

Vulnerabilities, Challenges and Risks in Applied Linguistics

Edited by

**Clare Cunningham and
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Contents

	Contributors	vii
1	Introduction <i>Clare Cunningham and Christopher J. Hall</i>	1
Part 1: Communities		
2	Can Southern Epistemological and Indigenous Ontological Orientations to Applied Linguistics Challenge its Ethnocentrism? <i>Cristine Gorski Severo and Sinfree B. Makoni</i>	15
3	Late Capitalism and New Challenges: Indigenous Communities Taking Risks in Defense of Vulnerable Languages and Territories in Guatemala and Colombia <i>Luz A. Murillo</i>	31
4	The Bumpy Journey Towards the Irish Sign Language Act: Critical Considerations and Personal Reflections of a Deaf Activist–Scholar <i>John Bosco Conama</i>	48
5	‘Befriending’ Risks, Vulnerabilities and Challenges: Researching Sexuality and Language in Educational Sites <i>Helen Sauntson</i>	63
Part 2: Policy		
6	Challenging Constitutional Bilingualism with ‘What if ...’: Counterfactual Histories and At-risk Minorities in Finland <i>Johanna Ennser-Kananen and Taina Saarinen</i>	81
7	UK Language Policy Quo vadis? Language Learning in the UK post Brexit <i>Ursula Lanvers</i>	97
8	Vulnerabilities, Challenges and Risks in Sign Language Recognition in Canada <i>Kristin Snoddon and Erin Wilkinson</i>	111

2 Can Southern Epistemological and Indigenous Ontological Orientations to Applied Linguistics Challenge its Ethnocentrism?

Cristine Gorski Severo and Sinfree B. Makoni

Introduction

In this chapter, we argue that applied linguistics has come a long way from when definitions and debates revolved around the distinctions between applied linguistics and ‘linguistics applied’ (Davies & Elder, 2006) or when it was taken as axiomatic that applied linguistics, unlike linguistics, addressed issues in the ‘real world’ (Brumfit, 1995). However, in this chapter, we seek to demonstrate how applied linguistics can take on the challenge of developing further than how it was characterized by Davies and Elder and, subsequently, by Brumfit if it is viewed through Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies (Makoni, 1998, 2003; Pennycook, 2018; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). In the chapter, we also seek to illustrate that Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies render it feasible to move beyond the impasse that critical applied linguistics (CAL) faces because CAL continues to subscribe to universalism characteristics of Eurocentric scholarship. Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies are not the same as CAL; if anything, they seek to address some of the limitations that have become apparent in CAL in the Global South, as the latter has ‘run out of steam’ (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019) and because its hegemonic universalism entrenches differences between the Global North and Global South.

We conclude by showing how the benefits of using Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies outweigh the risks of not using such

approaches in applied linguistics in the Global South. The Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies that we are developing involve a mobilization of and a construction of an ‘assemblage’ (Kroskrity, 2018; Pennycook, 2018) of Indigenous and non-Western ontologies of language and multilingualism, and wherever possible, we capitalize on perspectives of marginalized communities in either the Global North or Global South (Hauck & Heurich, 2018). The epistemological and Indigenous ontological ‘assemblages’ include Indigenous multilingual typologies that include spiritual aspects of language (Di Carlo, 2016). In the epistemological and ontological ‘assemblages’, language is not separated from the other aspects of one’s being that are central to an individual’s life, such as their spirituality, because language is life, and life is language, which provides spiritual sustenance (Ferguson, 2013). Language in this framework is not an abstraction; it has animacy (Ferguson, 2019).

In this chapter, we aim to contribute to a development of Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies toward applied linguistics by using lay perspectives as analytical heuristics that originate in integrationism (Pablé & Hutton, 2015). Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies render it feasible to decolonize applied linguistics. We are developing Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies in applied linguistics, drawing on the work of Connell (2007). Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies in applied linguistics are ‘multicentered’ and ‘represent diverse social experiences’ and conflicting forms of knowledge that may accommodate the needs of social movements, all of which are relevant to a democratizing applied linguistics. In terms of Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies, we consider colonialism and post-colonialism – in both a broad and narrow sense – as important frameworks from which to discuss the meanings of language, language learning, and applied linguistics.

Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies do not constitute a fixed body of knowledge but, rather, an emergent set of possibilities. They constitute an orientation toward language and applied linguistics that is at the intersection of decoloniality and Indigenous perspectives of language. Interest in the Global South and Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies is occurring at the same time that there is a ‘decolonial turn’ marked by a massive shift in knowledge production comparable with the ‘linguistic’ and ‘pragmatic turns’ that we have previously witnessed. The ‘decolonial turn’ is occurring across many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities and within applied linguistics. Although the concept of decolonization is controversial, we construe it in this chapter to be a ‘political and epistemic project that surfaces from local histories elsewhere and otherwise, which seeks to speak back to this world system that affects all aspects of society’ (García & Baca, 2019: 2). Moreover, we echo García and Baca’s contention that decoloniality emerges from hope and vision such that it is possible to explore ‘border

thinking’ as the site of knowledge and epistemic alternatives that move us beyond Western categories of epistemology and ontologies. This further leads us to mobilize Indigenous and non-Western categories about language and multilingualism in applied linguistics, which are both based on ‘land’, as we illustrate in this chapter, and in other ‘waves of knowing’ (Ingersoll, 2016, drawing on the sea, which Ingersoll refers to as ‘seascape epistemology’).

This chapter is a continuation of discussions of the possible and desirable contribution of Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies to applied linguistics, as proposed recently by Pennycook and Makoni (2019: 34), in which ‘our goal here is to seek ways of expanding the analytical repertoires of applied linguistics by drawing on southern thought’. We are arguing for an applied linguistics whose goal is to ‘disrupt’ Global Northern hegemony over applied linguistics in the Global South, thereby creating conditions in which applied linguistics in the Global South can enter into a dialogue with applied linguistics that originate in the Global North or other regions in the Global South. It will be easier for the Global South to enter into a dialogue with the Global North when the hegemony of Global North applied linguistics in the Global South is ‘disrupted’. The dialogue between Global North and Global South applied linguistics is not equivalent to a ‘delinking’ of Global North applied linguistics from the Global South or vice versa. A ‘delinking’ of the Global South applied linguistics from the Global North is politically desirable, as we strive to move toward a more egalitarian politics of knowledge, but is not feasible owing to the ‘entanglement’ in applied linguistics between the Global North and Global South. Neither decolonial thinking nor epistemologies of the South and Indigenous ontologies claim to replace a previous incorrect paradigm with a correct one but, rather, offer paradigms of complexity that, rather than seeking authenticity, seek justice and horizontality.

We approach issues about risks and vulnerabilities in two different senses. We explore the nature of the risks and vulnerabilities to applied linguistics if it does not address issues raised by alternative approaches to applied linguistics emerging from the Global South. The second sense of risks we address is the risks which alternative approaches are faced with themselves if they constitute alternative frameworks to applied linguistics in the Global North. We understand that ‘Epistemological or civilizational racism is deeply embedded in academic knowledge systems in the Global North and by extension can be found in applied linguistics. It privileges “White” epistemological assumptions about knowledge, regarding them as norms against other forms of knowledge have to be measured’ (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020: 104). Disciplines such as applied linguistics and anthropology are ‘historically viscerally’ (Rajagopalan, 2020) tied to colonialism and racism.

In this chapter, we illustrate the analytical value of Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies in Global South applied linguistics of

Quilombism, the land and mangrove metaphors. Language is a product of individual and community perspectives and is grounded not only in socio-historical contexts but on ‘land’ as well. We situate the ontology of language on land and on the mangrove. We believe that this is important because ‘land’ – with all of the multiple metaphorical meanings associated with it – in some colonial and post-colonial contexts, has been a site of protracted conflict both in Africa and in the Diaspora, such as is seen in Brazil. By interpreting such examples in terms of Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies, we may identify a lay-oriented conception to language that includes politics, aesthetics and ethics, with the objective to denaturalize and de-Westernize universal ‘linguistic-cognitive rules’ about language, second language learning and applied linguistics.

We address the following questions: in what ways can Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies be used as instruments to challenge and undercut the recalcitrant colonial legacy in applied linguistics? In what ways can Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies be used to challenge Global Northern hegemony in applied linguistics, as we seriously address issues about the politics of knowledge production, distribution and dissemination? Is it feasible to establish a dialogue between Global North and Global South applied linguistics in an applied linguistics animated by Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies? All of these questions have a direct bearing on the politics of knowledge production, dissemination and circulation, which is an important component in a development of applied linguistics of the Global South.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, we present an overview of Southern epistemologies and ontologies in applied linguistics, followed by a discussion of two interconnected epistemological and ontological frameworks – Quilombism and the metaphors of land and the mangrove, thereby establishing areas of contact between such approaches and Southern epistemologies and ontologies.

