. We began meeting regularly online to conspire in the crafting of a replicable model for our idea of developing rooted, and connective forms of awareness of nature. Our aim was to perform sustenance horizontally and collectively. We intended to give our initiative the capacity to spread around the world like fungal spores carried by the wind.

But then the pandemic hit.

The anxiety was shared by us all. You were adamant when we called and you said: ‘We need to do something now! We need to convince other people to help us plant 7 billion trees!’

My reaction was the only one I could have possibly had: ‘But of course! Yes! Let’s do this!’ I could not even fathom such a quantity in my head, if I am honest. But you spoke with such power, Atila, and I knew we would never be stopped. You let me know of your frustration with what you saw as a lack of involvement on behalf of universities in organizing actions against the greater corporate forces actively destroying our livable landscapes.

So, in response, we dreamed up a holistic, transdisciplinary and non-formal educational project that merged the community-building practices of artmaking and food growing via the playful conceptualization culture-as-cultivation. However, after some consideration, we decided to begin smaller, planning to plant one billion trees first. You responded: ‘Yes, but then we also need to build 700 vegetable gardens!’ to which I responded: ‘naturally!’ My next email led us to the title: ‘I know! Bruno Munari has a drawing exercise in which he challenges people to perceive a tree as a slow explosion of a seed and to draw one as such. If our aim is to plant 1 billion trees, then let’s call this project ‘One Billion Slow Exploding Seeds!’’ It sounded funnily appealing, this way to use playfulness in signaling an absurdly factual need. So, we drafted an abstract that read like a manifesto, we poured our souls into the writing and hoped for the best when applying for conferences. Soon after we had three

opportunities lined up and a paper on the way. You and I presented 1BSES in South Africa, the UK and Brazil. I became absorbed by my dissertation while waiting to present at MLA in Glasgow and we lost touch for a moment when I got the news of your passing. Your last message read as if you barely had any energy left. I had called a couple of days prior, but it was too late.

If I were to explain love in its most powerfully connective phase, it would be by channeling your fierce tenderness in caring for the living and the dying as part of a dynamic, ever-unfolding whole that is our home. Your very being is proof of the value intrinsic to the core teachings of Latina/x writers who are building affective and conceptual bridges to heal colonial divides among the oppressed. There is a hard and complex truth in the lessons of anti-colonial scholars who are presently trying to demonstrate to the rest of the world that it is possible to work together across differences toward a common dream in spite of the hardships that we face. It becomes easier to face them together. That is a kind of math that I can grapple with. Driven by the memory of your being, we are daring to dream into reality the material possibility for all people who are suffering from domination to be able to lead a dignified life with the proper metabolic conditions and in reciprocity with the Earth's processes, which is what ecosocialism and marxist ecological feminisms fight for.

We have so much work to do. We are shedding the human to be recognized as compostable humus. As fungi. You left when the party had just begun. I couldn't believe that you were gone, it was as if the entire world skipped a heartbeat. Days became heavier. But, as I am telling Andressa and Roberto in the group chat that we still interact on: our project is actively being embraced by incredible people from around the world. I wish you could be here for it. There are so many kind and willing beings trying to make a difference and we are getting together to make your dream come true. We will plant 1 billion trees and 700 vegetables gardens by forming mycorrhizal coalitions between universities and cultural institutions to get academics (professors and students) to join in the fun. I wish you had been there for the conversation that happened in Glasgow after I presented 1BSES for the first time without you. I screened a video of you speaking about the project and it got through to people because of how genuinely and fiercely you spoke.

I am now summoning a river of images to express the gratitude that I feel for the moments where we were able to join forces and weave a common envisioning for a future grounded in non-egotistical comradely love. For that is the type of love that we must cultivate against all rifting forces of ego. Love like that will heal the agonistic divide.

Oh, Atila. We will someday share a glass of cachaça de banana, as we promised, while traversing the mycorrhizal afterworlds, and in celebration of the life that you dedicated to caring after our home.

Desde el corazón,
Xalli

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*Dedication originally presented in:*

A Maelstrom of Peace: Atila Calvente's Billion Slow Exploding Seeds
*Re-membering Anti-colonial Life-forms Through the Cultivation of Love*
A Project by Atila Calvente† and Xalli Zúñiga.

# Interlude: In Memory of Átila Calvente

Magda Madany-Saá

Átila worked for over 20 years in Petrópolis with neighborhood schools in the favelas and the rural countryside, bringing farmers and disadvantaged children together to plant school vegetable gardens and learn about the origin of the foods they eat, and how it relates to their own lifestyles as they grow. In addition, he had experience among settlers in the Amazon, ranchers and indegenous on the Ilha do Bananal in Tocantins, as well as his own experience as an organic coffee and dairy farmer in the Atlantic Forest in the Serrana area of Rio.

Átila initiated The Cacaio Project: Education for Environmental, Aesthetic and Moral Development on which he extensively talked about during our GVF sessions. He was above all a great humanist and an insatiable seeker of knowledge to try to make sense out of global and local problems that afflict youth and their families everywhere. After contributing to planting hundreds of school and community gardens in his beloved Petrópolis, his last (perhaps quixotic) quest to plant 1 billion

native trees was emblematic of his energy and willingness to give so much of himself to the poor and to Nature. His trees survive and honor him…

In a personal email to Magda Madany-Saá in May 2021, he wrote:

> I have learned so much in the Penn State Virtual Group. Today my work seeks to take advantage of the aspect that encourages the decolonization of science and research methods (Smith, 2008), looking for new onto-epistemological bases on a relationship with nature, silence and ecopoetry. Language and communication do not come exclusively from the brain–mind–body, but also from some energy/spirit. As a farmer in Brazil I can bring to vulnerable children concrete experiences for them to get involved in abstract thinking. The rain teaches softness and lightness. Soils teach humility. Domestic animals teach rationality. Silence allows the expansion of attention and concentration. The lakes cultivate serenity. The sun, an awakening of life. The forest is like a synonym for diversity. The streams, the movement of life itself. To learn from the peasant woman, the vital force. Children abandoned by governments and societies, characterize challenges for an unthinkable future. Cecília Meireles said, 'Words fly, and sometimes they land'. We work to create a fertile environment so that children can seize opportunities to be protagonists of their own stories.

