

Introduction

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Recent developments in sociolinguistically informed applied linguistics have grappled with the language/context relationship. Instead of seeing variables which correlate with determinate social categories (class/gender/age) we now see questions of indexicality and scale, power and ideology shaping interaction in dynamic, emergent, performative and co-produced relationships. This is a more dynamic and socially accountable version of the language/context relationships, making visible the highly significant ways that language shapes the social and vice versa. Typically these insights have emanated from the intellectual centers of the North. In this special issue we gather perspectives from the South and from the periphery, shifting the gaze from center/periphery to periphery/center, asking what these perspectives can bring to a socially responsible, politically active and visionary applied linguistics. Contributions address topics, some familiar in applied linguistics, some less so: language policy, literacy, multilingual community interpreting, performance, youth culture, racism, non-normative sexuality. What they have in common is an aim to do so from another angle, with a de-familiarizing gaze. They aim to show how language dynamically contributes to the emergence and shaping of social spaces which in different ways are theoretically sensitized to and speaking back to power which comes from elsewhere.

Periphery we argue is a concept which can only be understood in relation to an imagined center. These are notions which are brought into being relationally and contrived through power infused practices. They are reflective of a pervasive modernist dichotomic logic, which still shapes social life in many spheres (gender, sexuality, race, language, religion etc.) and which involves a scalar social dimension, creating parameters to oppose norm (center) and its deviation (periphery). The center is characterized by the accumulation of highly-valued resources of all kinds, material, cultural, technological, discursive, linguistic, which are missing or present in unequal degrees in the periphery. The tensions between these parameters, which are both topographic and symbolic, and the inequalities they engender, have historically forged the basis of capitalist societies and modernity.

Periphery-center as a concept encompasses a social spatial scale at a particular time, defined by relations of exploitation / economic injustice and symbolic domination, enacted by the center in reference to the periphery. That is not to say however that the periphery is always subjected to the center in a well-sedimented type of connection or that these periphery-center relations cannot be altered. Empires fall and resistance has always been present in the periphery. There have always been socio-political gaps through which these relations of exploitation can be subtly flouted or openly fought against.

Historically, the great navigations of the 15th and 16th century gave birth to the beginning of globalization. This traumatic process created Europe as West (Venn, 2000). The westernization of the world ('Occidentalism') has been constructed by the 'conquest' of the so-called New World, named as such by the *conquistadores* since these lands were hardly new to their indigenous communities or inhabitants. Westernization has been directed by colonialist projects which Venn (2000: 19) refers to as "the becoming-modern of the world" or "the becoming-West of Europe: such that Western modernity gradually became established as the privileged, if not hegemonic, form of sociality, tied to a universalizing and totalizing ambition". This imposed hegemony motivated a predominant logic against which alterities were fabricated and measured.

The social consequences of colonialism are still present around the world. This long historical period, also called the Modernization of the world, constructed what Bauman and Briggs (2003) have referred to as the Voices of Modernity, indexing discourses of 'purity' and 'faultlessness' in reference to what was then fabricated as constituting the West. These discourses have been prevalent in the prefiguration of the essentialist ideals of 'perfect' and 'pure' language (Spanish, Portuguese, English etc., i.e. colonial languages), race (white), gender (male), sexuality (heterosexuality), religion (Christianity), which still operate around the world. We will see traces of these essentialist ideals and their critique in many of the papers in this special issue.

These ideologies have been determined by the encounters of colonial metropolitan centers with otherness, typically peripheral others, which were /are then replicated by the colonized elites. Colonial contacts nevertheless have originated "contact zones" (Pratt, 1987), "hybrid cultures" (Canclini, 1989), "mestizo thought" (Gruzinski, 1999), "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2000), or what the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade (1928/1976) has referred to as an "Anthropophagic process": moments when whatever came from the center was cannibalized and transformed in the periphery.

These are views which question the ideologies of 'faultlessness' and 'purity' as an integral part of colonialist projects, and which are also above all useful to challenge and disrupt still existing essentialist orders related to language, gender, race,

sexuality, culture etc. Although de-essentialization as an argument is well-aligned with contemporary theorizing of social life in general, it is a practice which has been ahead of theory for those who have experienced life in the periphery. They are constantly having to re-describe themselves in view of their zone-crossing, hybrid, mestizo, border and anthropophagic lives. This is a phenomenon also now present in the center as will be argued in this issue. Periphery dwellers are used to de-stabilizing the forms of life, which are constitutive of themselves and as such they have managed to act in novel ways. It is in this connection that “the earliest history of travel, exploration and colonialism has always entailed various kinds of serendipitous, mutual, strategic and subversive cross-cultural borrowings and more transgressive masquerades” (Coombes & Brah, 2000: 10). Life in the periphery is then rescued from a traditional passive role view and is reread through an agentive lens, which repositions it as active and resistant. Such a position fractures the ‘Occidental’ metanarrative (Mignolo, 2000) and opens the ground for imagining things otherwise, for reinventing life or for cannibalizing what comes from the metropolitan center.