Southern Epistemologies and Indigenous Ontologies in Applied Linguistics in the Global South

We argue that, if applied linguistics aims at integrating Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies in the social sciences and humanities (Cusicanqui, 2012; Lander, 2000; Quijano, 2000; Santos & Meneses, 2010), it has to face some epistemic, ethical and political challenges and risks. We must problematize core concepts in applied linguistics, such as language, learning and applied linguistics. ‘What is language?’ should be a central question, instead of engagement in foreclosing debates about the ‘natures’ of language (Hauck & Hank, 2018) by adopting universal methodological and theoretical frameworks that assume that the nature of language is a settled matter. We therefore advocate a contextualized applied linguistics that is the product of a continuous and ongoing reflection of

individual experimentation and creativity with the local in a decolonizing applied linguistics.

Both Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies are political and ethical projects related to power relations, race, gender and ethnicity, all of which have a bearing on the nature of applied linguistics. Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies demand of us that we pay attention to colonial and post-colonial experiences and call upon us to challenge the White male heteronormative basis upon which contemporary applied linguistics is grounded. We ask, 'Why is my applied linguistics White and male?' Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies help us to understand what counts as language from multiple perspectives, which means that we should be able to use new metaphors and narratives to describe languages, all of which are relevant in our conceptualization and ways of 'doing' Southern epistemology and Indigenous ontology in applied linguistics.

'Doing' southern epistemology and Indigenous ontology includes considering experiences of resistance and histories of struggle by local people in both colonial and post-colonial contexts. We should be able to consider the way resistance plays a major role in framing what counts as applied linguistics from the perspective of those who were created as the 'other' in applied linguistics. In Southern perspectives, the 'coloniality of power' (Quijano, 2000) has to do with the way colonial practices have continued to exist even after many previously colonized countries became nominally independent. Colonial culture and structures have been reinforced by capitalism and neoliberalism, which include the ratified use of hierarchical and racial categories to describe the 'other', who are euphemistically described as language users, second language learners, speakers of New Englishes or Global Englishes, language learners and so forth, categorizations that reinforce a mythical status of some Western-educated, native speaker of English. Coloniality concerns several interconnected issues, such as economy, authority, natural resources, gender, sexuality, identity and knowledge production (Cusicanqui, 2012; Lander, 2000; Quijano, 2000; Santos & Meneses, 2010). Local knowledge production also concerns wondering about what language – communicative practices – should be used to narrate how colonial power can be subverted or contested.

We argue that a critical Southern perspective must consider how applied linguistics helped to shape what we understand as language – as language practices – in colonized contexts. Coloniality and post-coloniality cannot be reduced to geographical or temporal aspects (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019), but rather, must consider evolving power relations that submit some to the systematic control of others. This means that history cannot be reduced to a linear and chronological perspective that has been used to shape the ideas of 'pre' and 'post': 'There is no post or pre in this vision of history that is not linear or teleological but rather moves in cycles and spirals and sets out on a course without neglecting to

return to the same point' (Cusicanqui, 2012: 96). We should be able to understand the underlying epistemological and ontological mechanisms of such control, which means considering language as a political and constructed category that, together with race and gender, helped to shape and hierarchize people's lives, depending on which languages they are native speakers of or whether or not they are native speakers.

In terms of applied linguistics, we postulate, 'Racism impacts not only the people, texts, or semiosis that we investigate in our research, but also us – teachers, researchers, and students in applied linguistics – in many ways' (Kubota, 2019: 1). This means that Southern perspectives illuminate the historical process by which we have created the use of language as a category of differentiation, control and hierarchization. We are aware that some concepts in applied linguistics, such as mother tongue, foreign language, proficiency, language extinction, language revitalization, language families and language diversity, are grounded in colonial templates (Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Irvine, 2009; Kubota, 2019; Leonard, 2017; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019; Severo, 2019; Smith, 1999)

In the following section, we explore the conceptual value of two Southern political metaphors: the Quilombo and the land and mangrove metaphors. We understand such epistemological and ontological frames in terms of ethnic and gender resistance. Although the Quilombo is a political, juridical, ethical and historical movement connected to the colonial era and slavery in Brazil, the mangrove can be seen as a cultural, political and musical movement that is connected to the way it captures the rhythms of the mangrove, understood as a metaphor of the periphery, juxtaposition, transition and ambiguity (instead of opposition, similarity, discreteness or differentiation). The mangrove is also related to the role played by women who harvest crabs in Brazil. We argue that the metaphor of the mangrove can help us to understand and narrate gender and language issues.