In one of the last emails to his colleague Magda Madany-Saá in September 2021, he wrote: 'Iniciei o projeto no Morro do Alemão e falei para os traficantes se afastarem do meu/nosso projeto. I shall plan to go back there October 10th.'

And he added: 'At the Posse community we are going on October 2th to amplify the vegetable garden, plant trees alongside the local river and play with the children different Cacaio educational practices.'

> I would like to ask the wind, the moon, the wild tender flowers of the Cerrado, and the souls of my Suruí children from the Amazon, a word to build the most beautiful, aesthetic, true and silent friendship. (Á. Calvente, personal communication, September 2021)

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The above narrative about Átila Calvente was shared by Magda Madany-Saá at the opening of Bonny Norton's Global Virtual Forum (GVF) talk in October of 2021. Below, you can view some of the Zoom chat comments which our GVF participants posted in response to Magda's announcement of Átila's passing:

**Clarissa Jordao:** This sounds like a prayer…. beautiful

**Busi Makoni:** It's as if he could foresee the end of his life and left us with some words of wisdom.

**Anna Kaiper-Marquez:** Thank you Magda for this.

**Ashraf Abdelhay:** Thank you very much for this presentation. It is very sad to lose a friend. Our hearts are with his family. May his soul rest in peace.

**Magdalena Madany-Saá:** RIP dear Atila. Thank you everyone for honoring his memory today.

**Anisa Caine:** Thank you Magda for this moving tribute. Atila's poetic spirituality has made a lasting impact on us all, we celebrate his life with deep sadness and gratitude.

If you share Átila's passion for rural education and place-based education, we encourage you to read his articles:

Calvente, A.T. (2015) The Cacaio project: Education for environmental, aesthetic and moral development. *Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)* 13 (1), 7.

Calvente, A.T. (2022) Abstract critical thinking, language and school vegetable gardens: Improving the Cacaio garden of education and praxis. In S. Makoni, A. Kaiper-Marquez and L. Mokwena (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and the Global South/s* (pp. 430–446). New York: Routledge.

# Gratitudes

This volume, *Shades of Decolonial Voices in Linguistics*, is our second volume in our series of the Global Forum on Southern Epistemologies. The First Volume was *Decolonial Voices*, *Language and Race*, and the third is provisionally *Foundations of Decolonial and Southern Epistemologies*. In this volume, we argue, as many people have argued before us, that linguistics has been shaped by colonialism and outline strategies which may be deployed to decolonize linguistics. We conclude, however, that the decolonization of linguistics is an open-ended process and will not be successfully concluded until society has been decolonized as well.

Like our other projects, we managed to get the volumes to a successful conclusion not because of any single individual capability, but because of the commitments of many people. This includes the organizing and editorial team of the Global Virtual Forum, the guests who have generously contributed to each session of the Global Forum, our global audience, and many other people who have advertised and promoted the Forum in their social and educational circles.

One of the many defining features of the series of the Global Forum on Southern Epistemologies is that the expertise we rely on is largely, though not exclusively, from among those who take part in the Global Forum. For example, we are grateful to a colleague who designed the cover for the book series. We are also grateful to the colleagues who produced the videos which accompany the volume, thus making the volumes multimodal in both theory and practice and increasing accessibility. Further, we are grateful to our global audience including those who weekly attend our forums, at times twice a week, and those who download and make various uses of our videos from across the globe.

The development of the Global Forum has been an ongoing journey for us. It has been more successful than we would have envisioned at the beginning. Its success has depended largely on the contributions and commitments of fellow colleagues, friends, associates, and acquaintances at different stages in their careers and life trajectories, making the project an experiment in intergenerational communication as well.

It is not feasible to individually cite the names of all the people who have actively contributed to this developing project and have shaped our scholarship on this life changing writing and living journey. Thus, following Catherine Walsh (2023), perhaps these acknowledgements ought to be more properly accurately construed as 'gratitudes' rather than acknowledgements.

# Foreword

It is my singular honour to invite readers to feast on *Shades of Decolonial Voices in Linguistics*, the second instalment of the ground-breaking *Global Forum on Southern Epistemologies* series. Like its predecessor, this new volume infuses incisive argument and personal testimony from its keynote presenters with the cut and thrust of real conversation and debate. It is in such interaction, in such a novel forum as this, where the sheer scale of the challenge of a decolonial linguistics is being grasped and, perhaps, some of its initial pathways staked out.

As our authors jointly attest, the decolonization of linguistic and communicational disciplines is both necessary and urgent. To create a new vision of our communicational powers worthy of all humanity, free of the despotic mental and institutional shackles of Eurocentric and Northern tradition, giving pride of place, and voice, to those who have been silenced and to those suffering and resisting discrimination, domination and worse – is there a more inspiring, a more noble, aim in the history of any intellectual endeavour? But it's no walk in the park. Indeed, it's a task unprecedented in our time and will demand an effort that is out-and-out *Hanumanian* (de Souza & Nair, Chapter 5).

