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TRICKSTERING APPLIED LINGUISTICS WITH
PENNYCOOK AND MAKONI:
TRANSGLOBALIZING NORTH AND SOUTH

TRAPACEAR A LINGUÍSTICA APLICADA COM
PENNYCOOK E MAKONI:
TRANSGLOBALIZANDO NORTE E SUL

Clarissa Menezes Jordão*
Eduardo Henrique Diniz de Figueiredo**
Juliana Zeggio Martinez***

It was a cold Curitiba night in mid-October, 2019 when one of the present authors came into a meeting room for professors at our university and found a colleague who seemed to be annoyed for some reason. Soon after they started a conversation, she (the colleague) revealed that what had been bothering her was the fact that she had just found out about a new book entitled *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics from the Global South*, which had been written by two scholars from the Global North – Alastair Pennycook and Sinfree Makoni.

Our colleague's concern was not unfounded. After all, she felt – like many other professors we know from universities in Brazil and other southern contexts – that researchers from the Global North should not try to speak for those of us in the Global South. In other words, she was rightfully worried (at least to a certain

* Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. clarissamjordao@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3558-5603>

** Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. edward.07@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6850-0122>

*** Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. jumartinez78@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2244-9621>

degree) that Pennycook and Makoni's locus of enunciation (see GROSFUGUEL, 2007) did not make them suitable to write a book that somehow attempted to represent the views, challenges and contributions of applied linguists in the Global South.

Fortunately, for this book, Pennycook and Makoni anticipated that scholars in the Global South could have such feelings, and decided to address them from the very beginning of their text. In the introduction to their book, the authors explain how "the geographical and geopolitical locations of North and South are themselves complexly intertwined," and do not qualify or disqualify scholars (themselves included) "as writers about the Global South" (p. 16). While such statement may be taken with much skepticism by Global South academics, Pennycook and Makoni do a very good job in bringing to the fore a theoretical foundation for the complexities involved in understandings of Global North/Global South and southern epistemologies and also in explaining how the Global South is not a geographical concept, but rather a geopolitical, metaphorical, epistemological one that refers to "struggles against inequality" (p. 4) in both the geographical north and the geographical south – even if many times the geopolitical south and the geographical south overlap. They thoroughly explain that the reference is not to geographical positions, but central/marginal positionings of knowledge and those who know (chapter 1).

While this does not necessarily make our colleague's concern irrelevant or unsubstantiated, it does show awareness by the authors of their positionality when it comes to writing such a book. In this sense, they emphasize how risky it is such an endeavor to define what southern epistemologies might comprise. It is important to say that the authors also discuss their loci of enunciation in the first and introductory chapter, showing awareness of its importance in critical research in Applied Linguistics (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2019; DINIZ DE FIGUEIREDO, MARTINEZ, 2019), and adding to the defense that they are qualified as writers who address applied linguistics from a Global South perspective.

As we open the present review of Pennycook and Makoni's book, we must also start by presenting our own loci of enunciation. All three of us (authors of the present review) are scholars working in a Global South university located in the south of Brazil. As scholars coming from such a location, we are deeply aware of the struggles that scholars in southern institutions (geopolitically and epistemologically speaking) face, for example, when trying to access articles published in major journals from the Global North and also when attempting to publish their own research in such journals. Therefore, our choice of writing this review for *Trabalhos*

em Linguística Aplicada is based on the fact that this journal is edited and published in the Global South, and, especially, that it is an open access journal.

Besides our colleague's comments on location and epistemological rights that opened this review, what mostly oriented our initial drive to write about this book was its concern with the importance of our location and with the struggles faced both nationally and internationally in the Global South in order to survive in our profession here. The very existence of this book indicates we are being seen by Applied Linguistics in the Global North – by two prominent scholars writing from that geopolitical space, at least. Whether the authors are considered northern or southern scholars is open to debate.

Nevertheless, the book they wrote challenges the theories produced in Applied Linguistics in the Global North, questioning assumptions and concepts in the light of their encounters with Global South decolonial scholars and ideas. It is clear to us that Makoni and Pennycook have undergone an exercise of self-reflection shared with their readers, not only in terms of the importance of one's locus of enunciation to the development of one's theories, but also in terms of what constitutes theory, how it has been projected to a high status in the Global North (despite Applied Linguistics claims to "investigate real world problems involving language", as stated by Ken Hyland in the preface to the book – p.viii), and how such status needs to be challenged, or Applied Linguistics will continue to be of very little, if any, impact in the world (p.11-12). *Innovations and Challenges* seems to aim at making visible to the Global North how Applied Linguistics has been done (or could be done) in the Global South, and how epistemologies of the South can contribute to create an Applied Linguistics otherwise (p.128-132). It calls for a reinvention of Applied Linguistics in which linguists are aware that science is only relevant if in dialogue with the local that makes it possible.