Integrating Perspectives of Southern Epistemologies and Indigenous Ontological Frameworks

In this section, we explore the underlying epistemologies of two political and sociocultural movements: Quilombism and its connection to the evolving concept of Quilombo and African-Brazilian struggles for rights as well as the cultural movement of *Manguebit/MangueBeat* (rhythm of the mangrove). Although other local concepts and practices also could be considered, we opted for these worldviews because they link peripheral experiences historically connected to modes of political, cultural and moral living. We argue that these movements and metaphors enable us to articulate language and applied linguistics in terms of land, belonging, sharing, being, singing, dancing, claiming and constructing a complex interconnected vision of language. By focusing on such metaphors and

movements, we seek to connect local issues and demands with a cross-border perspective that underlines diasporic movements of resistance.

Language is not static, and its status is not a pre-given reality. Each subdomain in applied linguistics creates its vision of language anew in its theorization and practice. For example, second language acquisition with a strong emphasis on the cognitive and images of language influenced by cognition and computers frames language differently from sociolinguistics or language teaching. Analytical frameworks of language in language teaching are undergirded by different understandings of language. We advocate a radically contextualized concept of language, which means that laypeople's opinions and practices (Pablé, 2019) matter in terms of defining not only what counts as language but also the way that language can be approached only from an integrated understanding of local experiences. Although we understand that a radically contextualized concept of language may run the risk of reinforcing what counts as authenticity, we argue that universal and ahistorical theories should be consistently understood in terms of local experiences and submitted for interpretation.

We start by exploring the ideas of *Quilombo* and *Quilombismo* (Quilombism) and how they are connected to African-Brazilian struggles for rights, visibility and justice. The term *Quilombo* is related to the political, juridical and sociocultural struggle of African-Brazilians for recognition and citizenship, which is connected to the history of slavery that brought around 5 million African people to Brazil. The term *Quilombo* has had several meanings since the colonial era in Brazil. It is related to modes of living, places, resistance, popular movements and ethical issues (Leite, 1999). In the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, the use of the expression *Remanescentes de Quilombo* (Remainders of the Quilombos communities) designated a group that has a right to land. Since then, such an expression has been broadly used by African Brazilians, scholars and jurists. The concepts of *Quilombo* and *Quilombismo* also are connected to the term *Black*, which includes two perspectives: the historical experience of Africans who, under slavery, have been treated as being ahistorical and non-human; and the political and cultural experience of Africans and their descendants toward the creation of a sense of solidarity and community (Leite, 1999).

Quilombism was a term used by Abdias do Nascimento (1980), an African-Brazilian writer, activist and scholar, who founded the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (The Black Experimental Theater) in 1944 in Brazil and wrote, among other treatises, the *Manifesto da Convenção Nacional do Negro à Nação Brasileira* (Manifesto of the Black National Convention to the Brazilian Nation), in 1945. For Nascimento, Quilombism is related to an 'idea-force, a source of energy inspiring models of dynamic organization, since the fifteenth century' (1980: 153), which still has to be realized. The underlying epistemology of Quilombism challenges the Eurocentric theories that helped historically to shape the

stereotypical concepts of race, identity and language used to define and describe Africans' experience: 'For centuries we have carried the burden of the crimes and falsities of "scientific" Eurocentrism, its dogmas imposed upon our being as the brands of a definitive, "universal" truth' (Nascimento, 1980: 159). Nascimento's ideas have historically helped to shape the Brazilian Black Movement, which can be noticed by how his concept of Quilombism has been revisited by important Black scholars and cultural leaders, for example, Nei Lopes who in his *Brazilian Encyclopedia of African Diaspora* (2011) described in a lengthy treatise Abdias Nascimento's political, epistemological and cultural contribution to Afro-Brazilian movements.

