

LANGUAGE, RACE AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A CONTEMPORARY MULTIPOLAR WORLD

LÍNGUA, RAÇA E O SUL GLOBAL: ENFOCANDO AS LENTES PARA A IGUALDADE E A JUSTIÇA SOCIAL NUM MUNDO MULTIPOLAR CONTEMPORÂNEO

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“(…) No African was given a seat on the unification committee and the results are that newly formed languages comprise a mixture of Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Kaffir cooking, Nyanja and English. For me, it’s not the Shona language that white people are trying to force, but the language of a white man.”

Rusike (The Bantu Spread, 1934)

Language and race – what they involve, what they construct, where they derive from and how they are (re) formed; these questions are central to the fields of Critical Applied Linguistics and Decolonial Sociolinguistics (Silva, 2024; Silva and Cobucci, 2024; Silva and Rajagopalan, 2024; Antia and Makoni, 2023; Severo and Makoni, 2023; Makoni et al., 2022; Pennycook and Makoni, 2019; Makoni and Pennycook, 2014). Research in these fields has historically been conducted in Northern Europe and North America, relying on Western theoretical and epistemological frameworks. This focus is problematic as it excludes language practices and knowledge systems emerging beyond Euro-America, particularly in the Global South. We argue that this is highly debatable, since what is absent from this Western/Northern focus are the language practices and language-centered knowledge frameworks that have existed and continue to emerge outside Euro-America, namely in what is referred to as the Global South.

The term/construct “Global South” has multiple connotations, including geographical and geopolitical. In this special issue of the Journal “Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada”, “Global South” refers, in general terms, to people, places and ideas that have been left out of the dominant narratives of modernity. It can sometimes be used to literally refer to the South, the regions of South America and much of Africa, for example, which have not been part of the upward march of economic, social and political “progress” of the richer nations. More importantly, it refers to wider histories of exclusion and disenfranchisement at a global level. Consequently, when we refer to the Global South, we focus on those parts of the world that have been the object of European colonialism since the 15th century and which constitute the so-called “majority world” (encompassing around 80% of the world’s population).

By contrast, the Global South is more than a geographical region. It is also a political-economic term synonymous with “third”, “development” or “marginalized” areas around the world. Notions of the Global South can refer to the urban poor in the Global North and the rural poor in the Global South; those who struggle with forms of racial prejudice, gender, sexuality; those who have precarious jobs in different parts of the world; and those who cannot afford the high costs of university tuition in both the Global North and South (Pennycook and Makoni, 2019).

In other words, the “Global South” is diverse and plural and this plurality has an impact on the production and dissemination of knowledge. It arises from a non-theoretical impulse in the “interest of some project, dream, desire, hope, issue or pathological condition” (Bade, 2021, 21). In an African context, for example, academic

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studies are strongly oriented towards South Africa and not towards other African contexts, despite the fact that, in terms of material resources, South Africa is the most unequal country in the world. The same is true in Brazil.

When we refer to “Brazil,” we are specifically addressing the scientific and academic production concentrated in the South and Southeast regions. In our view, these areas represent Brazil’s academic “Global North.” On the contrary, the North, Northeast, and Center-West regions, often overlooked in this context, align more closely with what we define as the “Global South”. If research into the Global South is not conducted carefully, it could further reinforce the inequality of spaces like South Africa and Brazil. In short, the concept of the Global South is not without challenges or contradictions, often creating ‘hierarchical spaces’ (Makoni, 2019, p. 149) present in both Northern and Southern contexts. Consequently, with the focus on the expansion of these geographical and political-economic spaces, there is a necessary shift to move beyond the perspectives of the North to embrace epistemologies and theories created and derived from Southern structures. Furthermore, by recognizing that Southern knowledges emerge from struggle, we expand this proposal to include epistemologies shaped by these hard experiences which come out as a product of such endeavour.