Furthermore, as the discussions here show, it is a collective and inclusive project to which we all have something to offer if we are willing. The means and ideologies of cultural and symbolic violence, accompanying and enabling colonial seizure, displacement and domination of the Global South, both shape and are shaped by the linguistic and communicational weapons used against the oppressed and exploited within the Northern colonizing states themselves and clothed in the same threadbare epistemologies (Pennycook, 1998). The colonizers' perspective on the linguistic poverty of 'primitive peoples', with their exclusively 'concrete' (rather than 'abstract') cognitive capacities, became entrenched in Northern linguistic theory and educational systems for which the unsponsored written trumps the embodied oral, where rumination on the decontextualized products of linguistic activity represents the height of rationality. The masses, at the other end, bristle with 'language deficits' or plunge into the notorious 'word gap'.

Accordingly, a crucial point of departure for the decolonial project, as our co-editors, Sinfree Makoni, Cristine Severo, Ashraf Abdelhay, Anna Kaiper-Marquez and Višnja Milojičić, argue is to settle accounts with the positivism and scientism of Eurocentric linguistic tradition – to stop trying to pin languaging down with structures, postulates or frameworks or, most importantly, to shoehorn linguistic experience and know-how into boxes with language names on them. If philosophers are

out of their 'skulls' and psychologists have lost their 'minds' (John Joseph, Chapter 4), then we linguists must prepare to lose our tongues.

What we gain is the chance to share our communicational philosophies and experiences across the globe, the possibility of creating together, where we can, common goals for this liberating venture along with programmes of enquiry and teaching fitted to and informed by practical interventions to address linguistic and communicational problems, injustices and wrongs. The extent to which the methods and achievements of Eurocentric scholarship will survive the critical fire brought by this insurgent intellectual movement remains an open question, but, as our contributors show, careful and self-critical re-examination of such scholarship together with productive engagement with internal Eurocentric/Northern nonconformist traditions (e.g. with Bourdieu, see Joseph, Chapter 4, or with Harris's integrationism, see Bade, Chapter 1; Makoni *et al.*, 2021; Pablé *et al.*, 2022) is both necessary and fruitful.

The contribution that linguists can make to advance the pursuit of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) calls 'cognitive justice' is of course inseparable from the broader life-and-death struggle for global social justice. As William Jamal Richardson (2018: 242) puts it so simply and straightforwardly: 'Decolonisation means prioritising the survival of colonised peoples above other interests'. 'The core mechanism by which we can begin to disrupt these processes of structural Eurocentrism', he goes on, 'is by ensuring that colonised and marginalised people don't die'. This blunt truth puts all our efforts into perspective. In effect, for those of us steeped in Eurocentric methods, within privileged Northern institutions, our entire professional training and disciplinary commitments are at stake. This is not just a question of adding to our reading lists but a profound and arduous journey of intellectual discovery, of self-criticism, self-doubt. And this is not just about the content of university curricula but about the universities themselves as institutions and their deep and continuing complicity in live colonial and oppressive economic and political systems. It is in this overall context of decolonizing practice, then, that this volume makes its singular and timely contribution.

In their congenial opening, 'Why "Shades of Decolonial Linguistics"?', Sinfree Makoni, Cristine Severo, Ashraf Abdelhay, Anna Kaiper-Marquez and Višnja Milojičić deftly set the scene for the verbal fireworks to come, suitably laying out a set of four questions which encourage the contributors to adopt the 'what if approach': what would be 'the implications for their professional practices, if linguistics were to be decolonized'? In response, the invited contributors provide starting points, thinking points, talking points, from their own life experiences and very different areas of research, opening out into an expanded dialogic free-for-all with plenty of time for questions, challenges and reflections articulated in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. The topics addressed are diverse, demonstrating something of the scope of the decolonial challenge in intellectual matters generally, as well as in linguistics in particular.

David Bade (Chapter 1: 'Living Theory and Theory that Kills: Language, Communication and Control') talks about 'how I integrated my life as a librarian, a linguist and a shepherd'. Bade notes how, in Chomsky's English there is 'no hint of ethnicity, race, religion, poverty, joy, old age, sickness or death, much less Buddhism,

nor is there any hint of communication, of winter, summer, of children or animals' and addresses the baleful impact of mechanistic linguistic models, largely constructed on (and in) English. Salikoko Mufwene explores turning points in his own ongoing critical journey away from linguistic orthodoxy in Chapter 2: 'An Iconoclast's approach to Decolonial Linguistics'. Mufwene shows how European imperialists and colonizers devised and applied self-serving 'hierarchies of grammatical structure' in their self-proclaimed civilising mission. He calls out to 'all of us trained in the Western paradigm' to 'step back and put things in context and re-examine our analyses'.

In Chapter 3, Robin Sabino's 'Giving Jack His Jacket: Linguistic Contact in the Danish West Indies' aims to bring the forgotten people, and in particular, 'subaltern agency and identity', back into our understanding of linguistic creativity and development, noting that racist assumptions and an understanding of linguistic change as decay motivated the view that Caribbean creoles were corrupt reductions of European targets. John Joseph's Chapter 4: 'Challenging the Dominance of Mind over Body in the History of Language Analysis' takes on the pervasive biological reductionism of neurolinguistic research with the help of a '4E' perspective, exposing the legacy of racist assumptions, as well as the commercial and institutional interests, at work in 'locating language' in the brain.