Considering Quilombism as a critical perspective to Eurocentric visions means:

- (1) To question historical authoritarianism in its several modalities, which includes the use of a Greco-Latin and Christian concept of language that has helped to shape universal frameworks that have been used in regard to Indigenous African languages as 'European scripts' (Makoni & Meinhof, 2004; Severo & Makoni, 2015). We understand that applied linguistics has been caught up in a Eurocentric model of language that underlies the contemporary and modern approaches to language.
- (2) To problematize the racialized epistemologies that have been used to frame 'Bantu' languages as a language family that was constructed under the 19th century comparative linguistics (Abdelhay *et al.*, forthcoming). Such problematization includes the descriptive, structuralist and ethnolinguistic framework that has been used to describe what counts as 'African languages' in diaspora, such as the idea of Afro-Brazilian Portuguese.
- (3) To be careful about the politics to be adopted (Nascimento, 1980), avoiding the acritical reproduction of colonizing power relations that work by silencing and erasing histories, narratives and peoples' vision. This means that we should be able to avoid commonplace, dualistic and simplistic interpretations of power relations.
- (4) To avoid the reproduction of language harmonization ideologies (Makoni, 2016), such as the idea that Brazilian Portuguese has been the product of a harmonious contact between African Bantu Languages and European Portuguese. This ideology perpetuates the idea that an alleged linguistic democracy in Brazil would follow the myth of Brazil's being a racial democracy fictitiously favored by 'miscegenation'.
- (5) To understand that language is the product of an open-ended and indeterminate process: 'What orthodox linguistics cannot take on board is the notion that in verbal communication both form and meaning function as indeterminate variables' (Harris & Haas, 2011: 501).

- (6) To expand the meanings of ‘land’ by considering not only the right to acquire geographical land but also symbolic forms of territorialization, such as the idea of language as a dwelling place. Land has to do with different forms of spacialization, which means, on the one hand, control, use of space and new forms of socialization, and on the other hand, issues of forced eviction and negative stereotypes (Leite, 1999).
- (7) To expand the conception of language in an educational context in which oral tradition and other language practices may be seriously considered. This means that systematization and standardization should not be a condition for teaching languages (Deumert, 2010).

Another example of Southern epistemologies and ontologies is the Brazilian cultural movement of *Manguebit/MangueBeat*. The hybrid word *Manguebit*, whose symbol is a crab, mixes the ideas of mangrove, rhythm (beat) and technology (bit). Just as ‘land’ has been a powerful means of defining the several meanings related to territorialization, belonging and resistance in Quilombism, the word ‘mangue’ (mangrove) also carries political and critical meanings related to cultural and economic movements of historically subalternized and excluded people in Brazil. The mangrove can be seen as an ‘in between’ metaphor – it is located between the land and the sea – and as an integrated and anti-binary process – the mangrove includes the sea and the land. The mangrove is a ‘form of artistic thinking’ that reminds us of ‘collapsing land-bound notions of being-in-the-world and reminding us not to forget the ocean’ (Deumert, 2019: para. 9). On the other hand, the mangrove is also a metaphor that problematizes poverty and hunger from the perspective of the so-called ‘amphibious individuals’ who live between the margins of the capitalist world and the agrarian society: ‘Amphibian beings: inhabitants of land and water, half men and half animals. Fed in childhood with crab broth: this mud milk’ (Castro, 1967: 12).

The manguebit is a cultural and political movement that started in the outskirts of Recife, a city in northern Brazil, in the 1990s. Such an artistic movement subverts the ideas of marginality and periphery by promoting new forms of collectivism, participation, construction of visibility and social voices. Just as Nascimento wrote a manifesto to elucidate his perspective on *Quilombismo*, the manguebit movement produced the *Manifesto Carangueijos com Cérebro* (Crabs with Brain Manifesto). The leaders of the movement were Chico Science and Nação Zumbi (Zumbi Nation), who mixed in local aesthetic elements, such as the African Brazilian rhythm Maracatu, with modern ones, such as hip hop and the punk subculture (Guimarães & Carvalho, 2016). Such cultural movements also used alternative modes of diffusion, such as social networking, flyers, libraries, street theater groups and communitarian modes of communication, such as local radio programs. The multiplicity and complexity of the manguebit movement reflects the integrated and yet indeterminate

ecosystem of mangroves, which ‘are constituted by fluid borders separating and linking diverse elements such as water, roots, mud, crabs, reptiles, mollusks, fish, insects, birds, plants, flowers, and lichen among other things’ (Walter, 2005: 128).

