Solidarity and the politics of ‘us’
How far can individuals go in language policy? Research methods in non-Western contexts

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Introduction
In this chapter, we illustrate how applied linguistics research methods are problematic in the ways they approach non-Western contexts, drawing on language policy and planning as examples to intellectually contextualize our discussion. We focus specifically on colonial, colonized, and postcolonized discussions of how applied linguistics research methods have been discursively produced, ignored, or erased from mainstream applied linguistics and language policy agendas. Specifically, we focus the analysis of applied linguistics research into colonial, post-independence, and postcolonial language policy in the Brazilian and African contexts from a critical non-Eurocentric perspective: ‘It proposes a teoria povera, a rearguard theory based on the experiences of large, marginalized minorities and majorities that struggle against unjustly imposed marginality and inferiority, with the purpose of strengthening their resistance’ (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. ix). We recognize that research methods are intertwined with ethical, political, and theoretical perspectives towards what counts as non-Western in applied linguistics. By problematizing the ethical and political dimension of some Western theories and research methods in applied linguistics, we tend to signal to the way they help to reproduce power relations and lack of solidarity and recognition of the Other.

An historical perspective of the field is provided through the classic Advances in Language Planning (Fishman, Ferguson, & Dasgupta, 1974), who discuss the relationship between language policy and newly independent African states. Such a discussion appears rarified in the last decade. For example, the Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy contains a chapter on the relationship between imperialism and colonialism (Phillipson, 2012), while another chapter concerns the colonial and postcolonial language policy in Africa (Makoni, Acdelhay, & Mashiri, 2012), bringing several contextualized examples of the complicated language policy situation in African countries. The Oxford Handbook of Language Policy and Planning (Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018), in contrast, fails to provide an explicit exploration of methods of applied linguistics research into the relationship between colonialism or postcolonialism and language policy; it also does not include an overt discussion of African linguistic contexts. We mention these three compendiums because, taken together, they map
Cristine G. Severo and Sinfree B. Makoni

the main agenda of the disciplinary field of language policy and planning, and the implications of such research on methods of enquiry in applied linguistics.

Yet another example of the lack of concern about colonialism and language policy can be seen in Johnson and Ricento’s (2013) revision of these areas. The authors do not explore the complexities of colonialism, postcolonialism, power relations, and language policy. They only superficially cover these topics, which are connected mainly to the earliest works of the field. The authors propose a chronology of the field of language policy and planning as divided into four main themes: (a) early language planning scholarship, (b) expanded works in the 1970s and 1980s, (c) critical language policy, and (d) the emergence of the ethnography of language policy in the 21st century. At the end, Johnson and Ricento state, ‘The ethnography of language policy has been proposed as a method that combines a focus on structure and agency, the macro and the micro, policy and practice’ (p. 16).

Although we recognize the efforts of some researchers to seriously consider colonialism and postcolonialism as central to understanding the complexities of the relationship between language, peoples, identities, and power, we believe that the traditional and Western methodological frameworks are not sufficient to understand what counts as language in colonial and colonized contexts. In this chapter, although we focus on African and Brazilian experiences, we understand that such relationships and experiences are not limited to geographic or demographic contexts. In addition, we believe that colonialism is not a temporal experience that ended with post-independence. We understand colonialism in a broader and more subtle way, which means considering, on the one hand, the effects of colonial relations in terms of how concepts such as ‘Black’ and ‘Africa’ helped to shape what can be understood as race (Mbembe, 2014) and language, and on the other hand, the way colonialism works as a ‘model of power’ that both reinforces and is reinforced by capitalism, continuously producing perverse power relations (Quijano, 2000). We assume that in (former) colonial contexts, the invented concept of language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) in colonialism plays a major role and that research methods in applied linguistics, which utilize ideas about language invention in contemporary contexts, inadvertently reinforce colonialism or social and political inequalities.

We argue that the most vibrant research and effective research methods in language policy in colonial and postcolonial contexts are omitted due to Western framings of language research, a strand of research that tends to be blind to both non-Western sociopolitical contexts and non-Western framings of language. Non-Western framings of language that are central in order to understand the use of research methods in non-Western contexts are much more expansive than in conventional applied linguistics because ‘the understanding of the world far exceeds the western understandings of the world’ (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. viii) and more specifically include the analysis of the communicative and cognitive practices of the other species which share the world with us (well captured in Kohn, 2013, How Forests Think).