'Keywords for India: A Conceptual Lexicon for the 21st Century' (Chapter 5) is Peter Ronald de Souza and Rukmini Bhaya Nair's account of their own attempt to 'use language to breach the fortress of hegemony of the Global North'. Through selecting and focusing on 200 keywords 'from the Indian linguistic space' (e.g. *jootha, time pass, swaraj*), the authors target the comfort zones of the hegemonic Eurocentric conceptual universe and provide 'a tactic, if not a high-level strategy, for democratizing the linguistically colonized, dominated by English, hierarchy of languages that we still have in India'. In his 'Queer Anger: A Conversation on Alliances and Affective Politics' (Chapter 6), Tommaso Milani stirs up a powerful discussion with his audience about the value and place of rage and disobedience in scholarly commitment and practice, focusing on the need to take account of complexities and ambivalences in identities and political allegiance. For instance, Israel, he argues, uses LGBTQ rights in creating 'new forms of discriminations' against the Palestinian people, the victims of Israeli erasure and dispossession. Bonny Norton (Chapter 7: 'Identity and the African Storybook Initiative: A Decolonial Project?') also raises a chat storm in exploring the significance and implications of the African Storybook Initiative and subsequent language projects (e.g. Global Storybooks) in enabling and promoting a linguistic citizenship through the expansion of identity options for decolonial subjects.

In his 'Domination and Underlying Form in Linguistics' (Chapter 8) Nick Riemer argues that mainstream linguistics education, and notably undergraduate linguistics teaching, 'plays a role in normalizing the unjustifiable and unaccountable exercise of power' both inside and outside the academy. The university linguistic classroom, in Riemer's view, is a key site for 'habituat[ing] students to a certain exercise of arbitrary symbolic authority', a situation crying out for critical challenge and transformation. In Chapter 9, 'Decolonizing Multilingualism: A Practice-Led Approach',

part convivial dialogue, part artistic performance, Alison Phipps and Piki Diamond address fundamental issues of decolonial practice in relation to multilingualism and the epistemicidal tendencies of the Western academy. In contrast to research methodologies which 'extract' the surface *what* of cultural being, they propose 'additive' journeys of collaborative creation, communal forms of calling forth 'coming from a place of the *why*'.

There we have it: a heady brew indeed. And so, without further ado, let the show begin!

*Peter E. Jones*
Department of Humanities
Sheffield Hallam University

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# Why 'Shades of Decolonial Linguistics'?

Sinfree Makoni, Cristine Severo, Ashraf Abdelhay, Anna Kaiper-Marquez and Višnja Milojičić

*Decolonial Voices, Language and Race*, our inaugural volume in the Global Forum on Southern Epistemologies (GFSE) series, was published by Multilingual Matters in 2022. The current volume develops the theme of decolonization via a focus on linguistics, addressing the following four questions:

(1) What does decolonization mean?
(2) What does it mean to decolonize linguistics?
(3) Why should we decolonize linguistics?
(4) How is decolonial linguistics practised?

This volume is based on sessions by scholars including David Bade, Salikoko Mufwene, Robin Sabino, John Joseph, Peter de Souza, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Tommaso Milani, Bonny Norton, Nick Riemer, Alison Phipps and Piki Diamond.

## What Does Decolonization Mean?

The title of the volume, *Shades of Decolonial Voices in Linguistics*, highlights the different iterations of commitment to decolonization among the scholars assembled in this volume. Scholarly commitment ranges from the explicit articulation of and commitment to decolonial linguistics to a broader critical orientation within the teaching of linguistics to undergraduate students. We opted for the term 'shades' because, although everyone is affected by colonization, the impact and nature of decolonization vary depending on whether it is a settler or an extractive colonization that the project aims to undo or contain.

We have also used this title because the meaning of decolonization varies according to the geopolitical location and analytical tradition within which the analysis is situated. For example, in the United States, decolonization is associated with settler colonialism on the one hand, and the quest for social justice and demand for reparations on the other. Meanwhile, in postcolonial Africa, decolonization emphasizes addressing the legacy of colonialism, such as via the redistribution of land in post-apartheid South Africa.

It is necessary to study decolonial linguistics even if we do not refer to ourselves as decolonial linguists. We cannot move beyond an approach of 'coloniality' if we are

using the 'segregationist' orientations towards languages (Harris, 1998) that treat them as discrete, nameable entities. That approach created the analytical problems of 'colonial linguistics' that we find embedded across the entire colonial legacy (Heller & McElhinny, 1997; Rajagopolan, 2020). Decolonizing linguistics also means challenging the tendency to view language as an object, which renders languages as ensembles of positive facts that are the consequence of freezing dynamic interpersonal social processes and converting them into monological texts (Riemer, forthcoming).

In this context, 'coloniality' refers to the residue of and legacy of colonialism beyond the formal end of colonialism (Mignolo, 2021). Coloniality is a much more amorphous concept than colonialism, which describes the actual domination of one country by another. Kramsch (2022) elaborates on the concept:

> Coloniality is the permanent process of material and symbolic exploitation, both domestic and abroad, very much linked to racial policies, racism, ethnic discrimination, and all kinds of other discriminations or dominations of the gender related kind. Mary Louise Pratt makes the distinction between *descolonisación* and decolonization. The concept of decolonization comes from Latin America, under the name of *descolonisación*. It is understood, however, in Latin America as a political process of historical change against capitalism and neoliberalism in all its forms. So, whenever we look at research in decolonization that comes from Latin America, it will always have an anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal flavor that you do not [necessarily find] in the term decolonization as it is being applied more widely in applied linguistics. Decolonization in English is an unspecified movement against inequities of race and gender and for greater social justice.

For Kramsch, the issue concerns the language used to frame decolonization, which is not necessarily the language in which the concept originates. Therefore, the issue concerns the politics of translation. The word may carry different meanings as it is used in Spanish compared to how it is used in English, Swahili or Arabic. The decolonial challenge requires considering how decolonization might be framed in the numerous languages that are rarely used to discuss decolonization. This involves recognizing that our understanding of decolonization is not as broad as it should be. For example, Wright (2022) indicates that the Muslim community of Niasse – which comprises 'tens of millions of adherents' – has been engaged in discourses of decolonization, but that engagement is largely unfamiliar to language scholars in the Global North and Global South outside Islamic studies.

