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Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta and Ana Deumert

This special issue on Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts. Towards mobile and dialogic perspectives on language puts the spotlight on the hegemonies and marginalizations of mainstream academic productions and the circulations of concepts in the contemporary fields that are labelled Multilingualism, Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, etc. Transcending the demarcations that have emerged in the Language Sciences broadly conceptualized across time, it particularly attempts to illuminate, through different scholars' engagements, the circulations of concepts inside and across academic circles located in various places on the planet, identified as central or marginal places of production of academic norms, including what is understood as global epistemic circuits.¹ Thus, this special issue attempts to address a new range of questions. The following constitutes a non-exhaustive list:

(1) To what extent is it possible to observe, beyond hegemonic productions, different types of circulations and trajectories, at different scales, including the imaginaries that create centers and margins, as well as how we understand concepts such as global, international, national, northern, and southern?

(2) To what extent can we identify and defend subjugated ideas, proposing norms from the periphery, producing alternative knowledges (in the plural), leading to parallel forms of globalizations?

(3) To what extent are such identified ideas, norms, and knowledges then marginalized, co-opted, appropriated, or re-used by academic disciplines within and across the global south/north?

The late Tope Omoniyi emphasized at an invited symposium that he organized in 2015 ('Illusions and Delusions of the Centre within the Framework of Globalization', at The Sociolinguistics of Globalization Conference, Hong Kong) the need for a debate, that

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

was long overdue, on northern versus southern understandings of ‘globalizations’ (and thus also modernities). This, he argued, includes interrogating the status of previously colonized territories, territories that are not recognized explicitly as having been colonized and the status of territories that are or are not seen as being colonizers. In the vocabularies of the late Aimé Césaire, it is only through the ‘deeping and the co-existence of all particulars’ that a meaningful and rich universal can emerge. It is thus the dialogues between the locally situated and what is glossed as the global or universal, that is meaningful. Of particular significance is that scholars with marginalized positionalities across all territories and across time have been forced to take up global and universalizing nomenclature and norms from the global north. This has led to the fact that norms, theories, and methodologies are not just dominant in academia, but are universalizing and constitute what might be understood as lingua-colonialism. Such a state of affairs plays a crucial role and concretely shapes the reproduction of national, regional, and transnational elites. It also affects the publishing possibilities that scholars have or do not have access to, given the dominant languages of publishing that constitute de facto challenges for writing and publishing, the genre-expectations of such texts, etc. In other words, discourses that have originated in older and newer academic metropolises have become naturalized as ‘global science’. While more and more is published, these publications seem to be of less and less relevance to the challenges that humanity and our planet face. Therefore, we ask what imaginaries enable such continuing universalizing reproductions and how ‘epistemologically and existentially sustainable’ such science can be (Bagga-Gupta forthcoming-b)?

The concerns that we address in this special issue relate to the increasing body of research across the last twenty years that calls for particularities and situated standpoints, knowledge and imagination (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002), the inclusion of southern voices (Connell 2007; Heugh et al. 2021), and the decolonialization of knowledge itself (Bagga-Gupta forthcoming-b; Mignolo 2009; Pennycook and Makoni 2020; Deumert, Storch, and Shepherd 2020; Deumert & Makoni forthcoming). That being the case, the stronghold of mythical universalizing academic hegemonies means that very few terms proposed by southern scholars (whether they are located within northern or southern spaces), or terms that are grounded in southern contexts, are used or circulate in fields where the language sciences (broadly conceptualized) play a role. This notwithstanding entanglements between southern and northern academic circles have been documented

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

(Kerfoot and Hyltenstam 2017). The marginalization of southern knowledges is also the case within the contemporary fields that are labelled Multilingualism, Applied Linguistics, or Sociolinguistics, etc. – either in Anglophone or, even more clearly – in Francophone traditions (Léglise 2022). Furthermore, older as well as newer concepts and theories that make claims to have global or universal relevance continue to be exported unidirectionally: from Europe or the US to other continents. These older-newer concepts and theories flourish, silencing other equally (if not more) relevant terms and conceptual currents. Linguists, more than others, it has been suggested, are facing a globalization that is nevertheless marked by an almost complete western/northern hegemony in their own fields and in the multiple fields to which they feed into (Shi-xu 2009).