This framework is one which at the same time that it operates with the distinction of center and periphery, has tried to show how this distinction has been blurred. It is difficult to keep such a ‘dichotomy’ separate because of the very nature of capitalism, which invades and commodifies even resistant forms, and also because of the very nature of human cultural contact. If the traditional distinction between center and periphery could be treated as somewhat separate until the second half of the twentieth century (Mignolo, 2000), such a difference has become more and more flexible and difficult to sustain from the last third of that century onwards:

The emergence of global colonialism, managed by transnational corporations, erased the distinction that was valid for early forms of colonialism and the colonality of power ... Yesterday [colonial difference] was out there, away from the center. Today it is all over, in the peripheries of the center and in the centers of the periphery. (Mignolo, 2000: ix)

In a multipolar globalized world the centre is in the periphery and the periphery is in the so-called centre nations: fluxes of people, cultural artifacts, texts, languages etc. have contributed to the construction of superdiverse cities (Vertovec, 2007). Center and periphery must be seen in terms of the fluxes and flows and highly differentiated levels of resources which shape and determine spaces and access to them: it is quite possible for the marginalized peripherals to be peripheral in centers, just as those in the center, through luxury tourism, commerce and indeed the mobility of aid organizations can fleetingly inhabit peripheries.

We live in a neo-liberal order which favours the privatisation of public enterprises, the deregulation of financial markets, enormous bank gains etc. Center and

periphery are consequently more and more inseparable and are at the service of these neo-liberal parameters. It is a world in which human needs essential for life, from water supply to health and educational services can be commodified. Inequality is taken for granted.

It follows from the above that meanings and practices which exist in the periphery are potentially also present in the center and vice-versa, although their performative effects are obviously localized and different. In an intense globalized world, which makes meanings, finance, commodities, languages, people, texts, images operate in a constant, rapid and constitutive state of mobility and flow made possible by technology, SpaceTime scales have been amazingly compressed. If migration has always been present in the way people moved here and there in search for a better life, it is now a much easier process despite the dangers of border-crossing or the carefully contrived securitization measures which exclude the many. The ex-colonial centers have been populated by people from the periphery whose presence has itself made life in these centers superdiverse. If hybridity, border thinking, contact zones, *métissage*, anthropophagic processes etc. were typical of life in the periphery, they are also now distinctively present in the center. And this is also happening in former colonial peripheries, such as Brazil, which is also receiving immigration from other more peripheral countries: right wing groups in Brazil have been campaigning against the increasing presence of recent immigration from Haiti, Bolivia, Syria. All this globalized mobility in many ways has threatened the cherished nineteenth century imagined concept of the nation (Anderson, 1983), has enlarged our possibilities of understanding the world through the profusion of discourses we are continually being exposed to and has brought to our attention the fact that increasingly we can see, across borders, our common humanity (Santos, 2000). However, it has also given rise to: bigoted reactions to the relative 'acceptance' of difference in racial, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, religious, cultural etc. terms in recent times, gains achieved by social movements which have influenced sectors of life in different parts of the globe; national political decisions backed up by a surprising number of the population in many parts of the world who have voted for or supported conservative and right wing politics and their consequent construction of racist, anti-feminist, anti-LGBT, anti-indigenous and anti-immigration discourses in these countries and elsewhere, enabled through social media and globalization flows.

We argue in this issue for the relevance for applied linguistics for considering the construction of meaning in the periphery and their performative effects. If on the one hand this world, including the on-line world, is blurring borders of all kinds (Mignolo, 2000; Heller, 2011) and demands new theories, methodologies, perspectives and categories to be understood (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Wang, Spotti, Juffermans, Cornips, Kroon, & Blommaert, 2014), on the other,

awareness of the recent conservative reactions towards progressive policy changes create a challenge for an Applied Linguistics engaged in a culture of politically committed research (Moita-Lopes, 2012).