Recife is considered, culturally and economically, a peripheral place in Brazil, in contrast to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which reinforce the political agenda of the movement in relation to the cultural national scenario. The city of Recife was built over a big mangrove, and the mangrove is the place where poor people live. By using modern elements, the mangue movement helped to resignify the meanings of regional, popular, traditional and authentic. This meant a deconstruction of cultural and social binaries, such as periphery and urbanity, regional and central, and popular and erudite. The mangue movement is about new modes of occupying the public space by creating new forms of visibility that are strongly related to social and economic resistance. It is also about the (conflictual and dialogical) relation with otherness that underlies the concept of politics: ‘I want to regard the mangrove as a concrete utopian symbol and space of identity formation based on inclusive otherness through antagonistic complementarity’ (Walter, 2005: 129).

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980) ideas, Deumert (2019: para. 2) proposes a rhizomatic interpretation of the mangrove: ‘Thinking-with the rhizome allows us to capture the multiplicities, assemblages and interconnections that shape the social world, and give it meaning’. Such dialogicity implied in the mangrove metaphor has a deep connection with the way communication, arts and culture work by approximating, aggregating, resisting and creating an evolving sense of political belonging and social struggles. One example of the several initiatives that integrate the mangue movement is the Solidarity Resistance Network (SRN), a network of more than 60 urban communitarian groups committed to new modes of organization (Martins, 2009). The SRN has a connection to the right, to the city (Lefebvre, 1996) and to urban social movements. In addition, the SRN is about renewed forms of distribution of spaces, times, communication and forms of activities, turning visible and audible what has been historically invisibilized. In terms of strategies of communication, the SRN includes visual arts, audiovisual techniques, songs and graffiti (Martins, 2009).

A multimodal language used with political and aesthetic issues characterizes such practices as graffiti, which carries several meanings, relates to youth identity, urbanity and creativity: ‘By creating signs, symbols and motifs that convey meanings and messages, urban space is transformed by its adornment and co-option as a canvas for the expression of identity, status, style and culture’ (Zieleniec, 2016: 13). In this context, communication, arts and culture play an integrated role in the SRN. This means that politics and aesthetics play a joint role, in which aesthetics is seen as ‘a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of

speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience' (Rancière, 2004: 13).

By reconfiguring the regime of visibility and the regime of discourses, which define what can be said and seen by whom, the mangue movement politically acts by using language as an important element of emancipation. The mangue movement is an example of how the regime of (language) politics is also aesthetically configured. Southern perspectives to applied linguistics may help us to recognize language aesthetics and communication by connecting language to its modes of distribution in space and time, helping to create new regimes of visibility, as in the example of graffiti and street theater in urban and peripheral spaces illustrates. It is not a coincidence that both Nascimento and the manguebit have used the arts, which include the public use of language, as a political instrument of self-emancipation. In addition, both have used the manifesto as a discursive genre, which signals its political and visual roles. Curiously, the root verb 'manifest' comes from the old French *manifestar*, which means 'to make evident to the eye'. The manifesto also can be taken as an example of truth telling, a way of denouncing regimes of oppression and exclusion and a search for new political or artistic orientations and movements (Amidon, 2003). Manguebit provides opportunities to forge a utopian vision of social life.

In terms of its economic and social aspects, the mangrove is also strongly related to the collective harvest of crabs by women in several areas of Brazil, as the region of Maragogipe in the state of Bahia, located in the northeast of Brazil. The mangroves are considered complex coastal areas, places of intense biological recycling, a mixture of sea and river, of trees and water (fluvial trees), and of air and land (Oliveira, 1993). It is a kind of biological 'third space' and, metaphorically, we argue that it works as a cultural 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994), an ambivalent and indeterminate space in-between, where historical meanings are open to negotiation and interpretation. By proposing this metaphorical interpretation, we highlight the role that women play in the post-colonial process of meaning negotiation.

