

Linguistically World-Travelling' and Speaking in a Bifid Tongue: Contributions of a Latina decolonial feminist reconceptualization of the self to rethink multilingualism in a decolonial vein

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Abstract

This article draws a connection between Latina decolonial feminist reconceptualization of the relational and multiplicitous nature of the self, and the project and possibilities of rethinking the role of multilingualism in promoting epistemic justice and the reconstitution of the communal. In particular, the author dwells into Maria Lugones's border dwelling 'world-traveling' modality (1987) of moving between mutually exclusive selves, and its linguistic possibilities to make room to multiple ontologies of speakers and languages, where the idea of language and speaker move in a process of complex communication. The goal is to extend this Latina decolonial feminist understanding of a new kind of self« with an ambiguous, fluid identity, and who experiences a sense of constant in-betweenness that fosters unique modes of meaning-making« which can offer a lens to interpret the possibilities for interrupting a modern/colonial 'bifid tongue' sense of multilingualism tied to a bordered conceptualization of languages, closed sets of meanings, and an isolated-autonomous self.

Keywords: coloniality of language, ontological pluralism, multilingualism, multiplicitous speaking self, linguistically world-traveling, languaging

INTRODUCTION

The NIHSS Think Tank project “Multilingualism, Linguistic Citizenship and Vulnerability: A Comparative Focus on South Africa and Brazil” has allowed us to build a generative space to rethink concerns in language teaching education in and from the Global South, and discuss the potential of certain concepts and methods to capture these concerns. Of particular interest to us has been multilingualism and decoloniality: what multilingualism we want, what multilingualism we need, and what multilingualism we think is possible, for a decolonial age.

This is my first article out of our multidimensional conversation on how we think about multilingualism. With it I’d like to contribute a decolonial philosophical entry to discuss meaning and issues of difference-sameness, belonging, otherness, and recognition in multilingualism, and within the nation-state history and geography of late modernity.

As I move away from a structuralist reduction of multilingual reality, I don’t follow a deconstructing path but a decolonizing one. The latter is about “bringing back the body” into language politics and locating the speaking subject in space, time, and history (Menezes de Souza 2019, 10-11). The body that is the center in my decolonial analysis is the body, flesh, and tongue of colonized speakers. The body shaped by racial and gendered axes, roles, and identities that emerged with colonization and conquest and stretch into the present global society. As the body is made visible in the decolonial approach, the complicity between structuralist studies and the expansion of capitalism with its colonial/modern multidimensional matrix of power becomes more evident. Considering that the idea of multilingualism we inherited from coloniality/modernity carries with it the myth of a disembodied and spatially unlocated speaking self, I want to propose a Latina feminist reconceptualization of the self as a way to bring back the body into language into our pedagogies.

This contribution will add a body-political layer to my understanding of the coloniality of language (Veronelli, 2015). The analytics of the coloniality of power developed by Aníbal Quijano (1992/1998, 2000) has enabled me to examine how sys-

temic colonial power is at work in language. This extra layer will introduce a critique of systemic power that is informed by an up-close, in the flesh, in the midst of people methodology in which institutions, including language, are examined without the rigidity of abstraction and as something that can be felt bodily and emotionally.

Challenging the dominance of white Euro-American hegemonic terms of the conversation on multilingualism by bringing the body back into it calls for disclosing and enacting my locus of enunciation. The space-time, experience and memory I speak from is made of elements and traces of popular and Andean indigenous ways of thinking and living phagocyted in the ethos and life style of la *clase media porteña*, the Buenos Aires middle class, which, as the philosopher *Rodolfo Kusch* taught us, because of these popular and indigenous traces, is always different from the Euro-American middle-class model; it is a peripheral middle class. And, as migrant in the United States for the last twenty years, my locus of enunciation has become also that of Latina feminists. It is from this Latina location and embodiment of knowledge that emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the significance of the social ties and the norms governing them, and the unique ways in which gender interacts with Latina-hood (Vargas 2018: np), that I reflect about the speaking self.