For Norton (this volume), a decolonial project is one that seeks to expand the range of 'identity options' available for decolonial subjects. Norton's argument for decolonization is partially founded on Stroud's (2001) notion of linguistic citizenship. Like Stroud, Norton believes it is a decolonial concept. There is a potential contradiction here: although the idea of citizenship might be liberatory in some contexts, it is potentially discriminating in other contexts, because the criteria for citizenship enable not only inclusion but also exclusion.

## What Does it Mean to Decolonize Linguistics?

The decolonization of linguistics requires reworking the analytical frameworks of linguistics to create alternative analytical heuristics that also consider the political

implications of revising the orthodox linguistic paradigms. These heuristics enable us to engage with the other cultures and ways of being, thinking and communicating that might have been overlooked or suppressed by the status quo.

Another characteristic of the decolonization of linguistics is that it is an open-ended and never-ending process, much like the decolonization process itself (Mayo, 2022). The decolonization of linguistics can be practised by questioning the pluralization, enumerability and nameability of languages as fruitful ways of capturing linguistic diversity (Makoni & Pennycook, 2024) because some areas of human and social experiences (e.g. water) are not easily amenable to counting.

Furthermore, the decolonization of linguistics is predicated on an awareness that the very notion of language is a recent ideological idea of questionable relevance to non-Western societies. From that perspective, language is not universal (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Masters & Makoni, 2019; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020) or, as integrationists following Roy Harris emphatically argue, it is a 'myth' (Harris, 1998). When we argue that language is a 'myth' or an 'invention' (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), we do not mean that language does not exist, but that languages – similar to other phenomena, including race – are socially constructed and should be understood within very specific discourses and particular institutional ideologies that have created notions about languageness reinforced by literacy. Consider, for example, the postcolonial context of Africa. African languages do not exist; instead, what exists is 'human speak' (*ukulumisinthu*) (isiNdebele or isiZulu), sometimes rendered as *unotaura chivanhu* (you speak human speak) (chiShona).

Decolonial linguistics is not necessarily an anti-Global North linguistics project, as evidenced by its strategic alliances with the Integrational Linguistics associated with the work of Harris (1998), late professor of Linguistics at Oxford University in the UK. That is, decolonial linguistics and Integrational Linguistics can collaborate in the critical project of decolonizing language studies (see Makoni *et al.*, 2021, 2022b; Pable *et al.*, 2022). However, tensions and contradictions between the two exist. For example, Harris suggests that the language user 'has the only concept of a language worth having and everyone is a linguist' (Harris, 1998: 20). This has strong decolonial and liberating potential because some contexts (e.g. African grammars) have seen linguistic descriptions informed by missionaries and outsiders with limited knowledge of the languages and communicative contexts within which they were functioning.

Therefore, decolonial linguistics seeks to analyze the nature of language not from a linguistics perspective but from the perspective of the speaker, the language user. In some cases, the language user may be a disenfranchised 'native speaker' (Pable *et al.*, 2022), a term we are adamant about retaining in the context of African decolonial scholarship because it enables us to identify who has been disenfranchised.

This means that not all native speakers are privileged because that depends on the language. For example, native speakers of African languages, especially minority African languages, were disenfranchised by the European missionaries and linguists that described their languages from a European perspective or using a European analytical grid (Makoni, 2011). In such cases, decolonization involves a process of disinventing African languages by viewing them through different lenses (Makoni

& Pennycook, 2007), which entails cultivating the importance of native speakers of African languages. Arguing for the importance of native speakers in such contexts is not a reiteration of the colonial perspective. Instead, it is a liberatory strategy distinct from its employment in Western European scholarship, which is rife with colonial connotations (Joseph, this volume; Davies, 2003).

In the practice of the decolonization of linguistics, 'instability', conflict and inconsistency are the norm. Consequently, decolonial linguistics is anti-linguistics: 'a systematic questioning and inverting of the basic premises and arguments of traditional linguistic theory' (Stewart, 1983: 266).

## Characteristic Features of Decolonized Linguistics

For Nick Riemer (this volume), it is necessary to cast a critical lens on linguistics because of the potential impact its teaching has on the thousands of students who are exposed to it at the undergraduate level. Riemer argues that teaching linguistics encourages ethnocentricity, homeogeneism and Eurocentricism, producing habituated mindsets because students are rarely provided with any rationale for why a specific analytical model should be adopted for the purposes of pedagogy. Additionally, he contends that linguistics is frequently taught in a manner that suggests that there is a single solution to the problem sets that students are given to address, an approach that might be carried out of the classroom.

It is Eurocentrism and coloniality's characteristic discursive and epistemological certainty that decolonization seeks to challenge by focusing on adopting epistemological 'uncertainties' towards social, educational, political and linguistic problems. However, although we seek to shift away from Eurocentricism – one of the defining features of coloniality – we are cognizant of the complications associated with a complete breakaway or 'delinking' from a Eurocentric approach to linguistics.

The call to decolonize linguistics has been accompanied by calls to decolonize other disciplines, including anthropology (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2015), political science (Shilliam, 2019), and sociology (Connell, 2018). Meanwhile, there is increasing fervour around notions of decolonizing international relations, physics, medicine and African studies, alongside university structures and formal education models. Central to this shift is the struggle over whose knowledge matters and should therefore be regarded as legitimate (Makoni *et al.*, 2022b). In this context, the need to be sensitive to issues about sexuality in decoloniality has been recognized as a vital project. Addressing this, Milani (this volume) argues in favour of a queered multilingualism by debunking the bias against LGBTQ in the research on multilingualism, which addresses ethnicity, race and social class (among other factors) but is silent on the issue of sexuality.