Fluidity/mobility is unequally distributed, more easily accessed by those in the center: their bodies and thoughts travel across the world by the mere touch of a computer key or on jet planes. Although locality has been said to be a synonym for poverty (Bauman, 1998), those in the periphery, it is argued, find alternatives for their lives through access to technology (which is cheaper and cheaper on mobile screens), liaison with what Hardt and Negri (2005: 12) have called the multitude (“different ways of living, different views of the world and different desires”) as well as with other resources. Researchers in different fields and in diverse parts of the world (Souza Santos, 2008; Santos, 2000; for example) have argued that hope for our world is in the minds and hearts of those who live in the periphery: almost as if there were a total disbelief in or tiredness with the alternatives put forward by those who dominate the center with doctrines of neo-liberalism and austerity. Life in the margins and marginalized lives, with their social, cultural, sexual, racial, gender dimensions and their intersectionalities provide unique insights, which can actually illuminate life possibilities beyond the limits of the periphery because the understandings of those in the margins have been less affected, imprisoned or colonized by the hegemony of modernity (Bauman 1992; Venn, 2000; Bauman & Briggs 2003; Souza Santos, 2008), creating alternatives in the cracks of the neo-liberal world order. By focusing on meaning-making in the periphery, this issue of AILA Review aims at bringing to light how people in the margins in their performativities in discourse and in different situated contexts (online and offline) have been able to speak back, inaugurate new meanings about who they are or can become, bringing about alternative futures: a crucial demand in times, intellectually and morally bankrupted by neo-liberalism and austerity.

The contributions

Lepännen and Westinen’s paper emphasises the affective dimension of belonging and marginalisation as expressed in “migrant rap”, reminding us that peripheries and margins are dynamic, relational and historically situated, involving processes of marginalisation and exclusion. Musical and verbal performance genres like hip hop create a commentary from the margins on central constructs like nation, community and belonging, yet also participate in a globalised, rhizomatic network which is itself transnational, centred and centering. Belonging can include belonging beyond the boundaries of the nation state which positions the recently arrived

as peripheral: belonging both to local (Finnish) and globalised networks whose affiliation is to the margins. Social media such as YouTube are appropriated as a space of play for the globalising marginal performance and its reception. Bizzyiam's video is a speaking back to the exclusion of racist discourse, but interestingly a speaking back that is largely performed in Finnish, the national language. We see in the reception from different groups of Bizzyiam's video how it performatively constitutes a new center both in relation to the hip hop scene but more widely in its critical positioning vis à vis the racist core of nationalism. Speaking back involves creating a new center, triggering among others the hate discourse of racist responses, which are then countered and opposed by other responses.

Guimarães and Moita-Lopes's paper engages with the intersection of race and sexuality as a working class, gay black school student Luan performatively constructs his identities face to face at school and on-line on social media. Using the cheap mobile technology available to him, Luan constructs a seductively sexualised self on-line and strongly resists comments posted by a white schoolmate which criticise his self presentation, positioning him along racial lines as black trying to be white: the black body subjected to the white gaze. He confidently asserts his own way of being black both on-line and in the classroom, speaking back to being racially positioned along dimensions of race, gender and sexuality in ways that emphasise his self-authoring. In numerous dimensions of his life, including his schooling, Luan is on the margins. However his ironic and nuanced on-line identity performances position him centrally as a star in the social media spaces that he inhabits.

Singh and Bartlett's paper emphasises the historically contingent character of the center/periphery construct through a consideration of the changing situation of the island they focus on, Barra in the Hebrides, from mediaeval maritime hub to marginalised periphery in a United Kingdom. Yet the mobility of locals as they travel to centers for work brings back know-how of the operation of centers that can inform local decision-making. The paper is further situated in the current political uncertainty and turmoil, which the authors characterize as "heightened scale uncertainty", affecting the UK. The paper argues for the complexity and dynamism of scale as a construct, showing how speaking back to centers of power through imagining a future constitutes a new center precisely through contesting the future. The analysis shows through a focus on indexicality and narrative how community organizers recognize the importance of the polycentricity and multi-scalarity of the political spaces within which they operate. They focus on the phenomenon of "upscaling" to show how community organizers must learn the language of the funders to tap into grants effectively.

Wang and Kroon engage with the marketization of heritage, the bringing together of centers and peripheries through the medium of tourism. This leads

the Tujia of Enshi, a minority people in China to engage in the performance of authenticity in the service of heritage tourism. This performance of authenticity is managed and directed from the center, creating a kind of spectacle of authenticity. It is through performances of authenticity of the sort that the Tujia can attract to themselves some of the goods and benefits of global flows. In order to understand how the linguistic/discursive/semiotic processes operate in these performances of authenticity, Wang and Kroon draw on the notion of the chronotope.