‘Feminist reconceptualizations of the self have challenged Eurocentric philosophical models for their biases and shifted the inquiry toward recognizing selfhood as a relational, multilayered phenomenon ... [Eurocentric models have traditionally] minimized the personal and ethical import of unchosen circumstances, interpersonal relationships, and biosocial forces. They isolate the individual from its relationships and environment, as well as reinforcing a modern binary that divides the social sphere into autonomous agents and dependents ... For many feminists, to acknowledge the self’s dependency is not to devalue the self, but rather to value vulnerability, as well as to call into question the supposed free agency of a self that implicitly corresponds to a white masculine ideal ... To account for features of the self that have been traditionally overlooked, such as interdependence and vulnerability, the self must be understood as socially situated and rela-

tional ... [In addition,] intersectional theories of selfhood brought forward by African American feminists [have complicated the relational self by noting] that stratifications of social identities such as gender, race, and class do not operate in isolation from one another. Rather, these identity modalities interact to produce compound effects. As such, the individual is an intersectional self, or even multiple selves, where structures of subordination but also of agency converge ... Proponents of the intersectional self credit multiply oppressed people with a certain epistemic advantage in virtue of their suffering and alienation” (Anderson et al 2021: np).

In what follows, I take up this epistemic advantage to look at the project and the possibilities of rethinking the role of multilingualism in promoting social and epistemic justice while paying attention to the reconstitution of the communal. In particular I will dwell into my mentor, Latina lesbian decolonial feminism philosopher Maria Lugones’ observations about the emergence of different selves that appear within different contexts (1987) as well as her thoughts about the tacit metaphysics presupposed by the discourse of purity (1994). My hope is that this Latina feminist register of the heterogeneous and multiplicitous nature of the speaking self can offer a unique lens to interpret the possibilities for ‘identifying-interrogating-interrupting’ (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021) the coloniality of language in multilingualism.

My argument is structured in 2 parts. In the first section, I will connect the Eurocentric models of an isolated and autonomous self with the idea of multilingualism we have inherited from modernity/coloniality; ‘a idea of multilingualism better suited to a lonely, silent and fleshless world’ (Special Issue Multilingual Margins Think Tank Call for Papers). Following Lugones, I will characterize this idea of multilingualism as ‘bifid tongue multilingualism’ tied to a (structuralist) bordered conceptualization of languages and closed sets of meanings. In the second section, I will connect the Latina feminist understanding of the heterogeneity and multiplicity of selfhood with a decolonial option of multilingualism. Here my aim is to bring to the foreground the resistant legacies of languaging, meaning-making, and expressivity of those who are assumed to ‘speak nothing’ (NIHSS Think

Tank, Unpublished transcription session of 28/09/2020, 9) because they do not conform to the rules and laws that define what is legitimate and proper speech. I am particularly interested in looking at hybrid, improper, impure, and corrupted border-dwelling languages as decolonizing ideas and praxes of multilingualism.

I have worked within decolonial theory for the last fifteen years. I believe one of the most valuable lessons from this school of thought and action, and maybe also the most difficult one, is the movement from critique to creative alternatives. The movement from the analytics of coloniality to the programmatic of decoloniality. Decolonial scholars have different versions of this junction, one of which, I argue, is Lugones’s ontological pluralism, a theorizing of reality as not unitary but multiple, including the reality of the self—the oppressive reality/the liberatory reality; the death reality/the life reality.

Lugones describes ontological pluralism as thinking with one’s back against the wall, when there is a refusal to see oppression as an exhaustive reality, and, thus, to speak only from oppression and to inhabit only an oppressed and individual sense of being. Methodologically, this shift makes for a historical emphasis that pays attention to both coloniality as a process of subjectivization and inferiorization of colonized people (critique), and to practices and responses to coloniality that are not contained or explained by oppression or oppressive structures, that is, practices and responses that exceed oppression (creative alternatives). An example of ontological pluralism regarding the reality and nature of the self is that Lugones never says ‘I am oppressed’ but rather ‘I am being oppressed resisting’ (with a double direction arrow between the two) to indicate and seek the possibility of excess in the subject’s response.

Lugones’ rejection of the unity of the self resonates with Audrey Lorde’s ‘sister outsider’ (1984/2007) which, in contrast with W.E.B. DuBois’s account of ‘double consciousness’ (1903/1994), develops a multitudinous identity in connection with others in the creation of the Women of Color feminist coalition (Anderson et al, 2021). What is particular about Lugones’ ontological pluralism is that she claims that we can inhabit not only multiple realities/selves, but we can do so simultaneously,

and dwell in the tension between them. She introduces ‘world-traveling’ as the modality of moving between mutually exclusive selves that appear within different contexts.