One of the objectives of decolonial linguistics is to go beyond the 'world of English', to borrow Bade's phrase. That objective can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, it might mean analyzing languages other than English or Indo-European languages. Of course, only analyzing languages other than English does not necessarily qualify the analysis as sufficiently decolonial, although it at least expands linguistic analysis 'beyond English', thereby making linguistic analysis less Eurocentric and creating opportunities for a decolonial linguistics to emerge.

Second, it describes the emergence of a more critical orientation towards linguistic analyses of English. Mufwene (this volume) argues that there is an unfortunate tendency to analyze other languages based on analytical categories that pertain to English, calling for a reworking of analytical frameworks and resistance against understanding the rest of the universe in terms of the linguistic status quo.

The 'world beyond English' is multilingual, but the meaning of multilingualism will differ substantially across diverse contexts. Clearly, multilingualism should mean different things in the Global North than in the Global South/s (Makoni *et al*., 2022a), the plurality of which reflects the concept's heterogeneity and multiplicity. However, even in the 'Global South/s' (Makoni *et al*., 2022a), the meaning of multilingualism will inevitably vary, hence the preference for the term 'southern multilingualisms'.

One type of knowledge evoked by practices of decolonization is indigenous knowledges, including the use of indigenous languages. We consider it imperative to resist romanticizing in the process of adopting indigenous and traditional knowledges and believe that advocacy for indigenous languages cannot successfully lead to decolonization if the underlying assumptions about language remain Eurocentric. Inspirations from indigenous cosmological visions (without uncritically romanticizing indigeneity) include notions of *nite* (Diagne, 2020), *ubuntu and nepantla* (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020) and *Allin Kghaway, buen vivir, sumak kawsay* or *Suma Qamaña* (Cusicanqui, 2010; Quijano, 2014). These ideas and theories argue that engagement with decolonial voices demands a commitment not only to local people but also to challenging white, heterosexual, middle-class and Euro-American males. Our commitment to indigenous perspectives as a project that contributes to decolonizing linguistics should also consider the evolving nature of indigenous knowledge and eschew a crystalized and essentialized notion of indigeneity. This means problematizing the use of generic and hierarchical identity categories, such as the terms 'indigenous', 'native peoples', 'forest peoples', 'native peoples', 'Aborigines' and 'peoples of the fourth world'. Furthermore, the notion of indigeneity itself must be always subject to review (Mignolo, 2007).

However, Riemer (forthcoming) cautions us that the decolonization of linguistics as theory should not 'be substituted either for the decolonizing of the discipline as institutional practice, or for the decolonizing of society more broadly'.

This volume belongs to the genre of 'conversational books' (see the Preface to Volume 1). As such, it aims to expand the genre of scholarly books. Most academic books, even those arguing for decolonization, are typically predicated on the conception of a monoglossic book, which reinforces coloniality via the linearity of their introductions and conclusions, among other monoglossic features. For Piki Diamond and Alison Phipps (this volume), decolonization involves 'messing around with academic monographs'.

Furthermore, decolonization involves retaining a transmodal form of publishing that tries to capture the multiple voices and polyglossia of the interactions upon which the books are based. Because this particular book 'originates' in the Global Virtual Forum's recorded audiovisual conversations, which have been converted into supplementary materials, it (and all of our conversational books) seeks to reflect and

enhance polyglossic characteristics by creating texts in which the audience is a partner in the decolonial investigation of established knowledge, ultimately challenging the notion of a unitary author.

Pennycook and Makoni (2020) contribute to decolonial linguistics by questioning some of the underlying assumptions that form the basis of linguistics. The authors expose some of the biases inherited from the colonial period that permeate contemporary practices of linguistics as a profession, which, notably, originated in the 19th century, coinciding with European expansion and colonization.

The analysis of decolonial linguistics should be based on various very specific processes, and these should go beyond arguments that analysis should be conducted in indigenous languages. Following de Souza and Nair (this volume), we propose that the metalanguage used in decolonial linguistics be grounded in four principled actions: (i) infiltration, (ii) population, (iii) elevation and (iv) appropriation. The terms will be drawn from local plurilingual contexts, raising theoretical and ideological issues about the politics of metalanguage, an under-researched topic in sociolinguistics, as Hutton (2022) has argued:

> The relationship between specialist and lay vocabulary in the social sciences is an under-studied topic, and it arguably cuts to the heart of many of the key questions that these disciplines confront. Technical terms may eventually circulate in mainstream usage and lay terms are sometimes selected for 'disembedding' as technical terms. It is argued that stipulated definition is a fundamental form of conceptual engineering and it follows that disciplinary metalanguages are in unstable and dynamic interaction with lay discourse. There are strong arguments for a detached or 'alienated' metalanguage, since social analysis requires distance from social mainstream, yet this very alienation threatens to delegitimate disciplinary metalanguages since they are at cross purposes with the conceptual world under study.

## Authorship and Decolonizing Multilingualism

According to Alison Phipps (this volume), decolonizing multilingualism has implications for issues of authorship:

> What it means to author in the Global North within the academy is very different to what I've experienced authorship as being through Piki. And in many ways, even though Piki has not necessarily written the words of the *Decolonising Multilingualism* book that I have written, she was very much one of the key authors of the experiences that form a third of that book and have formed much more of the work that we've done together. I'm using the word 'work' there in the sense of *mahi*, in the sense of the 'wider work' in the world. The word mahi, meaning a broader understanding of what we're here to do rather than what we're necessarily paid to do, transactionally.