By focusing on multiple mobile and dialogic – rather than global or universal – perspectives and their entanglements on a non-universalizing planetary scale, this special issue on Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts. Towards mobile and dialogic perspectives on language proposes and conceptualizes alternative perspectives that emerge from non-extractive work across northern and southern territories, voices and gazes, and experiences from the south in the north and the north in the south.² It thus attempts to go beyond and contributes to ontologies and epistemologies that have an important bearing upon both multiple perspectives as well as northern hegemonies. In this sense, this special issue calls for and contributes towards multidirectional sciences (in the plural) that are of relevance to the multidisciplinary domains of the Language Sciences where knowledges rooted in western/northern experiences and traditions are simply part of the palette of knowledges.

With this as an overarching introduction, we present a short reflection first on the journey of this special issue, then our own ways of framing mobile and dialogic gazing, including our positionalities before introducing the ‘six plus two papers’ that make up this special issue.

After years of collaboration with colleagues from Amazonian and Caribbean academic circles³, regular meetings with colleagues dealing with multilingualism from various places (and especially from the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research, University of the Western Cape and Centre for Research on Bilingualism in Stockholm), as a member of the Southern Multilingualisms and Diversities consortium (SMDC)⁴ and because of her own experience struggling to navigate within scholarship

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

between several languages and academic traditions and measuring discriminations and coloniality at play at various levels, Isabelle Léglise was particularly attentive to scientific claims and literature regarding marginalized voices and epistemic violence in Academia. When she was invited to write a paper in France on sociolinguistic issues linked to, as they called it 'exotic fieldworks' in mid-2010s, she realized how little southern theory and epistemologies, subaltern, postcolonial, and decolonial voices and traditions of thought were known among her Parisian colleagues. She set out to make these voices heard within French academia through publications (Léglise 2017) but also through her monthly seminar on language practices as social practices that had, at that time, a 15-year history. Although awareness regarding these issues within the little group of close colleagues and students in this seminar was high, not least because of participants' minoritized backgrounds within French academia, she found the level of awareness within other circles continued to be dismal. Isabelle then decided to address the issue of erasure in itself. In order to contribute from her positionality to contemporary debates, not least since she had started meeting social scientists working on the circulations of knowledge and academic elites through the Federation of Research Centers on Social Sciences and Global South F3S regularly. She began working on concepts rooted in southern experiences and their circulations (or erasures) within academic circles and particularly in the Francophone academic circles (Léglise 2022).

At the June 2018 Sociolinguistic Symposium in Auckland, New Zealand where more scholars from Australia and Asia than usual could attend, two sessions were particularly meaningful for Isabelle Léglise. She approached and discussed her concerns first with Ana Deumert, Alan Carneiro, and Sifree Makoni after attending their double panel on 'Sociolinguistics and Southern Theory – Voices, Questions and Alternative', and thereafter with Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta after attending her critical co-authored paper on the genesis and trajectory of Translanguaging across the globe and into Swedish spaces.

Ana Deumert's panel included many voices contesting a Euro-centric perspective on organizing academic conferences and regimenting science. The visibly limited number of colleagues attending the 2018 Sociolinguistic Symposium from across eastern/southern territories meant that issues regarding western/northern hegemonies could no longer be ignored. Many African colleagues whose papers were accepted, for instance, could not present because they lacked financial possibilities for their travels. Isabelle Léglise invited Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta, Ana Deumert, Sifree Makoni, and Alan Carneiro to par-

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)
Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283
DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

ticipate in a panel at a conference on the 'GlobalizationS and Circulations of Ideas, Knowledges and Norms' within the F3S in Paris in September 2019 that she was co-organizing to get these ideas to travel to Paris.