It is not a coincidence that, in the African-Brazilian religious symbolism of *Candomblé*, there is the image of an old wise woman, *Nanã*, who, in some parts of Brazil, is associated with the mangrove, fertility, agriculture and the transition between land and sea; *Nanã* is known as 'a Vêia do mangue' (the old lady of the mangrove; Oliveira, 1993). Another hybrid religious symbol related to the mangrove is the *Oxumaré*, for half of the year a man who lives in the sea, and for the other half a woman who lives in the river. In the Brazilian religious syncretism, *Oxumaré* is considered the Catholic Saint Bartolomeu. There also is a deep connection between women's social practice of crab harvesting and environmental issues: the rhythms of the tide and of the harvesting are directly influenced by the moon. Pollution affects the social and economic exploration of the

mangrove, which is why women also play an important role in environmental protection practices. By worshipping the local mythical symbolism of *Nanã*, these women follow a harvesting ritual that balances environmental and economic exploration (Oliveira, 1993).

Some language practices related to the harvest of crabs in the mangrove are songs. Women sing as a strategy to attract crabs (*aratu*) to the surface. Such songs are generally a solitary performance, a relationship between the woman and the crab. One example is the following song (Dantas, 2010: 45–46):

Chega aratuzinho, vem pra minha isquinha. Quando for de noite você está na panelinha

[Come little aratu, come to my little bait. When night comes you will be in my little pan]

Ururu, urru já vem o aratu/Ururu, urru, ururu aratu

[Ururu, urru, there it comes the aratu/Ururu, urru, ururu aratu]

We understand that songs play an important role in shaping both social relations and language. We argue that songs should be taken as frameworks to understand what counts as language, which may vary according to the local and cultural contexts involved. Songs thus ontologically constitute a form of interaction between humans and animals, thereby creating a type of applied linguistics that does not revolve around the human, but rather takes into serious consideration human/animal interaction as part of an important aspect of applied linguistics practice. For example, for the Yaminawá shamans in Brazil, ‘Learning to be a shaman is learning to sing, to intone the powerful chant rhythms’ (Townsend, 1993: 457), which occurs in ritualistic religious practices. We argue that the local meaning and practice of singing should be considered an important framework to define what counts as language.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to illustrate how an applied linguistics from the Global South can utilize its metaphors to enhance our understanding of the nature of applied linguistics and not be dependent on analytical metaphors from the Global North. We selected Quilombism and the metaphors of the land and mangrove to describe these analytical metaphors of language, language learning and applied linguistics. The analytical metaphors create alternative models of applied linguistics that are potentially relevant to applied linguistics in the Global North.

We return to issues about risks and vulnerabilities which are the key touchstone concepts in this volume. Epistemic racism constitutes the cornerstone of knowledge structures of Westernized universities and the way most applied linguistics is practised intellectually within them. It therefore

logically means that applied linguistics as a discipline cannot escape the ‘epistemological racism’ characteristic of Westernized universities in which it is practised. Applied linguistics in the Global North and, indeed to some extent, even in the geographical South, runs the risks of being permeated by the ‘epistemic racism’ of Western cultural ethnocentrism unless it opens and renders itself susceptible and vulnerable to other ways of doing applied linguistics which come from diverse Indigenous cosmovisions. We argue that if we are to ‘recuperate an applied linguistics with a heart, we will need to put our minds to retrieving the discipline’s spirit of compassion by standing with Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities, and not on the sidelines, in their struggles against structural violence’ (Gomes, 2013: 14).

There are, however, risks in incorporating orientations from the Global South, particularly its Indigenous cosmovisions. The following are the risks which we have to bear in mind as enumerated by Grosfoguel (2013):

- (1) Can we produce a radical anti-systemic politics beyond identity politics?
- (2) Is it possible to articulate a critical cosmopolitanism beyond nationalism and colonialism?
- (3) Can we produce knowledge beyond Third World and Eurocentric fundamentalisms?
- (4) Can we overcome the traditional dichotomy between political economy and cultural studies?
- (5) How can we overcome Eurocentric modernity, without throwing away the best of modernity as many Third World fundamentalists do?

There are also risks in including alternative epistemologies in applied linguistics, since including them in applied linguistics may alter the character of the epistemologies. For example, alternative Indigenous epistemologies are ‘inherently heterogeneous, inchoate, pluri- and multi-epistemic, and potentially emergent’ (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020: 117). Incorporating them into applied linguistics demands that they be normative, thus consequently changing their character from variable to normative.

Our conclusion in this chapter is that an applied linguistics that draws on Southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies is, indeed, possible and desirable, can be mobilized for use in the Global South and may serve as a powerful corrective in some areas in the applied linguistics of the Global North.

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