The issue concerns not only decolonizing multilingualism but also researching multilingually across different disciplines. However, decolonizing multilingualism appears counterintuitive to the 'multilingual turn'. In this context, it is worth considering Phipps' suggestion that much of her research constitutes 'a struggle to decreate'. Simone Weil has spoken about de-creation as a struggle at the roots of the mind that individuals undertake when they realize that the ways in which they have been

inadvertently created (Weil, 1997). As a component of de-creating, decolonizing multilingualism means de-centring particular types of multilingualism, the types of multilingualism associated with hierarchical views of language. Decolonizing language, de-centring and de-creating also demand developing an awareness that so many of the ways in which we used to know the world and used to know language have been lost to the academy's particularly narrow view of knowledge.

## Decolonizing Linguistics and Extractivist Ideologies of Research Methodologies

One of the primary objectives of decolonizing linguistics is to break with the violent extractivist ideologies of research methodologies which reflect 'a fossil fuel of rhetoric[:] We mine data. We codify it. We analyze it' (Cronin, as cited by Phipps, this volume). Overall, the ways that we – in applied linguistics, in sociolinguistics, in linguistic disciplines, in disciplines of modern languages, and even in literary studies – have looked at languaging, at the ways we use and deploy language within the Anthropocene, have been largely extractivist.

Non-extractivist approaches mean starting with practice and with art and with improvising and devising rather than starting with a plan, a linear chart, a project scheme, a book outline or a set of questions about what data to be obtained from where and when. This puts researchers in a less identifiable place. Non-extractivist methodologies are cooperative and involve multiple exegeses. For example, the dance project in Ghana demonstrates a non-extractivist approach to research that corresponds to the decolonization of research methods: it was conducted in 20 languages, it was spontaneous, and it was additive.

Sociolinguistics has never taken a clear position on this, oscillating between a universal commitment to social engineering with its evocation of romantic authenticity and embrace of postmodern fluidity. Decolonizing linguistics radically challenges sociolinguistics by bringing a decolonizing perspective to an already fraught relationship between academic metalanguage and the social realities under study (Hutton, forthcoming). For Hutton, sociolinguistics has no way of answering the critique from Southern Theory because Southern Theory and decolonial linguistics are agents of 'disambiguation'. Central to sociolinguistics is the notion that language is 'socially constituted' (Hymes, 1974: 195) but also needs to develop a metalanguage apparatus that is consistent with the requirements and expectations of Western social sciences.

## Decolonization and Black Female Scholarship

According to Busi Makoni (2021, 2022), black female scholars are subjected to conditions of invisibility, exclusion and silencing, facing structural and systemic barriers that range from greater difficulties accessing graduate education to an absence of administrative and academic support. This process is evidenced by statistics concerning the number of citations of work by black female scholars, reflecting the patriarchal and white domination of scholarship.

## Decolonization in An Unequal Digital World

Given our decision to hire a commercial transcription company in India whose ideologies (we later discovered) were rooted in a colonial mindset towards language use, we have had the unfortunate experience of witnessing the *racing* of, and *linguistic discrimination* towards, our chapter authors' bodies and speech. Particular to this volume, we have experienced our chapter authors' language being judged against the yardstick of standard language ideology (SLI) on numerous occasions.

One case in point is the work of Phipps and Diamond (this volume), wherein the chapter authors' translanguaging was labelled with the note 'speaking a foreign language' by our transcribers, and whose chapter was rife with transcription errors when we first received it. For instance, Phipps and Diamond's frequent references to linguistic and cultural phenomena outside the Global North resulted in confusion on the transcribers' part, such that terms like 'Ga speaker' would be transcribed as 'guest speaker' on numerous occasions. Crucially, the reality of this situation pushed us, as co-editors, to reflect on the impetus to align our future transcription hires with the values of our forum series.

Since our forum's first transcription company exhibited values and behaviors aligned with racial and linguistic discrimination, even as our forum organizers worked to align our forum series with the values of equality and inclusivity, we have done our best to remedy this disalignment in values by cutting ties with our old transcription company last year. As of today, our forum has newly hired a non-commercial transcriber based in Ghana.[1]

## Organization of The Volume

Building on this overview of approaches to decolonial linguistics and de-creating multilingualism, this section provides short summaries of this publication's conversational chapters:

In Chapter 1, 'Living Theory and Theory that Kills: Language, Communication and Control', David Bade introduces his own interest in linguistics as a child and how this interest led him to abandon his plan to become a missionary and instead become a student of linguistics in the 1970s. During this time, he was alarmed by the degree to which theories had been developed based on English alone and not tested in real-world contexts or in the context of other languages. He was also unsettled by the widespread strict observation of an approach to linguistics based entirely on Chomsky. Bade's introduction to alternative philosophies of language and communication, particularly in Library Sciences, was sparked by his initial readings of Roy Harris. These readings, in combination with Sinfree Makoni's arguments on the links between African languages and colonial missionary history, led Bade to explore new forms of communication, including how humans communicate with animals. Thus, this first chapter explores how the decolonization of linguistics can happen at a personal level and can transcend human communication. At the same time, a controversial issue which emerged during the discussion about Harris was the allegation that he was sexist towards women. Comparable allegations have been made against

other linguistic scholars, including Dell Hymes. Addressing such allegations remains a considerable challenge for decolonial scholarship, which must continue to grapple with such issues.

In Chapter 2, 'An Iconoclast's Approach to Decolonial Linguistics', Salikoko Mufwene draws on his own experiences as an 'iconoclast' (as one reviewer referred to him) to explore the history of colonization and the necessity of decolonial linguistics. However, decolonial linguistics is complicated because 'not everybody that claims to do decolonial linguistics really does decolonial linguistics'. In this chapter, Mufwene expands on several key arguments connected to decolonial linguistics, including the need for careful analysis of languages not familiar to us, the substantial contributions of non-native speakers to the development of linguistics, and the complex history of European colonization in Africa, Asia and South America. This chapter provides a basis for rethinking colonial-embedded linguistic practices and expanding notions of decolonization to recognize the 'delicate work that we are engaging in, in which we have to resist the danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water' (Mufwene, this volume).