Ana Deumert's experience of the New Zealand conference was one of deep discomfort. As the organizer of the panel 'Sociolinguistics and Southern Theory – Voices, Question and Alternatives', she had tried for more than a year to find financial support for colleagues from the global south. Although the registration fee was waived, this did not address the challenges of travel costs and accommodation. In the end, she was able to raise funds for accommodation, but travel costs proved to be a stumbling block. As a result, and as noted above, the panel was characterized by too many absent voices, which are, however, made visible in a subsequent publication (Deumert and Makoni forthcoming). The importance of physical presence at professional events is evident in the fact that this special issue emerged out of in-person conversations at the conference. Yet, to attend conferences in-person can be difficult – if not impossible – for scholars from the global south: 'international' conferences still take place predominately in northern spaces and charge increasingly unaffordable fees in euros or dollars. The materialities of participation were also at the centre of discussions at the Sociolinguistic Symposium in Ghent (2022), but solutions proved elusive. In addition, one also needs to be cognizant of the fact that the climate catastrophe asks one to avoid, as much as possible, long-distance travel. All this raises an important question: how can north–south conversations take place when taking these challenges into account? Might we need to re-imagine our work maybe more radically? This does not mean moving conferences online – an approach that many tried during the COVID-19 pandemic and that has, overall, not been fully successful. Currently, some conferences use hybrid formats which, however, lead to new forms of inclusion/exclusion: those who cannot afford the travel costs and full registration fees often tend to present online and are not part of the important 'side-events' at conferences; for instance, the conversations during breaks and in the evenings, conversations which are part of academic engagement and which are important for making connections across academic spaces. Ana has reflected on her positionality in several places: on her political engagement, her experience in the academy, her desire for cross-generational knowledge formation (in Deumert and Makoni forthcoming), as well on her position in the academy and her intellectual resistance to any grand theories, universalizing statements and the perform-

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

ance of academic expertness and fluency (Deumert forthcoming, Mabandla and Deumert forthcoming).

Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta's experiences across time and her nomadic existence both across spaces as well as across disciplinary enclaves made her cognizant early as a senior (albeit biologically young) scholar in a purportedly global North setting, her privileged-marginal voice and the potential need to disturb fossilized ways of academia. Unwittingly, she found herself troubling hegemonies in various ways, not least through her publications that did not get an up-take initially since she was considered 'too multi-disciplinary' and furthermore, did not follow mainstream concepts or references; instead she nurtured a troubling stance with her doctoral students at international workshops and conferences both in Sweden and in mainstream conferences across the globe across the Language Sciences, Educational Sciences, Disability Studies and Migration and Ethnicity Studies. Her encounters with colleagues who shared similar concerns in 2014 at AILA in Brisbane and the subsequent formation of the Southern Multilingualism and Diversities Consortium in 2014 in Adelaide brought further home her insider-outsider positionalities everywhere, all the time. Sangeeta's subsequent meetings with Isabelle, Ana, and Sinfree at the 2018 Sociolinguistic Symposium in Auckland where she had organized a double panel on Deaf Studies and Language Studies opened up possibilities that lay in creating critical work with others who had formulated similar concerns in different ways.⁵ One of the prime reasons she organized this event in Auckland in 2018 was the conference theme: Crossing Borders: South, North, East, and West. She had been experimenting since the late 1990s with creating small-scale workshops, conferences that were multilingual in English, Swedish, Swedish Sign Language, and International Signing and then working bilaterally with research environments in Mexican and Indian spaces with multilingual presentations. The double panel in New Zealand was multilingual in a mainstream conference setting and resulted in a double special issue of the *Deafness and Education International* journal in 2019.⁶ Sangeeta's epistemological concerns can be gauged in questions like the following: what articulations and sensibilities can be exploited to forge new alliances across continents, across historical trajectories, across disciplinary silos, across language areas and societal sectors, and across academic hierarchies? What ways can normal-languaging and normal-diversities be articulated in the scholarship to trouble the banal monopoly of monolingual-hegemonies, written and oral languaging biases and white superiority she was privy to through her work as a senior scholar, mentor, and teacher, as well as the world citizen she considers herself to be? While not

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

denying the power of face-to-face meetings, Sangeeta's efforts have been augmented by both her scholarly interests in the areas of (multilingual and multimodal) digitalization and the deployment of digital resources to experiment with and create more inclusive multilingual research events across borders since the last 15 years. Identifying resources to enable such events across continents physically and in digital spaces is an ongoing long-term effort in her research environment.