Taking these epistemological issues into account and (re)reading critically other scholars who problematize the construct/concept “Global South” (Silva and Cobucci, 2024; Silva and Rajagopalan, 2024; Ndlovu; Leketi, 2020; Cusicanqui, 2019, 2010; Keating, 2019; Palomino, 2019; just to name a few), much of what we have experienced and published in Critical Applied Linguistics and Decolonial Sociolinguistics at the global/global level is based on orthodox notions of “good practices”, with very little attention to the ideological and epistemological foundations that gave rise to these social practices in the first place. Consequently, situated knowledge, rooted in the Platonic philosophies and ideologies of oneness from the European Enlightenment has invariably obliterated indigenous and African perspectives on language and the affirmation of Global South communities’ cultural identities in the contemporary world.

When framed in this perspective, it is therefore necessary to refocus our sociology of knowledge not only to challenge Western/colonial paradigms of oneness –prevalent in discourses on language, race, gender and literacies – but also to offer panoramic and transformed practices under the aegis of fluidity, flexibility and complexity, which define the fundamental principles of theories, epistemologies of the South and the people they represent. In the process of de-universalizing Western concepts such as globalization and mother tongue (Makoni and Pennycook, 2014),) pathways for rethinking language, race, and society emerge (Silva, 2024; Severo and Makoni, 2023). (Silva, 2024; Severo and Makoni, 2023), moving beyond Western hegemonies, and redefining ways of knowing, being, and acting.

From a scientific reflection on the texts that are part of this special issue *Journal Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*, one important question arises: What is this “Global South” to which we academics refer? We perceive, feel and experience, both in Brazil and in Africa, – since the two editors of this dossier are Brazilian and South African – a movement that has been characterized in academic-scientific literature as the “Global South”, which is aligned with a decolonial perspective of (re)construction and dissemination of knowledge and know-how. The Indian-Brazilian applied (critical) linguist Kanavillil Rajagopalan, from the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), points out and warns us that colonialism was much more than a macabre chapter in human history. It was a period during which a group of European nations granted themselves the right to embark on a predatory adventure towards the distant peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, subjecting them to unspeakable iniquities and humiliations, mercilessly sucking their wealth and leaving them in penury and total helplessness.

Colonialism took hold of peoples’ minds – and I would also add the minds of many applied linguists, sociolinguists and educators as well. This was an integral part of the regime of slavery, albeit often disguised in ingenious euphemisms. Conquerors imposed this system in their relentless search for other people’s goods, driven by greed and the unbridled delirium of their supposed moral and intellectual superiority. And the most blatant and damaging consequence of this brainwashing to which the dominated peoples were subjected is called coloniality.

Tânia Rezende, a leading researcher in Sociolinguistics, with an emphasis on Cosmolinguistics, states that the “(...) maintenance of the geopolitics of knowledge, with contemporary updates, in the polarized tension of resistance, between coloniality and the decoloniality of power, emerges from this metaphorical enunciation Global North and Global South”. This metaphorical enunciation, according to Rezende, continues to sustain the modern colonial mentality, (i) by dividing the world into North and South, (ii) by locating in the Global South, mainly, the peoples plundered, pillaged, subalternized and impoverished by the Global North, and (iii) by creating

other invisibilities, other races, species, other types and by defining and determining affiliations, which are the foundations of neoliberalism (Mbembe, 2018).

In our view, the state education policies for schools are neoliberal, anchored in modern reason, sustained by Christian, colonial and slave ideologies. These policies are salvationist, adaptive and meritocratic; they always demand resilience and self-overcoming from the different, from the Other. Inadequate working conditions have led educators to adopt improvised strategies such as “pedagogical bribes”. In contrast, a Freirean pedagogy – based on the “pedagogy of autonomy” and the “pedagogy of hope” – offers a horizontal and vertical understanding of the pedagogies of oppression and violence, whether physical, mental and/or symbolic. In dialogue with “inter/transcultural education and epistemic bilingualism”, Freirean pedagogy points to possibilities of embracing other educational realities, other cosmoperceptions which propose generosity in sharing knowledge, feelings and spiritualities in different languages, in co-learning, towards intercomprehension.