As we critically analyze colonization as a long-term process of subjugation through linguistic violence, I propose that we consider Lugones’ ontological pluralism to make room to think about creative alternatives. In particular, I want to try out Lugones’s modality of ‘world traveling’ in the realm of multilingualism, and see what this way of accessing the multilingual speaker as inhabiting both realities—the multilingual reality organized by coloniality of language and the multilingual reality against the grain of coloniality—can contribute to rethinking what multilingualism we want, what multilingualism we need, and what multilingualism we think is possible, for a decolonial age.

FIRST SECTION

In this paper I am engaging Lugones as a theorist of multiplicity. In this first part, I want to articulate the modern idea of the speaking self with a modern/colonial idea of multilingualism. What allows for the articulation is Lugones’ account of the dis-course of purity.

In “Purity, Impurity, and Separation” (1994) Lugones argues that power is tied to purity as an instrument of social control through social fragmentation. Divide and conquer style. Domination functions through a logic of purity that brings multiplicity into unity and homogeneity by separating what’s multiple into homogeneous fragments. The fundamental assumption for this to function is that there is unity underlying multiplicity. Importantly, unity is more than a reading or interpretation. It orders reality, sociality, and every aspect of people’s lives and psyches. The becoming of this order and organization of multiplicity is a historical process of domination in which power and ideology are at all times changing each other. And, as noted earlier such fragmented understanding of reality includes the reality of the self. The logic of purity fragments the idea of self and imposes a dualistic framework that splits mind and body, reason and emotion, selfhood and otherness, and the like. Unification requires fragmentation and hierarchical ordering. In-

deed, these are not just distinctions, they are hierarchies that organized oppression. The social world (both in the collectivity and in the individual) is both unified and fragmented, homogeneous and hierarchically ordered.

Lugones argues that the urge to control multiplicity of people and things (and I am considering here also multiplicity of languages) and their reduction into unity, is accomplished through a complex series of interrelated and clustered fictions: the epistemic privileging of an ideal observer who is itself the product of the logic of purity, abstraction, and dichotomous categorization.

In order to conceive what is multiple as internally separable and divisible into what is one and the remainder, there needs to be a vantage point from where such wholes and totalities can be captured. At the same time, there needs to be a subject who could occupy such vantage point and perceive unity amidst multiplicity. The construction of both observer and vantage point is fictional, they are both abstract, outside history and concreteness. They are both affected by and effect the purist reduction of multiplicity. The vantage point is privileged, simple, and one-dimensional. The conception of the subject is derivative from the assumption of unity and separability: the subject is abstract, fragmented, and without particularity.

Lugones connects the fragmented idea of self with modernity. It is the sense of self that is both the product and the producer of modern reason. What characterizes modern reason is the ability to abstract, categorize, separate into pure elements, and contain the multiple into the systematicity of norms and rules that highlight, capture, and train its unity from a privileged vantage point.

Categorical thinking is of particular importance to my argument because it represents the way of concocting and controlling multiplicity and difference characteristic of modernity/coloniality and Eurocentric knowledge. Dichotomous categories are the operation and the presupposition of the logic of purity. Differences between peoples, things, and languages are dominantly organized and institutionalized in terms of pure and impermeable categories. Categorical thinking presupposes the fragmented speaking self and collective intentions of people connecting and communicating to

each other in a way that privileges the logos and a monological understanding of sense.

Categories are not just concepts; they have a material history. People are categorically lumped together and categorically broken apart from each other. As peoples are created different in terms of the logic of purity, they are trapped inside these dominant differences and pitted against each other. It is only the modern man, men of certain class and race who are in a position to occupy the individual, fragmented self at ease, and without a sense of lost and violence.

As I moved into multilingualism, I suggest that the modern/colonial Eurocentric idea of multilingualism that dominates our understanding of how languages relate follows the logic of purity and results from the ideological erasure of multiplicity through fragmentation as theorized by Lugones.

My aim is to disclose this dominant sense of multilingualism as one of the ideological mechanisms that presupposes and produces a fragmented and atomistic understanding of the self and social groups. To grasp the operation of fragmentation anchored in the logic of purity, I am calling it 'bifid tongue multilingualism,' a sense of multilingualism that leaves the speaker's tongue split, not hybrid but divided, like that of the snakes, speaking out through both sides of her mouth (Lugones 2003, 170).

In order to understand the reality of bifid tongue multilingualism, my underlying assumption is that the coloniality of language is at the background, conditioning what a language is and, consequently, what multilingualism is, and how multilingualism is institutionalized and controlled through scientific instrumental knowledge, in the form of linguistics, educational science, and translation studies, to name a few.