Even though Isabelle Léglise succeeded in finding financial support for her colleagues to come to Paris in September 2019, she struggled to make the conference co-organized multilingual. She had to present strong arguments to her co-organizers from other disciplines in social sciences in favor of accepting papers in different languages. While resistance towards the hegemony of English in academia is very common among French scholars, its less recognized downside is the non-circulation of ideas and a compartmentalization of our fields, she argued. Her efforts paid off and English and Spanish were accepted along with French. Isabelle organized and financed simultaneous translations as an inclusive stance that could enable a circulation of ideas. The panel 'Circulation and trajectories of Southern concepts in the fields of Multilingualism, Language and Education' and discussions when preparing it with her team of young scholars proved highly interesting. In her view, the Paris conference was successful since simultaneous translations gave access to the circulation of ideas and contestations. Sifree Makoni for e.g. was able to listen to and discuss with Francophone Africans and challenge common assumptions within French academia. An historian scholar discussed the subversive potential of our panel's claims. During the Paris panel, Sifree suggested the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* as a key journal to push our ideas forward. We sent in some first notes as a Special Issue idea.

A few months later, the first COVID-19 wave struck the planet. Although some Parisian colleagues found that lockdown was a golden age, away from teaching and where 'everybody published double as much', Isabelle experienced lockdown differently: massive mental overload due to working more than usual, home-schooling her children, hours of remote connections sometimes with limited internet capacity in projects with colleagues in Brazil and Cambodia and issues of mental health impacting her family and friends. Teaching and mentoring also meant helping students from various backgrounds stuck in small rooms with no family around and no financial support from the State. This led to, for example, the creation of a student NGO to provide free food for thousands of students⁷ in Paris. This constitutes a good example of issues well known in the global south that

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)
Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283
DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

now impacted the northern hemisphere especially for marginalized populations (see also Sangeeta's introduction in the 2022 double special issue of *Bandung Journal of the Global South* where she highlights her predicament in the spaces of affluent Sweden in similar lines; <https://brill.com/view/journals/bjgs/9/1-2/bjgs.9.issue-1-2.xml>).

Ana Deumert's experience of lockdown meant a very heavy load, not only with regard to teaching (which had moved online at great speed), but also with regard to supporting students and colleagues emotionally. The psychological toll of the pandemic was immense: as one was trying to support others, one also suffered, dealt with illness and death as well as the isolation of lockdown. Today, it feels strange to think that just a year ago, we did not travel, we avoided interaction, and we didn't know when it would end. The 'slow emergencies' of racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and the climate catastrophe came into sharp relief during these three years (see Deumert and Makoni forthcoming for a more detailed discussion). COVID-19 also meant a broad shift to digital modes of engagement – while some have embraced these as opportunities for global collaboration, others have found the online space unproductive for the deep political work that needs to be done. And, while working from home did afford space to read, the fact that reading had to happen online created its own challenges – increased screen-time affected eyes and minds. With this pandemic now officially behind us, Ana often asks herself: What have we learned? What will we do differently in the future? Or are we just going back to the super-exploitation of people and the planet?

In February 2020, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta and her team of roughly 15 doctoral students, post-doctoral colleagues and colleagues from other societal sectors in Sweden were working in Mumbai, India with various projects. In particular, Sangeeta's research environment co-organized its international conference *LeadMe* (www.ju.se/ccd/leadme2020) together with partners from the Department of Mass Media at KC College, Mumbai University. After the conference, different sub-teams left for Sweden after completing their projects in a staggered fashion. The sudden and severe lockdown imposed in March 2020 however stopped Sangeeta from returning back. During her several months, severe lockdown (she was not allowed to leave the flat where she stayed in a multi-storied building for the first few months), she became privy to insights that have clearly changed her scholarly priorities. Digitalization enabled her to work seven days a week for the entire period of her lockdown existence in Mumbai. During this time,

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

she participated in Sinfree Makoni's weekly global forum seminars, read volumes online enabled through her home library in Sweden in preparation for the seminars, worked on at least five individual studies, two special issues and created other academic constellations. She collaborated with Alan Carneiro at this juncture as a reviewer team for a special issue of the *International Journal of Multilingualism* offering critical insights into an area of her expertise – Deaf Studies (Bagga-Gupta and Carneiro 2021). The double special issue of *Bandung Journal of the Global South* (2022, 1-2) was curated during the pandemic enabling the participation of scholars from all corners of the planet, as were her two studies in it (Bagga-Gupta 2022, Bagga-Gupta & Kamei 2022). Working mediated through stable digital resources in a southern territory, in strict lockdown conditions brought home a number of insights – professional and existential. The morality, poverty, and richness of privileges and marginalizations everywhere on the planet were critically one of these.