In this Presentation, we align with Rezende’s argument (in press), “we are neither at the center of the world created by Manichean coloniality nor confined to its peripheries or margins”. According to Rezende (in press) at a round table we attended together at Unijuí “(...) we are also not in the Global South that decoloniality, which is still Manichean, has counter-invented, because we have been placed on the margins or peripheries of this pole – a position we refuse to accept. Whoever articulates defines the space and assigns positions to bodies within it. While we do not define these spaces ourselves, we refuse to accept the positions imposed on our bodies by those who do. The references on which these ideas and their supporting positions are based come from the voices (...) of our cerradeira ancestry, which deserves acknowledgement and respect.

From our epistemological and ontological stance, anchored in the praxiologies of Central Brazil – South Africa, in order to understand the (inter)relationship between Language, Race and the Global South (Silva, 2024; Silva and Rajagolan, 2024; Severo and Makoni, 2023), we need to understand that: i) the “Global South” is not just a geographical definition, but a geopolitical, cultural and epistemic construct; ii) the “Global South” is a discursive space, a place of plural and dialogical knowledge production; iii) the “Global South” encompasses not only Brazil but multiple ‘Brasis’ – marginalized communities overlooked due to the lack of inclusive public and educational policies, such as the deaf, indigenous peoples, immigrants in crisis, and Black populations.

May this new way of (re)thinking and (re)acting in Language Science become the driving force and/or foundation for our peers in and outside Higher Education Institutions, urging scholars to do more research “with” the Global South rather than “about” the Global South. In order to do so, we must (re)think globally and act globally. To endorse this perspective, this dossier comprises eight articles authored by researchers from various regions of Brazil, along with an interview we conducted with the renowned Alastair Pennycook, from the University of Technology Sydney (Australia) and MultiLing, Oslo (Norway).

The first article, “Ethereal languages: interpellations for Critical Applied Linguistics from the Global South”, was written by Carlos Matheus da Silva-Mello, Vivian Silva Castelo Branco, Barbra Sabota, Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa, Viviane Pires Viana Silvestre, Ana Luísa Carvalho Rodrigues and Fernanda Franco Tiraboschi, researchers from the State University of Goiás (UEG). The article examines the mobilization of meaning constructions and ethereal languages that emerge from a multimodal production as part of the Etérea project (CRIOLO, 2019b), proposed by a group of artists, including Criolo.

The authors explore the pedagogical potential of this material for advancing critical linguistic education. They also draw on onto-epistemological perspectives, incorporating critical interculturality, decoloniality, and intersectionality. In order to read the material, they set out to weave a cartography through a semiotic rhizomatization that was built on movements of feeling-thinking-praxiologizing-affecting. The discussions in the article point out that the multimodal work critically denounces and makes explicit social oppressions linked to race and sexuality and has the potential to promote problematizations on issues of critical interculturality, which can contribute to a linguistic education committed to the fight against the maintenance of inequalities.

The next article, “Our daily knowledge: current epistemological challenges”, by Daiane da Fonseca Pereira, from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), examines possibilities to escape the dichotomous logic of European thinking that subordinates subjects, knowledge and promotes mass epistemicide.

Focusing on the post-World War II era as a turning point, the author critiques the continued reliance on Western epistemic frameworks. She questions how these models sustain intellectual elites aligned with a white canon, often ignoring the internal dynamics of Brazilian society. To this end, the author proposes a bibliographical

review of post-colonial authors, who invest in the key of racialization in order to understand how the European colonization project is established as a form of domination. The author highlights the permanent need to question the Eurocentric way in which Enlightenment knowledge is applied, which will help us hear new voices so that other forms of knowledge can be disseminated. After all, it is not acceptable to think about the production of knowledge in the West without problematizing the investment made to deny the capacity of non-European peoples to produce knowledge.