With my research on the coloniality of language (Veronelli 2015, 2016) I joined the discussion on linguistic racism and linguistic colonialism to contribute an understanding of the relation between language, personhood, and colonization that follows the analytics of the modernity/coloniality. My central claim was that European colonizers imposed not only their languages on the populations they colonized but also their understanding of language. This understanding fused together categories of

race and language, and hierarchies of racial and linguistic legitimacy, in such a way that the two seemed naturally associated.

The guiding logic of the coloniality of language reveals the in-unison operation of the two axes of coloniality and modernity. On the one hand, modernity naturalizes the colonial difference by upholding self-proclaimed universally valid epistemic and linguistic standards. A move that casts all those who do not conform to those criteria as naturally inferior and incapable of rational and clear linguistic communication. On the other hand, coloniality distributes this natural epistemic inferiority along racial lines; those who are epistemically inferior by nature are those who are racialized as other. The outcome is that the epistemic criteria upheld by modernity are such that the natural inferiority of the colonized is constantly reified through its own conceptual and linguistic schemas, which include reason, dialogical communication, and speech—in sum, logos (Ferrari 2019: 129).

My original argument thus showed that the move whereby the in-fact-Eurocentric standards that norm what counts as language and rational communication are presented as universal, naturalizes racialized differences, making the processes that produce these differences invisible. Here I want to begin to expand that argument looking at how linguistic coloniality functions through the logic of purity in order to think about multiplicity and difference in language, and how multilingualism is organized and institutionalized within the reality of modernity/coloniality.

First, a logic of purity is evident in the presupposition that there is a clear distinction and separation between languages. Or to put differently, in the tendency to perceive different linguistic realms as bounded or bordered. It is possible to see such tendency, in the objectifying and externalizing idea of language that sixteenth-century ideologues had. It was assumed that there was a kind of thingness in language, that language was a thing. It was believed that there was an entity called "Spanish" and that it could be described and mapped. Furthermore, we can venture to say that this presupposition was later prescribed in the means of expressivity of colonized populations. That is, having, for example, something called "Quechua" was in itself a colonial invention.

Second, it is possible to link this objectifying operation of early modern/colonial Eurocentric linguistic philosophy to the tendency to assume meaning being unitary within each linguistic system. That is, a transcendental, universal, non-contradictory and transparent conception of meaning that pre-exists the ways of using a language, whatever and wherever. Histories of mutual interaction, comprehension, incomprehension, cross-production, hybridity are erased and ignored in favor of false assumptions of hermetic symbolic systems. There is no trace of the highly political interactions that shape and negotiate meaning, nor of the politics of meaning formation. If anything, dialogic interactions are thought abstractly, thus disconnecting and dislocating the speaker from any relationship with the history of the language.

Third, the above assumption generates others, such as the prescription of a better and correct way of using a language. Also, the assumption of a normative speaker and a legitimate voice that organizes and signifies the normative construction of the social.

Forth, from the logic of purity follows a naturalization of language, naturalization insofar as language is depoliticized. This assumption of 'natural languages' engines the fiction of natural territorial boundaries to a language and between languages, giving scientific primordiality to the one-language-one nation-one people construct. The illusion, in turn, hides the connection between linguistic unification and the formation of imperial states and nation states as an exercise of power, an so it makes invisible the articulation between linguistic interactions and the formation of bounded national languages.

Although some of these elements need to be developed further, I believe there is enough to grasp how the desire for purity with its need for control and illusions of unity and univocity are conceptually related and act as instruments for controlling multilingualism by reducing linguistic heterogeneity into homogeneity.

As the logic of purity trains multilingualism, it forces an idea of linguistic plurality systematized in norms, rules, dichotomous categories, and constructs such as the 'homogeneous speech community'. It forces what I am calling a 'bifid tongue' sense of multilingualism that draws lines

that separates what is multiple into pure parts. As speakers are conceived, classified, and treated in terms of these homogeneous, impermeable, exclusive linguistic categories, each linguistic group is rendered from the inside. Natural languages are perceived as natural barriers to intelligibility across communities of sameness so constructed. As I noted above, the operation of naturalization hides the power that needs to be deployed to maintain the oppositional categorizing between languages.