Da Costa Cabral and Martin Jones again situate their study historically, adopt a “*longue durée*” approach to their consideration of language policy in Timor Leste, identifying changes in center/periphery dynamics since the 16th century onwards. Portuguese, the language of colonialism is reinflected vis à vis Indonesian through its role in the resistance struggle. Portuguese is a link to a language used in a range of lusophone countries round the world. The languages of other more local centers, Indonesia and Australia, both in different ways perceived politically as threats and as essential local neighbours, are assigned to the role of working languages. These decisions are crucial to the way that the newly independent state defines itself as a “center in the periphery” through positioning itself and designing its future in geopolitical and linguistic terms which thus resignifies Portuguese away from being simply a language of colonialism.

In Ballena and Unamuno’s paper the focus is on writers from the indigenous Wichi community of Argentina finding a voice to write in Wichi. This is a speaking back to a monolingual national ideology. Writing performance in Wichi on FaceBook is contested by monolingual Spanish-speaking respondents who challenge the communicative use of Wichi they encounter. Ballena and Unamuno find the emergence, on social media of writing with the Wichi voice, an “agency of voice” and a speaking out, which transforms Wichi writing into a means of communicating Wichi meanings and Wichi identity. We see this interactively when non Wichi speakers effectively challenge on-line use of Wichi. This speaking back in Wichi effectively indexes a nascent “center in the periphery” a point of strength from which Wichi speakers can begin to contest dominant language ideologies.

Baynham and Hanusova focus on the contingent and relational character of the center/periphery dynamic, showing how this operates in the interactional construction of a literacy/translation event. A Slovak Roma client seeks help in drafting a letter concerning renewal of his driving license to the Czech authorities. His non-standard Slovak inflected language is repeatedly othered in relation to standard forms of Czech. In a surprising twist, once the letter has been written, it turns out that UK legal procedure requires that the letter must be composed in English in accordance with legal procedures before it can be translated into Czech. So while non standard Slovak inflected Czech is hierarchically ordered in relation to Standard Czech, Standard Czech is then hierarchically ordered in relation to

English and in particular English legal procedures. This shows how center/periphery relations are fluid, interactionally accomplished in the course of the literacy/translation event.

Stroud and Williams's paper focuses on the theme of "imagining futures". How do we imagine multilingualism not as a hierarchical sorter and categorizer of persons, but as an instrument of human mutuality? To do this is as it were to wrench multilingualism as a construct away from center-oriented thinking and re-imagine it from the point of view of the periphery: Afrikaans, the language of apartheid oppression is reconfigured as Afrikaaps. In the first scenario, an analysis of a video produced as part of the protests at Stellenbosch University, the pain is embodied, that of the black body subjected to a white gaze, again a theme we have come across in Leppanen and Westinnen and Guimarães and Moita-Lopes's papers. Pain is embodied but also linguistic, which Stroud and Williams term "linguistic racialization". In the case of Afrikaaps as performed in the "Hiphopera" analyzed here, a stigmatized variety of Afrikaans is wrenched away from the purist linguistic ideology that others it and asserted as a variety in its own right, a form of re-signifying that we have seen repeatedly in the papers in this issue. The periphery through speaking back resignifies language varieties and the indexical orders that position them hierarchically. Stroud and Williams argue that Afrikaaps brings about a reconnection of language with the black body, which in the Stellenbosch example has othered it. In a sense the analysis of the Hiphopera closes the circle initiated by Bizzyiam's video performance: the issue starts and finishes with performance.

In this volume thus we have drawn together contributions that illustrate the significance of the center/periphery construct and its linguistic/discursive/semiotic enactments to substantive issues in applied linguistics: the study of popular cultural and social media, race, sexual and gender performativities, community activism, heritage tourism, language policy and planning, literacy and translation. In doing so we have also tried to further problematize the center/periphery construct with views and perspectives from the periphery, taking into account the global flows of people, goods, ideas and information that shape the world we live in and its sharp structural inequalities. We have seen how the center/periphery dynamic is relational, historicized, contingent and contested, also trying to hold onto the utopian task of imagining futures, which is a task for applied linguistics generally, of asserting our common humanity in the face of de-humanizing neo-liberal distortions of the economy and social life that for many decades have seemed unchallengeable, yet which recently have strangely and unexpectedly shown signs of crumbling due no doubt to its inherent contradictions, suggesting that there is still the possibility of speaking back from the margins and being heard, of finding a voice to do so and that committed applied linguistic research has a part to play in this.

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