In the third article, “Emergences of voices from the South in English language classes: transgressive formative possibilities with a cybercultural device”, Cristiane Ribeiro Barbosa da Silva and Leonardo Zenha Coreiro, from the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), present and discuss acts of curriculum (agency) with which a class of students, cultural practitioners – in the face of the ‘modern capitalist, colonial/patriarchal world-system’, in the current neoliberal version – engages in anti-racist struggles from formative pedagogical practices in English language classes.

The study adopted a cyber-research-formation methodology, embracing the bricolage of everyday cybercultural life, and took on a different rigor in the “doing-thinking” of education research. This theoretical-methodological approach enabled the authors to engage in dialogues between applied, transgressive and interdisciplinary linguistics and the insurgency of the Global South.

The investigation took place during English language classes at a Technological Institute in Pará, using digital technologies and the inventive mode of the Padlet interface (a cybercultural device), which allowed the researchers to forge a potentially authorial and transgressive training process, enabling the emergence of authorizing narratives, insurgent voices of cultural practitioners: research subjects. The acts of curriculum mediated by digital technologies pointed to transgressive learning practices, entangled with the political-pedagogical and interdisciplinary social use of the English language.

The fourth article, “Exploring Critical Racial Literacy in English Language Teaching: Experiences from a Teaching Internship”, was written by Ana Karina de Oliveira Nascimento and Thiago de Melo Cardoso Santos, both researchers at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS). The article discusses a teaching internship experience conducted as part of a master’s program in Letras/Languages, in which the subject “English Language I” was taught to students entering the undergraduate course in Letras (Portuguese/English) at the Federal University of Sergipe.

In addition to addressing the syllabus topics, authors presented discussions on critical race theory and its development in the educational context, through didactic activities based on the theories of critical race literacy and intersectionality. In this context, the authors examined their practices as teachers and the reflections arising from this experience, which broadened their understanding of ethnic-racial issues, their connections with English language education and the impacts on contemporary social practices, including the exchanges of experience with students. The results indicate the importance of building bridges between the production of academic knowledge and the social practices of marginalized groups in English language education.

The fifth article, “There are Portuguese children who only speak Brazilian: colonial linguistic ideologies in the online-offline nexus”, related to the contemporary Applied Linguistics field, was written by Danilo da Conceição Pereira Silva and Vitor Gabriel Caetano Alves, from the Federal Institute of Education Science and Technology of Alagoas. The authors critically analyze linguistic ideologies present in online debates about the article “*There are Portuguese children who only speak Brazilian*” published by the Portuguese newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, in November 2021. The authors conducted a non-participant digital ethnography between June and November 2023 on the newspaper’s Facebook page.

Their analysis revealed intense circulation of “colonial linguistic ideologies” in the online-offline metalinguistic practices observed. In essence, the study highlights how beliefs, rationalizations, and attitudes about language, its uses, and its speakers reinforce racial classifications rooted in colonial ideologies. In general terms, the authors argue that these ideologies contribute to the creation of linguistic hierarchies that reflect racial hierarchies; in the affirmation of nationalist linguistic purism as a linguistic policy of sanitization; and, finally, in the dynamics of feminization and sexualization of languages and their speakers as instances of violent linguistic embodiment.

These processes erase the “invention of languages” as an ecology of domination and Christianization of colonized peoples, since they depreciate the languages, cultures and identities of Brazilian peoples due to the

presumed Portuguese ontological superiority, legitimizing and updating diffuse discourses of colonial violence, against the backdrop of assimilationist imaginaries disseminated in the transnational rhetoric that Brazil and Portugal were “brother countries”.

The sixth article, “Southern Voices: subversive literacies of migrant women in Adult Education”, was authored by Irando Alves Martins Neto, from the Federal Institute of Education Science and Technology of São Paulo. In this text, the author investigates how the writing of two students in Youth and Adult Education subverts established social and linguistic norms. To this end, narrative analysis was used as a methodology that incorporates the discursive, situated and performative nature of the students’ stories. On a social level, access to reading and writing is, for the students, a subversion of imposed norms that have deprived them of the right to education. As women who migrated from the Northeast to the Southeast of Brazil in search of better living conditions, going back to school and learning to read and write are acts of resistance that challenge the status quo.