When it comes to the construction of a multilingual speaker, the bifid sense essentializes and forces her multilingual practices and identities into dichotomous categories of identity and language, with strict and discrete limits, and separated from each other. (Lin, 20) Speaking in this bifid tongue and the bifid tongue speaker thus reflect and produce the fractured self.

SECOND SECTION

In this second part, I aim to offer a foundation and justification that can serve as a useful counterpoint to multilingualism Eurocentrically conceived.

Where bifid tongue multilingualism is the product of a logic of purity, I want to see whether we can follow another logic that would allow us to 'inhabit this more crowded, fleshy and noisy world' (Special Issue Multilingual Margins Think Tank Call for Papers). I will attempt this logical opening through Lugones's ontological pluralism in her modality of 'world-traveling'. Following Lugones, I understand that coloniality constructs the social into a linear, univocal and cohesive reality that is both inescapable *and* can be inhabited in enormous tension. Given this, the idea is to *make room for ambiguity* through a decolonial turn that enables us to see and hear the multilingual speaker being oppressed \longleftrightarrow resisting the bifid, colonial sense of herself.

In her influential article "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" (1987) Lugones is concerned with understanding and revealing how plurality and difference among women is central to feminist way of knowing and being. She begins by describing how 'all people who have been subordinated, exploited, enslaved, and colonized have been forced to travel in and out of 'worlds', shifting from an oppressive

reality in which they animate a subordinated self and a reality where they are more or less 'at home'. While she takes that this flexibility to 'world-travel' is a matter of necessity and survival, she argues it could be undertaken resistantly 'to travel to the worlds of those who are also oppressed but who are categorically isolated from us' as a way to encourage coalition, and cross-racial and cross-cultural loving (Lugones 2003: 16-17; 77-78; 98).

'Travelling' is the shifting for being one person to being a different person; not as a matter of acting or pretending, but as a matter of being in another world that spatially and relationally constructs the self differently (89). Lugones' notion of 'world' enables us understand and inhabit the social as heterogeneous and multiple, both in its oppressive and resistant forms, in terms of multiple, actual, lived, experienced, contemporaneous, inwardly and outwardly tense 'worlds'. 'I think that there are many worlds, not autonomous, but intertwined semantically and materially, with a logic that is sufficiently self-coherent and sufficiently in contradiction with others to constitute an alternative construction of the social.' (Lugones 2003, 20)

I find that Lugones' characterization of a 'world' and 'worlds' resonates with Humberto Maturana's conceptualization of languaging (1978, 1990a, 1990b). I'd like to try this connection out as a decolonial point of entry to rethink multilingualism.

For Maturana, languaging is not a way to symbolize the features of an independent reality because there is no external or independent reality to what people do as speaking beings. Nothing exists outside of language and, as Maturana insists all the time, "everything we do, we do in language." (Maturana 1990, 18) Reality arises from social life. In languaging, people generate and manifest the reality in which they live and the objects that populate and organize that reality, including the 'I'. To perceive people's languaging is to perceive the progressive and recursive process of living in community bringing forth reality, generating worlds as multiple and heterogeneous forms of coexistence. Through languaging, seeing many languages in action (multilingual reality) reveals the existence of a variety of logics, technologies and strategies that bring forth reality and give meaning, direction, and form to sociality and social

relations, both materially and discursively. It is this ontological inseparability between languaging and ways of living-together that I am interested in as it enables me to address an ontological difference of languages and thus decolonially connect linguistic plurality and multilingualism with ontological pluralism. If this made sense, I'd like to consider the idea and practice of 'world-travelling' in a linguistic fashion as a way to counter the bifid tongue understanding of multilingualism.

Against the grain of purity and its homogenizing, atomistic, univocal, unilinear, unillogical, abstract understanding of an heterogeneous reality, in this case the reality of multilingualism, 'world-travelling' is about the logic of connection that is attentive to a deep multiplicity of worlds. Worlds are permeable, fluidly conceived, 'without the categorical walls that make boundary crossing inconceivable or an exercise of betrayal of "one's own"' (Lugones 2003, 16) Linguistically 'world-travelling' shares with the idea of 'translanguaging' (Garcia 2009, Garcia and Wei 2014) the rejection of a dichotomous categorization of languages. But different from 'translanguaging', 'linguistically world-traveling' points to something more than a multilingual self navigating complex social and cognitive demands through strategic employment of a unitary linguistic repertoire. The linguistic world-traveler shifts from a construction of multilingualism and of herself as multilingual speaker controlled by coloniality of language to other constructions of multilingual reality against the grain of coloniality. Such being oppressed \longleftrightarrow resisting flexibility implies fluency in the mechanisms of oppression and insight in resisting those mechanisms.