Some of the central arguments presented in *Innovations and Challenges* are developed from the authors' previous work, especially concerning their concept of language and agency. They continue to claim for the disinvention of language (MAKONI, PENNYCOOK, 2006) and for a widening of our notion of agency in line with post-humanism (PENNYCOOK, 2018), this time through a decolonial lens that stresses the need to collaborate and integrate different onto-epistemologies, bringing to the fore some concerns of Southern Applied Linguistics such as the interdependence of knowledges and the instability/hybridity of being (p.110-111).

One of the most important arguments raised in the book is that Applied Linguistics studies from a Global South perspective is not only a matter of changing epistemological perspectives, but one of changing ontologies – an argument made

previously by Boaventura de Sousa Santos in some of his work (e.g., SOUSA SANTOS, 2018). In other words, it is not a question of viewing scientific methods and knowledge in different ways, but one of looking at different ways of being, of becoming, at different existences and realities (other than those acknowledged and made legitimate by traditional science within the Eurocentric perspective). Thus, central themes in the book include the questioning of the basis for Global North Applied Linguistics – which is founded on rationality, linearity, development, disembodiment of science and binaries – and the broadening of the scope of understandings of language (and related concepts).

As part of their critique to northern epistemologies, Makoni and Pennycook denounce Applied Linguistics for having been blind to its own biases, assumptions and to the invisibilization of knowledges other than those from Western academia (p. 17). By questioning the Eurocentric Enlightenment values of reason, science, humanism, and progress (chapter 2), they deeply exemplify how Southern Theory has a long history in promoting global inequality and how *the making of the south* has been established in the last centuries within the creation of North/South dichotomy, the minority/majority world distinction, the colonial relations among countries, the images of the colonized/colonizer, the political and economic dependencies, the assumptions about development and modernization, and so on and so forth. According to them, Applied Linguistics is obliged to understand how the discipline has been implicated in the making of the Global South (p. 23) and to explore the effects of the South on Applied Linguistics theory and practice (p. 34-35). That's why their project seeks to challenge assumptions and frameworks of Applied Linguistics that are in fact inappropriate for the majority of the world (p. 12). In their own words,

Our project of applied linguistics from a southern perspective seeks to address the darker side of applied linguistics (cf. MIGNOLO, 2011a): The deep ties of colonial and neocolonial projects to language teaching; the exoticization [sic] of differences that reinforces the construction of racialized and ethnicized Others; the normative assumptions about gendered and sexual relations that obscure the politics of sexuality (p. 17-18).

One of the most serious issues for them is the fact that “the colonial linguistic project and its Applied Linguistics offshoot produced a vision of language that had little to do with how people understood language locally” (p. 79). In this line of thought, they invite their readers to reflect on themes such as language endangerment, policy, rights, and reclamation (chapter 4). They state that all those themes should be grounded on multiple language ontologies but, unfortunately, there has been a failure in the field to understand this complexity, mainly of

multilingual southern contexts. For them, Applied Linguistics has to “move away from the reification and exoticization of languages” (p. 80) in order to “engage with issues of ontology. They state that there are no such things as majority languages exterminating minority languages, or that losing a language means losing a culture. For them, the maintenance of such assumptions separates languages from people as much as it is far from the reality about social, economic, and political relations (p. 80). They stress that Applied Linguistics needs to relate differently with multilingual communicative repertoires and find ways of conceptualizing language within specific communities as each way of understanding language has different implications to the lives of peoples and communities.

Another significant issue raised in *Innovations and Challenges* is related to the concept of multilingualism (chapter 3). Makoni and Pennycook claim that multilingualism has to be understood as plural and diverse rather than a singular phenomenon; remixing multilingualism, for instance, goes far beyond the current language research on the plurality of multilingualisms. According to them, most of the theory produced in Applied Linguistics still views multilingualism in monolingual terms: “The issue at stake is a set of deep-seated language ideologies that are in need of a much more profound decolonizing” (p. 42). Their concern is based on the fact that “the monolingual/multilingual dichotomy ‘misdirects and misrepresents the notion of language diversity’ (NDHLOVU, 2018, p. 118)” (p. 61). This is due to the understanding of languages as fixed and independent entities rather than practices, repertoires, and complex communication; the authors emphasize that we are still bombarded by theories that insist on terms such as mother tongue, medium of instruction, creoles, etc.