On a linguistic level, the students reiterated their enunciative intentions by transgressing the standard norm of the Portuguese language, expanding the possibilities of meaning in the texts through the subversive use of punctuation and deictics. The results emphasize the need to recognize the students’ literacy stories as an indictment of the state’s failure to provide quality education to all.

Furthermore, the results indicate the need for language teaching that recognizes non-institutionalized writing as legitimate knowledge that should be part of the curriculum, minimizing the abyssal line between orality and writing and between formal and non-formal knowledge.

The seventh article, authored by Phelipe de Lima Cerdeira, from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and Denise Akemi Hibrano, from the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), bears the title “To discover other worlds, name things and (re)invent(ourselves): the place of literature in decolonizing knowledge and sealar initial teacher education in Letras”. In this article, the authors discuss how literature serves as a space for discovering other worlds and territory(ies) and for recognizing cultures, identities, knowledge, powers, races and social inequalities.

Methodologically, the authors analyzed data from a Google Forms questionnaire completed by literature undergraduates at two public universities. The results highlight: i) the silencing and limitation of literary practices in basic education; ii) the critical role of teachers in fostering student engagement with reading; iii) the transformative power of literature. It should be noted that the graduates perceive their loci of enunciation, recognizing the webs of power that constitute them and valuing literature as a way of naming other ways of (being) in the world. The study has contributed to an understanding of contemporary society and the challenges of initial teacher training.

The next article, was authored by Davidson Martins Viana Alves, from the Federal University of Riode Janeiro, the Rio de Janeiro State Department of Education and the municipality of Japeri, Rio de Janeiro. The article “Tambolinguistics and autoethnography: A theoretical-methodological possibility for studying the languages of Afro-diasporic black territories” seeks to present an innovative theoretical possibility in relation to language contact studies with an emphasis on ethnic-racial and historical issues and in dialogue with spirituality. The aim was to propose a path to a transdisciplinary linguistic analysis and observation, which includes the necessary scientific deepening between black raciality and language, given that the fundamental pillar for understanding Africanity is to conceive of its ancestral religiosity.

Focusing on Brazilian Afro-diasporic territories (terreiros, quilombos, favelas and samba schools), the author seeks to (re)build a collection of materials for various academic fields, challenging Eurocentric (Cartesian and positivist) research paradigms. He also points out the need for Africanist language research, in the long term, to minimize academic racism in science, promoting diversity in subjects and being a reference for the promotion of black linguistic and cultural manifestations.

To conclude the dossier, Leketi Makalela, from the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) and I conducted an interview with the distinguished scholar Alastair Pennycook, from the of the University of Technology Sydney (Australia) and MultiLing, Oslo, Norway. This interview is divided into two parts. First, we aim to delve into the philosophical foundations and motivations that have guided Alastair Pennycook’s illustrious career, offering readers of this special issue an in-depth look at the forces shaping his research and theoretical contributions. In the second part, our distinguished interviewee seeks to inspire the next generation of applied

linguistics researchers by sharing his ideas on how to navigate the complexities of interdisciplinary research, the evolution of his theoretical perspectives and his vision for the future of applied linguistics.

In summary, this special issue critically examines the constructs of language, race and the Global South, challenging Euro-American versions of reality under the umbrella term – Global South. From forty-five article proposals submitted to this special issue, eight articles and one interview were selected, complying with the standards of the TLA Journal and Scielo.br. These contributions address themes such as i) equity/inequality; ii) social justice; iii) race; iv) intersectionality; v) language policies; vi) racial literacy; vii) globalization and; viii) its effects on contemporary society, as well as diversity, social practices and the affirmation of rights in a contemporary multipolar world.

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We hope this special issue makes meaningful contributions to Brazilian Applied Linguistics through its critical and/or decolonial perspectives. Additionally, quoting Collins (2019), we hope it may “challenge power structures from within, working the cracks in the system, which nevertheless requires learning to speak several languages of power convincingly”.

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