The severe challenges (and unique possibilities) that the pandemic brought with it, meant that we were not able to complete the proposal for the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* Special Issue until the start of 2021. The proposal was accepted in April 2021, and we published an open call for papers in June 2021. This was circulated widely and we received a large number of proposals. At that time, we hoped to receive first draft submissions in March 2022. Although we received some, the second and third pandemic waves shaped the continuing trajectory of the Special Issue and many people could not participate. Across the planet, the pandemic affected scholars and academics severely and differently, as our own three experiences are testimony to. As a community we lost colleagues and friends, faced significantly increased workloads due to online teaching and administration, many struggled with issues of health and well-being, and for too many scholars those were also times of economic hardship. The Janus' face of privileges and marginalizing effects continued.

We are now in early 2023 finalizing this special issue after participating in a lot of digital exchanges, some online meetings, and our journey as editors, reading and discussing the manuscripts remotely across time spaces. The final form of the special issue is based on eight papers, this introduction and a postscript. This special issue deals with reflections grounded in various academic circles and on our own local and mobile experiences from nation-state places as diverse as Angola, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, France, India, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay, etc. All three of us, including the authors of the papers in this special issue, live nomadic lives at least within the

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)

Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283

DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

scholarship. We live and exist in one or more than one nation-state contexts, and we work regularly across one or more than one other nation-state territories. Furthermore, there is a dialectic that this Special Issue attempts to address. On the one hand, we believe strongly with the need to say from where we speak or from where we gaze, reflect on our positionalities, and address local theories and standpoints. On the other hand, we need at a certain stage to say something on global relations of power and hegemonies within academia, and their effect on the local, from the place we stand but also from what we understand of other voices – in order to initiate and carry out a conversation without silencing other voices or letting our own voices become erased. Offering a non-universalizing stance, mobile and dialogic perspectives on knowledges from the particularities of local knowledges enables a polyphony of situated voices and gazing and the need for intercultural translations.

We identify three main points of convergence between the texts that are part of this special issue and that are intertwined with one another:

First, our special issue deals with the circulation of concepts such as: in the paper by Isabelle Léglise, *sumak kawsay/buen vivir* and translanguaging from southern or marginalized experiences to the north and back, or, such as in the paper by Marcelyn Oostendorp, linguistic repertoires from data from the south to conceptualization in the north and back to southern academic circles and also, in the paper by Raquel Carinhas, Maria Helena Araújo e Sá and Danièle Moore the circulation of Plurilingual education as a concept from the north to the south and new participatory experiences from Uruguay. This Special issue also revisits old concepts of language, identity, culture, hunger, international, in the paper by Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta, identity and community in the paper of Raquel Carinhas, Maria Helena Araújo e Sá, and Danièle Moore in light of the multilingual-, boundary – and mobility-turns (in the words of Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta) and taking into account subaltern, postcolonial, and decolonial voices (in the words of Isabelle Léglise) or meta-intercultural ontologies or South-South inter-epistemic dialogue (as claimed by Hamza R'boul's paper) but it also proposes, following Alan Carneiro's paper discomfort as a new epistemological tool to rethink marginalized positions.

Second, our special issue deals with the need to fight or deconstruct hegemonies as the sidelining of southern thinking in Marcelyn Oostendorp's paper, the erasure of southern debts and origins through translation and circulation in Isabelle Léglise's paper, and a sharp reminder of marginalizations everywhere across time in Sangeeta

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)
Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283
DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

Bagga-Gupta's paper. It critically assesses the silencing and excluding of heterogeneous language repertoires, reproducing colonial asymmetries in indigenous education in Mexico as illustrated by Susana Ayala, Valeria Rebolledo, and Elsie Rockwell and also addresses the metapragmatics of knowledge production systems in order to avoid their misrecognition as in Alan Carneiro's paper.