Next to this survival act of 'linguistically world-traveling' we, scholars and pedagogues, should also learn to resistantly travel to others' multilingual realities against the grain of purist, monolingual, homogeneous, and monistic understanding of multilingualism in any of its dimensions. This is part of the ambiguity I referred to at the beginning of this section. As we understand that there are multiple multilingualisms, how do we listen to multilingual expressivities in a way that keeps the ambiguity of being oppressed \longleftrightarrow resisting? This has been a salient question in the meeting of the NIHSS Think Tank project.

Chris Strout expressed it in terms of changing the structure of listening, engaging with noise that is disobedient without subordinating it to the pleasures of our own ears (NIHSS Think Tank, Unpublished transcription session of 26/10/2020, 11-12). In what is left, I want to explore some of the communicative difficulties and communicative creativities that these questions pose.

First, to listen ambiguously is about a praxical disposition, willingness, and ability to travel to the worlds of the others as they create their world, make face, and negotiate meanings. Caribbean thinker Edoard Glissant's "Poetics of Relation" (1997) comes in handy to describe the kind of attitude that 'linguistically world-traveling' requires in order not to fall in the temptations of purity. He tells us to give up certainty and demands the right to opacity. In this way, Glissant reaffirms the need to sense resistant manifestations (the noise) in a less reflective, conscious, or agential way. It isn't the cognitive level of the articulations that matters, because resistant manifestations are acts of survivals in the midst of extreme oppressions and so, they aren't conscious at that level but, rather, discontinuously organized. Opacity refers to a sensorial attitude. It is no so much an obscuring principle (though it is possible for such a tactic to be itself in the shadows,) as it is the principle of being compel against abstraction and categorial reduction. Directed by the principle of opacity the linguistic world-traveler will strive to sense multilingualism disobediently yet already knowing that one will never accomplish this. In other words, directed by opacity, the linguistic world-traveler consents to a global dynamic in which there is no basis for certainty, not even at the level of oneself as a knowing and speaking subject.

'Linguistically world-travelling' understands meaning and communication to be both less coded and less determined by cultural codes. And it understands the existing codes as less ossified and, as the result of ongoing transculturation and inter-world relations of control and resistance to control. No world can be understood as monistic, homogeneous, or autonomous. As Lugones puts it, "resistant networks are often historically muted or distorted. Communication is complex. Expressive gestures, acts, movements, and behaviors are often incommunicative with respect to some au-

dience and communicative with respects to others. Meaning is often conveyed obliquely, indirectly, sometimes in ways hard to access but always differentially accessible to audiences related in terms of power ... Communication across worlds is complex not because of impermeable cultural boundaries, but because domination fragments the social" (Lugones 2003, 25-26). 'Linguistically world-traveling' is about forcing permeability and porosity in order to interrupt the coloniality of language in the form of bifid tongue multilingualism, which isolates each languaging within a tight, impermeable fiction in such a way that their interests are not connected, they are against each other; everything that happens is through the relation with and in terms of the hegemony.

Second, to listen ambiguously, against the univocity of life lived in a state of purity, asks to giving up propriety and mastery, to being comfortable with not fully understanding, but understanding by approximation. 'Linguistically world-traveling' against monolingual cum monological paths of social fragmentation does not presuppose fluency in the other's tongue, but rather a more fully sensorial attentiveness to the making of resistant sense along the path. Lugones speaks of 'tantear' for meaning. She uses 'the Spanish word "tantear", both in the sense of exploring someone's inclinations about a particular issue, and in the sense of "tantear en la oscuridad," putting one's hands in front of oneself as one is walking in the dark, tactively feeling one's way.' (Lugones 2003, 2)

In order not to render multilingualism transparent one has to resist comprehension and, in Glissant's terms, 'give-oneself-on-and-with' its disorder, its defamiliarizing force, its discontinuity, its confusion of indicators, its multiple levels of articulation, its secretive and multiple manifestations that with and/or without words, esoterically or coherently, work to say without saying. In 'linguistically world-traveling' one is not representing, clarifying, or translating. All these are monolingual practices to know about, to grasp multiplicity and conclude in a coherent monologue, to train multilingualism into a fragmented unity. All of these practices assume the logic of purity and a logos, a vantage point, a speaker/listener who is abstract, fragmented, and without history, and expressivity to be always

informed by a conscious subjectivity. None of these attitudes can glimpse the ambiguity of being oppressed resisting resistant communication. They crush it by always depending on and imposing monolithic and monolingual order.

