

Queering Applied Linguistics: framing race and sexuality performativities outside modernity's persistent delirium

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Despite the fact that Applied Linguistics (AL) research has included in its agenda issues related to what late modernity and globalization are doing to us, little investigation has pointed to issues of language, race and sexuality in that connection. At a time when there are tremendous flows of people, discourses and social movements across the world, continually disrupting our certainties in an increasingly contingent world (Bauman, 1992), in which pharmacopower has been changing our corporealities (Preciado, 2008), a focus on race and sexuality performativities in AL seems crucial if our field is to be responsive to the world in which we live. These relatively recent phenomena have challenged traditional views of what we are or can become and affected how our bodies are understood and controlled by contemporary biopolitics (Foucault, 1997). However, these phenomena have also generated anger, hate and crime in many parts of the world, which refuse to accept alternative narratives to modernist colonial prescriptions for our bodies. In this talk, I argue that we need to queer AL by 1) denormalizing the traditional 'subject' in the field (the student, the teacher, the listener, the blogger etc.); 2) seriously taking bodies into consideration by racializing and sexualizing them intersectionally beyond sexual and racial 'normativities'; 3) becoming aware of contemporary biopolitics and securitization, which have transformed bodies into species; and 4) advancing research methodology and theoretical-analytical frameworks which speak to emerging issues in our late modern times. This perspective is particularly necessary if we understand that doing social research is a way of constructing a discourse about social life (Souza Santos, 2008) while trying to understand it. Such a position can only be taken if we theoretically operate out of the scope of what Mbembe (2013) has called modernity's delirium, which insistently searches for purity and essence in a perennial coloniality process. I illustrate such delirium with recent waves of hate and crime which are circulating around the world as a consequence of fascist ideologies, which are found in both party politics and in other institutions. In particular, I focus on the murder of a gay black student on our campus by exploring how this sad event was entextualized in the media, followed different textual trajectories (Blommaert, 2005) across the web, and in such re-entextualizations indexed hate discourses.

References

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