In this chapter, we focus on the role that contemporary Western discussion of language policy has attributed to methods of research into agency in language policy and planning, mainly through what has been called micro-level planning or ethnography of language policy. Although we recognize the important contribution of this perspective to understanding the role played by individuals in reinterpreting or proposing language policies, we aim to reveal the underlying danger that such a ‘positive’ concept may convey. Thus, in this chapter, we question methods of research into (a) how far individuals can go in language policy and politics; (b) the limits of what counts as local, micro, and ethnographic in applied linguistics research methods in non-Western Contexts particularly in the area of language policy; and (c) how non-Western narratives help to expand the understanding of the relationship between language and politics. By addressing these concerns from the perspective of colonial experience in
non-Western contexts, we problematize the use of concepts and methodologies centered on the ideas of agency and micro/local. By doing so, we tend to value and recognize the role played by the ideas of community, solidarity, and sharing in helping to shape what counts as language and as politics, both of which are relevant to research methods in applied linguistics.

**How far can individuals go in language policy and politics?**

Agency is a powerful concept used to recognize and amplify the role played by individuals in social processes (Giddens, 1984) or, in other terms, the dialectical relationship between an individual’s actions and the social structure. According to Giddens, the two faces of power represent ‘the capability of actors to enact decisions which they favour on the one hand and the mobilization of “bias” that is built on institutions on the other’ (p. 15). Ahearn (2000) argues that Giddens was responsible for the popularization of this concept in the 1970s and 1980s.

The agency issue is linked to the problem of will and to the notion of responsibility. When free will is considered as opposite to determined or social constraints, moral responsibility is seen in relationship to having one’s own decision under a certain control, as one cannot be held responsible for something done under external obligation. There is a tension in the Western philosophical and academic context between practical freedom and previous determination, which can be summarized by two opposite ideas: hard determinism that considers freedom as an illusion and metaphysical libertarianism that sees people as being free and responsible (Audi, 1999). Although the former considers a certain predestination of acts and circumstances, the latter considers that the idea of freedom faces contingency, which implies assuming autonomy in face of diverse possibilities of action. Further, there is another perspective that tries to blend both concepts: ‘Many philosophers take practical freedom and responsibility to be consistent with determinism, thereby endorsing compatibilism’ (Audi, 1999, p. 327).

In the field of language policy, the underlying idea of agency is that individuals have the power to act according to their reason and will or that power is attributed to individuals differently, according to the hierarchical or institutional position that they assume in society. One definition of agency in works on language policy is: ‘Agency . . . refers to the various levels and forms of power invested in the range of actors involved in policy and planning’ (Fenton-Smith & Gurney, 2016, p. 74). In addition, some studies have highlighted the role played by teachers in educational contexts: ‘The role of language teacher agency in language policy and planning (LPP) enactment and implementation at the micro-level has received increasing treatment in the literature’ (Brown, 2015, p. 171). Johnson and Johnson (2014, p. 222), for example, point to the role played by agency in educational context; they understand ‘language policy arbiters as individuals who have a disproportionate amount of impact on language policy and educational programs’.

Another way to frame agency in consideration of research methods in applied linguistics is through association with a local approach: ‘At the micro-social level of the classroom, then, teachers and students enjoy some agency to question, negotiate, and resist power’ (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 211). Further, the concept of power underlying power is that a certain individual or group can empower – distribute power to – another individual or group of individuals, reinforcing a metaphysical concept of politics, as follows: ‘It is perfectly ethical for teachers to empower minority students and their cultural resources for greater self-determination’ (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 212). We argue that the idea of empowerment may reinforce power relations and social asymmetries. Some authors (e.g., Brown, 2015; Johnson & Ricento, 2013) have adopted the concept of language policy and planning as a multilayer model, whereby the relationship between macro, meso, and micro, or top-down and bottom-up, is seen in terms of a language policy onion, as explained later in this chapter (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).
According to Johnson and Johnson (2014, p. 224), in contemporary language planning and policy, ‘There is general agreement that an understanding of the multiple levels is necessary to fully understand how policy works’.

Despite the use of the concept of agency to reinforce the power of the individual and his or her capacity to make choices, some authors tend to relativize it, considering that it cannot be taken as equivalent to individualism, free will, or resistance. Brown (2015, p. 178) notes, ‘Examples of studies that use ethnographic methods to highlight agentive learner activity can certainly be found in the literature’. We argue that the philosophical discussion that involves the relationship between agency, autonomy, free will, spontaneity, responsibility, contingency, and determinism appears not to be taken seriously by applied linguists, who, in general, have used the concept of agency without analyzing its political implications for the field of language policy and planning.