Another specific theme highlighted in the book is a critique of language education and second language acquisition – henceforth SLA. SLA, in particular, is criticized for being too apolitical, and for always focusing on the same languages (chapter 5). According to Pennycook and Makoni, even the recent push for trans/multidisciplinarity in SLA (e.g., DOUGLAS FIR GROUP, 2016) still places disciplines into clearly defined boxes, as if there are clearly defined boundaries between them. In this respect, the authors later state that they prefer Moita Lopes’s (2006) concept of *indisciplinarity* (chapter 7), which, they explain, “is about a more active process of non-conformity, of resisting the straitjacket or normativity that prevails within disciplines” (p. 130), and is ideological and hybrid, giving space to other voices and knowledges. As for language education, the authors call for a decolonization of the curriculum, which, in their view, should seek to “expose students to multiple types of knowledges about language, and an agenda that

includes ways in which applied linguistics is sensitive to political and historical forces" (p. 85). This agenda, they go on to state, should be "driven not only by student agitation and other internal forces, but also by forces outside the broader sphere of the university that include, but are not restricted to, a focus on generalized colonial violence, racial discrimination in academia, and structures of global knowledge transmission" (p. 85).

When it comes to research approaches and methodologies in Applied Linguistics (chapter 6), Pennycook and Makoni criticize the ways in which such research still seeks commonalities, treats participants as objects, and "extracts" knowledge "like a raw material" (p. 115). They go on to explain that

Researching from the margins may lead to researchers being marginalized themselves in their workplace or career. The issue for us, therefore, is how research from the margins, or research from the Global South, can be mobilized to advance mainstream applied linguistics research in the Global North, and not lead to a further marginalization of these researchers (p. 121).

For Pennycook and Makoni, research from Global South perspectives should incorporate indigenous cosmovisions, go beyond white, Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies, and draw on a different set of ethical principles – such as the Maori concern for a respect for people, for generosity, and for not flaunting knowledge.

However, in spite of the fact that Makoni and Pennycook warn against colonial aspects in Applied Linguistics studies, at times they still seem to be moved by a latent desire that research should be a space for generalizations and commonalities. They wish to reconcile "local and more generalizable approaches" to research (p. 114), and question "how the varied epistemologies of the South form anything beyond a loose collection of varied ideas and goals" (p. 115), with a concern for abstraction and generalizability. While we understand this type of concern, we understand it as rooted in the authors' loci of enunciation within the Global North. In our view, scholars in the Global South – at least those working towards adopting Global South perspectives on research – do not have similar desire and concerns to those presented by Pennycook and Makoni, at least not in Brazil, which is our own locus of enunciation, as stated earlier. As we see it, what makes a project decolonial is its very existence in terms of plurality and not generalizations or commonalities. For us, southern epistemologies do form a "collection of varied ideas and goals" related to one another in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) called "relations of affinity" (rather than fidelity). Such relations are grounded in contingency rather than permanence, what comes as a natural way of developing science, a science established on conflicting paradigms, in constant need to justify and/or modify itself in relation to difference, to the possibility of being otherwise.

All things considered, the authors constantly refer to indigenous/local elements from southern thinking such as Pachamama (“interconnection between space and time with the cosmos as being in a state of constant becoming” – p.109), Ch’ixinakax utxiwa (“parallel coexistence of difference” – p. 133) and buen vivir (“time is understood cyclically rather than linearly” – p. 109), that are specifically developed in chapter 6. They also suggest the idea of Ubuntu-Neplanta to think about language otherwise: for them, this “way of thinking” (p.126) is a combination of the understandings that “languages only exist because others do” and that “languages are an unstable inbetweenness rather than firmly bounded entities” (p. 109). These are ways to approach non-western, non-european, non-northern perspectives that, alien to the Global North, go beyond the colonial project that has formed the basis of Applied Linguistics as we know it today.

The authors of *Innovations and Challenges* could be positioned as Global North academics, as they are based in two respected institutions in the geographical North and therefore speak from a place of authority conquered by the recognition of their research worldwide. However, as it becomes evident in this book, their onto-epistemologies have a lot in common with what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) describes as southern thinking, especially in their concern with the political dimension of human and non-human agency and their insistence on the need to make southern voices visible in northern AL. For this, they do mention and cite a lot of scholarly work from the Global South, but they still seem to have limited access to what is produced in many southern contexts. Such limitations seem natural, as knowledge is produced in many languages, cultures and cosmovisions that are inaccessible to us, be it because such knowledge is produced in languages we are not familiar with, or because it is out of reach due to publishing politics or the like. This is a dilemma faced by every project of inclusion or visibility. Nevertheless, as long as we drop the search for totality and recognize, as do the authors, that we are always speaking from situated, and therefore limited, perspectives, such dilemma is no longer a problem – it becomes something that needs to be acknowledged, as constantly done in *Innovations and Challenges*, but does not make any work, let alone this book, mediocre or substandard.