In Chapter 3, 'Giving Jack His Jacket: Linguistic Contact in the Danish West Indies', Robin Sabino depicts a complex and dense history of the colony, paying specific attention to 'the agency and rich cultural resources of the West African persons forced to make the small, island of St. Thomas their home'. Philosophically, this monograph begins from the documentation of Virgin Islands Dutch Creole as categorized into three distinct varieties: Negerhollands, developed by Africans and their descendants; Hoch Kreol, developed by the Euro-Caribbean settler population; and the Liturgical Lect, created by missionaries. The linguistic development of the colony is then framed in terms of the 'inter and intra speaker variation' that originally developed as Africans incorporated local linguistic resources and the semiotic practices of their oppressors as strategies for communication and self-identification. Sabino also discusses the notion of conventionalization and argues that it occurs as entrenchment progresses, with speakers not only conventionalizing but also re-conventionalizing over time, producing linguistic change.

In Chapter 4, 'Challenging the Dominance of Mind over Body in the History of Language Analysis', John Joseph understands language in terms of how it is embodied, embedded, enacted and extended, which he calls 4E cognition. Using the 4E prism as a basis for analysis, Joseph explores the role of Chomskyan linguistics in notions of the 'native speaker'. He uses Davies' ideas of the native speaker being a 'myth' to argue that extended/distributed cognition liberates us from conceptions of language that are restricted to representations stored in the brain and from research programmes that assume that a brain born with a particular structure for storing such representations develops in an automatic way with minimal exposure to input data. Finally, Joseph explores concepts of translanguaging and posthumanism to expand conversations on disrupting concepts of the 'native speaker'.

In Chapter 5, 'Keywords for India: A Conceptual Lexicon for the 21st Century', Peter de Souza and Rukmini Bhaya Nair centre on the 'enslavement of minds', the continuation of intellectual enslavement even after the end of colonialism that is enabled and enhanced by the domination of specific analytical frameworks. They argue for

challenging these 'formidable forces of domination' not by using indigenous languages instead of 'colonial languages' but by drawing on local plurilingual contexts as resources for analytical inputs. This chapter represents a conversation between de Souza and Nair, with de Souza analyzing the specific processes involved in decoloniality and Nair posing the question of whether decoloniality is (i) a state of mind, (ii) a social process or (iii) a hybrid production, using the history of British colonialism in India to interrogate these ideas. The authors conclude by establishing four approaches to enacting scholarship that can enable the conduct of decolonial discussions with humility.

In Chapter 6, 'Queer Anger: A Conversation on Alliances and Affective Politics', Tommaso Milani argues for the importance of 'queering multilingualism'. Drawing on the history of LGBTQ rights in Israel and Palestine, he explores the many contradictions regarding these rights and suggests that the paradoxes involved in the discourse surrounding LGBTQ rights convert the Israeli support for LGBTQ rights into a tool of self-identity that works to justify its violations of the human rights of Palestinians. Using these examples, Milani contends that research on multilingualism is biased against the LGBTQ: despite addressing, for example, ethnicity, race and social class, it is silent on the issue of sexuality.

In Chapter 7, 'Identity and the African Storybook Initiative: A Decolonial Project?', Bonny Norton explores three interconnected issues: (i) the relationship between linguistic citizenship and the African Storybook initiative; (ii) the decolonial nature of the African Storybook; and (iii) the expansion of the range of identity options for decolonial subjects. She proposes a decolonial approach to language that engages with recent debate concerning 'linguistic citizenship' (Stroud, 2001, 2018) and reflects on the role of digital technology in the identity of African peoples in relation to themselves and their communities. For Norton, the use of technology for improving multilingual literacy practices and empowering local people exemplifies a set of actions that can contribute to addressing the global disparity in literacy skills.

In Chapter 8, 'Domination and Underlying Form in Linguistics', Nick Riemer explores political epistemologies of linguistics to identify the nature of linguistics in relation to climate catastrophe in contexts of political authoritarianism. He explores the political and ideological consequences of beliefs that language in general, or particular languages, have a single underlying form, linking this to the teaching and learning of linguistics in undergraduate education. For Riemer, undergraduate students are subjected to notions that model society as orderly, rule-governed, hierarchical and amenable to dispassionate decision-making, prerequisites to the contemporary bureaucratic administration that facilitates modern governmentality. In this context, perspectives from the Global South may contribute to decolonizing universities and teacher training by expanding our understanding of what it means to teach and learn languages, ultimately contributing to shifting the geography of reason that represents the foundation of the Western university system (Gordon, 2021).

In Chapter 9, 'Decolonizing Multilingualism: A Practice-Led Approach', Alison Phipps and Piki Diamond expand on decolonial approaches to multilingualism by problematizing the Eurocentric geography of reason that has shaped what is considered knowledge and the languages used to produce and disseminate that knowledge.

Reflecting on the challenges they confronted conducting a £2.5 million multilingual project involving 11 countries and 22 researchers, they exemplify how financial support can enhance collaboration instead of reinforcing power relations based on economic advantage and disadvantage. By exposing the ethical, political, cognitive and economic challenges they faced, Phipps and Diamond emphasize the value of experience for decolonial projects, for scholars from the Global North, the Global South, and the spaces in-between. Their personal narratives demonstrate how meanings are never static. Instead, they are produced by continuous processes of negotiation, change, and adjustment, processes that always take time.

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## Note

(1) Our current transcriber is Emmanuel Paddy of Emmanuel Paddy Transcription Services.

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