Third, the linguistic world-traveler has to cultivate an ear for multiplicity in interlocution: multiplicity in the interactive process of intention formation, in perception, in meaning making. This speaks to the willingness to change the structure of listening that Strout called for. Where the ear for the powerful logic of univocity and multiplicity reduced and drowned by univocal contestations along the axis of domination and coloniality, is also prepared to defamiliarize itself and hear new senses, the remade, intervened, and contested sense-making of those who cannot occupy the position of a normative multilingual speaker. From this follows that listening ambiguously requires a listener who occupies a hybrid, ambiguous space of understanding rather than a listener who is placed solely in an ideologically purified linguistic space.

Fourth and last, although communication is complex, to linguistically world-traveling is nevertheless to look for unmediated communication. Therefore, it asks for putting aside the temptation to mediate, appease, and manage. This is the temptations of multilinguals who have both tongues in their mouths, who are fluid in both tongues. It is a form of heroism, of managing and digesting the multilingual noise, and, in this sense, it reproduces the fiction of the vantage point perception of the unitary self (Lugones 2000, 261).

I will wrap up this section bringing in concreteness. Otherwise, I would be rejecting hierarchical dichotomies, individualism, categorical fragmentation in the abstract, which would be like carrying only for the denial of coloniality without constituting alternatives. I think that methodologically, when we are going for decolonial interventions, it is not only important to have an answer to the why and for whom of the research. It is also part of the methodology to prepare ourselves to answer how we know as well as why and for whom. As anticipated, my aim is to bring to the foreground the resistant, transgressive and contestatory legacies to coloniality of language and, in particular, explore hybrid, improper, im-

pure, and corrupted border-dwelling linguistic formations as decolonizing noisy ideas and praxes of multilingualism.

At this point I am characterizing hybrid, improper, impure, and corrupted border-dwelling languagings as ‘in-between tongues,’ not captured by bifid-tongue multilingualism, but obliterating it. They are not identifiable by thinking in dichotomous categories. They conform neither to the rules of one nor the other language, and, thus, they are not reducible to the sum of the parts. Their very nature undermines the presupposition of boundedness and purity in language. They exceed the desire for dissection.

The literature I am studying looks at Pachuco Caló—one of the languages of the borderlands, of chicanos and chicanas border dwellers—I’d like to think that there are possible connections to Kaaps and Petrogues.

In “Hybrid languages, translation and post-colonial challenges” (2000) Joshua M. Price explains that Caló is a linguistic challenge to cultural, racial, and linguistic oppression. A multilingual, hybrid, interstitial, enormously inventive linguistic formation born out of the necessity for communication that is not in the bordered terms of power and coloniality. These are exercises in noisy multilingual resistance to communicate expediently in places of danger, to send clandestine messages, critique dominant codes or dominant values, or simply to survive. Caló expressivity constantly disrupts English, Spanish, or Spanglish with linguistic resistance, constantly politicizing speaking (Lugones 200, 160).

Because speaking in impure tongues is always an elaborate, political, and artful intersubjective accomplishment, their noisy multilingualism gestures to a relational, multiplicitous self, with an ambiguous and fluid identity, who experiences a sense of constant in-betweenness that fosters unique modes of meaning-making, and whose very existence may be hidden from the dominator. In short, the linguistic world-traveler.

FINAL

In conclusion, to decolonize the idea of multilingualism, it is important to see lan-

guage always as political and demystify the illusion of anything “natural”. In doing so, it is important to pay attention to the network of speakers historically and socially located in power relations that have linguistic dimensions. And in doing so, it is important to keep in mind that different speakers located throughout linguistic domains may bring different values, cultural understandings, and different ideologies, including ideologies of languages and language relations.

I am recommending the modality of linguistic world-traveling to give texture to an idea of noisy multilingualism, which can only be heard ambiguously as it attends to linguistic functioning operating simultaneously on many logical levels and in non-essentializing ways. To listen to multilingualism ambiguously is to understand multilingualism as a disputed, conflictive, changing space, in constant production, that motivates us to be part of a poly-logical struggle for possibilities that interrupt social and linguistic fragmentation, that interrupt coloniality.

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