From our perspective, one factor that seems to be missing from the book, however, is a deeper discussion of *teaching methods*. As stated by the Pennycook and Makoni themselves, Applied Linguistics has a history of engaging with language education, and thus a book of this nature could give further attention to methods – including Kumaravadivelu’s concept of postmethod (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006). In our view, the authors’ readership would benefit greatly from a deeper

approach to these questions. In addition, as scholars from the South, we also felt that the concept of *rationality*, deeply embedded in the European Enlightenment, could have been more forceful in order to enrich the project of this book. One of the greatest critiques of decolonial theory towards modernity and coloniality is grounded on the exclusion of *emotion*, as well as other knowledges, in detriment of the modern rationality. As we understand it, there is no decolonial project without abandoning or transforming the notion of humanity that was created by the modern rationality and, for us, it requires to consider how emotion plays a significant role in our being and becoming in the world.

Another factor that seems missing from the book is the role of *resistance* in southern epistemologies. As claimed by Sousa Santos (2018), a central concern of epistemologies of the south is how people from the margins resist situations of oppression, and how they share knowledge on such resistance with one another. A focus on the alternatives developed in the Global South to deal with hegemonic onto-epistemologies from the Global North should therefore be of great value especially to southern scholars doing Applied Linguistics. We feel that *Innovations and Challenges* could benefit a lot from deepening discussions on the role of resistance in decoloniality. We, readers and scholars in the field, certainly would.

Along such lines, the authors do recommend at one point that “researchers actively choose the margins, choose to study people marginalized by society, and perceive themselves as scholars who will work for, with, and alongside communities who occupy the margins of society” (p.121). It is resistance they seem to be advancing, although not stressing it as they perhaps could. More than stating the importance of resistance, it would be a great step if they could have actually presented initiatives, attitudes and practices that resist Applied Linguistics from the Global North. In fact, we would dare to rephrase their recommendation, recommending ourselves that researchers, rather than study people from the margins and advocate for them (“work for, with and alongside”) *learn* from and with them, changing our roles as scholars into a deeply collaborative learning endeavor with those in the margins.

Rather than a book that approaches Applied Linguistics from the Global South, we read *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics from the Global South* as a deconstruction of how Applied Linguistics from the Global North has silenced other knowledges and many times stopped Applied Linguistics from realizing its own shortcomings. This reading stems from our locus of enunciation as Brazilian applied linguists, whose voices have often been invisible to northern epistemologies, even when we publish in English.

Resisting invisibility, then, has been a great part of our lives as scholars from the Global South. That is why the concept of *anancy* brought by the authors in *Innovations and Challenges* resonates in us as an effective strategy. Anancy comes from Afro-Caribbean philosophy, and has the figure of the trickster as a sort of leitmotif for the Caribbean stories: the trickster, human or non-human, “reveals non-traditional subversion” (p.113). According to Pennycook and Makoni, in such stories language plays an important role as a tool for rebelling against slavery and therefore, in their own words,

If, in applied linguistics of the Global South, we are to view language through an anancy lens, language use will be expected to be vague, ambiguous, indeterminate, multivocal, and used for subversive purposes consistent with the social objectives which the trickster aims to accomplish when seeking to survive or subvert existing power hierarchies (p.113).

Thus, language, as the main stuff of which Applied Linguistics is made, can and does work as a way to resist imprisonment of bodies and minds. Language when conceived under *anancy* lenses and related to the trickster figure, helps subvert the status quo and resist homogeneity of practices. Along similar lines, we realize, with the authors, that there is a plurality of ways to do Applied Linguistics, in Brazil and elsewhere, but our particular conceptualizations of the discipline have allowed us to share the concerns brought by Pennycook and Makoni in this book. Like them, we have also been trickstering Applied Linguistics, familiarizing with the work of other southern scholars and promoting exchanges among ourselves within Brazil. However, we are also in accord with the authors when they point out that there has been an unfortunate lack of South-South collaboration, and that the South should engage more closely with scholarship done in diverse Global South contexts.

We feel the book is a timely and much needed contribution both for applied linguists working in the Global North and for many of us also within the Global South. In other words, reading *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics from the Global South* offers valuable opportunities for challenging assumptions grounded on colonial premises, and devising ways to resist rationality, homogeneity, linearity and arrogance in our praxis.

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Onde se lia:

Clarissa Mendes Jordão*

Leia-se:

Clarissa Menezes Jordão*

Eduardo Henrique Diniz de Figueiredo**

Juliana Zeggio Martinez***

Onde se lia:

*Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PA, Brasil. clarissamjordao@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3558-5603>

Leia-se:

* Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. clarissamjordao@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3558-5603>

** Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. edward.07@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6850-0122>

*** Universidade Federal do Paraná, UFPR, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. jumartinez78@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2244-9621>