Third, and through the above, the participants in this special issue contribute to propose other ways of thinking, to offer a critical gaze from the south in Marcelyn Oostendorp's paper, as the need to listen to postcolonial and decolonial voices as a polyphonic academic world in Isabelle Léglise's paper, as engaging analytically with global-centric (rather than global, universal) epistemologies in Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta's paper, as the importance of revoicing our conceptualizations of plurilingual education to include the discourses, multisensory experiences and stories of diversely situated social actors in Raquel Carinhas, Maria Helena Araújo e Sá, and Danièle Moore's paper. In Alan's Carneiro words, this relates to proposing alternative and transdisciplinary epistemologies of diversity and a transhistoric and transtopical way of positioning, that offers a potential alternative for bringing about change. In Hamza R'boul words, problematizing equality and international relations leads to reconciliation among cultures for ensuring a smooth functioning.

The rest of the issue is organized as follows (for space reasons, the first two papers are part of Issue II, this volume):

Alan Carneiro: Following the path of otherwise: subalternized subjects, academic writing, and the political power of discomfort

Hamza R'boul: Epistemological plurality in intercultural communication knowledge

Isabelle Léglise: Circulation of concepts, compartmentalisation and erasures in Western academic circles: *sumak kawsay/buen vivir* and translanguaging

Marcelyn Oostendorp: Linguistic repertoires: South/North trajectories and entanglements

Maria Bäcke: 'Let the Settlers Set Sail:' The Global North and the Global South in the Literary Works of Angola's Agualusa and Ondjaki and in the Academic Research Drawing on Their Work

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)
Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283
DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

Raquel Carinhas, Maria Helena Araújo e Sá, and Danièle Moore: Re-voicing conceptualizations of plurilingual education: 'El plurilingüismo, este concepto de ... ¿cómo se puede decir?'

Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta: Troubling circulating discourses on planet earth. Attending to complexities through a mobile-loitering gaze

Susana Ayala-Reyes, Valerio Rebolledo-Angulo and Elsie Rockwell: Voices silenced by written texts: indigenous languages encountering standardization

Sinfree Makoni, Cristine Severo, and Ashraf Abdelhay: The politics of Southern research in language studies

Notes

1. No single terminology is perfect to grasp the diversity of experiences in the geopolitics of knowledge production as well as various forms of discriminations within academic circles. If we try to avoid the use of the four cardinal points – north-south-east-west, we must sometimes refer to the terminologies circulating in the literature such as the global/Global South/south and also the Global/global north/North as a historical provider of norms identified in Western academic traditions. See among others, discussions in Bagga-Gupta (forthcoming-a), Heugh et al. (2021).
2. This, as some have pointed out, can be called a global-centric stance (see Bagga-Gupta, this issue).
3. On the one hand through her own scientific cooperation in Brazil, French Guiana and Suriname and on the other, through Creole studies networks such as the SCL (Society for Caribbean Linguistics).
4. A 'group of sociolinguists and applied linguists who work in multilingual contexts around the world and who collaborate with research groups and/or centres with a focus on multilingualism. Our first interest is in the experiences, knowledge and expertise that southern and marginalised communities have of multilingualism and diversity. Our second interest is in how the knowledge and expertise of southern and marginalised communities may contribute to global understandings of diversity. Our third interest is in how knowledge and expertise may be exchanged in reciprocal and respectful ways among marginal and mainstream communities located in southern and northern settings of the world.' (<https://webdevtestsite>).

Isabelle Léglise, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta & Ana Deumert (2022)
Transcending circulations of southern and northern concepts: introducing mobile and dialogic perspectives on language, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17:4, 273-283
DOI:10.1080/17447143.2023.2206385

wordpress.com)

5. The double panel was unique in that it brought together junior and senior scholars from Scandinavian contexts who were deaf and hearing, and wherein all but one participant was a user of a national sign language. Sinfree was one of the two commentators.
6. 2019, 21(2-3) <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ydei20/21/2-3>. Of interest for present purposes is that the journal has a dual editorship handled from the north and the south.
7. On the right to food and access to food in a Hungry France (see Bonzi 2019)

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