In this chapter, we deal mainly with two conceptual and methodological categories that have been broadly used in contemporary language policy and planning: the idea of agency, and the concept that, to comprehend the dynamics of language policy and planning, it is useful to unpeel and chop the onion or, stated differently, to dissect language policy into its various elements, levels, and contexts. Although this perspective tends to consider the complexity of a multilayer phenomenon, it fails to deconstruct a binary perspective of social practices. For example, the idea of power related to institutional (dominance) vs. individual (resistance) is implied in the concepts of macro and micro or ‘policy power and interpretative agency’ (Johnson & Ricento, 2013).

We argue that to consider the complexity of a phenomenon means to avoid metaphors or methodological artefacts that take a priori categories to be applied to reality. This process means that such reality is methodologically invented. In terms of politics, such invention may have serious implications, as the universal use of categories produces very similar narratives on what counts as language in language policies across the world. We question the use of a ‘politics of categories’ that characterizes works on language policy and planning, which may work in favour of, for example, a politics of groupism, which is a ‘tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed’ (Brubaker, 2002, p. 164).

We question who the studies on language policy and planning tend to attribute agency to and who is denied such a condition. We argue that colonial studies can help us to elucidate the politics that distribute individuals into a scale of more or less agency, whereby colonized people tended to be labeled as having less agency and, thus, as having a greater tendency toward obedience.

The use of a universal narrative can be seen in the way that several contexts, each with its own history and singularity, may be described and analyzed through the use of similar concepts and methodological categories. By problematizing the universality of certain perspectives, we reveal the way that power relations are inscribed in the politics of language policy and planning.

We also extend the concept of agency to insurgency: ‘Insurgency refers to insurrections and rebellions, to contestatory actions and historical initiatives that confront the structures, politics of power and domination’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 34) Insurgency provides us with analytical tools to describe how scholars and activists in non-Western contexts can handle the impact of research methods in applied linguistics which inadvertently may reinforce capitalism and the global asymmetrical global economic political order.

Community and solidarity in the construction of ‘us’ in research methods in applied linguistics

In classical Western political philosophy, liberalism and communitarianism are two political and ethical frameworks that organize the lives of individuals in society. Whereas the former
focuses on the rights of individuals, including freedom, the latter focuses on collective rights rather than on individualism (Audi, 1999). In a more communitarian perspective, free will is limited by contextual and historical features. In other words, we can say, ‘Agents are never able to express the intention embodied in their actions or to characterize their actions in other respects in a wholly egocentric way’ (MacIntyre, 1973, p. 324). In addition, the relationship between the individual and community is such that it becomes impossible, for example, to demarcate the limits between the individual and the social. In this case, personal actions and beliefs are socially shared, but this does not mean that there is consensus.

We argue that the basis of politics is sharing the public space through actions and discourse, which does not imply homogeneity but, rather, plurality (Arendt, 1998). In this context, we agree that ‘[s]ocial life is thus a series of historically idiosyncratic, interrelated narratives in which the attempts at comprehension by every agent is an indispensable feature’ (MacIntyre, 1973, p. 325). In this sense, what interests us is how a sense of community and belonging can operate as a framework to define what counts as politics and language. Rather than individual action, agency, protagonism, and free will, we are interested in understanding solidarity and living together as moral principles that help to define a sense of belonging or, in other words, the emergence of ‘us’ instead of ‘I’. This does not mean, of course, that we disregard individuals’ actions, beliefs, and efforts. Rather, we aim at turning the political logic around, from an individual perspective to a collective perspective, and reflecting on the implications of this radical inversion for research methods in language policy and planning. We are arguing that the applied linguistics methods which are appropriate in non-Western contexts should seek to capture the complex relationality between individuals, ‘forms of struggle, social actors, and grammars of liberation’ (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. ix).

We argue that non-Western contexts can help us to expand our framework of research in language policy and planning by redefining what counts as language from a more communitarian and solidary perspective, helping us to understand how language can emerge as a product of a sense of community and belonging. In these contexts, we consider that ‘[h]uman beings are communities of beings rather than individuals; in their communities, the ancestors are present, as well as animals and mother earth’ (Santos, 2012, p. 50). In keeping with Santos’s interpretation, Latin American critical thought is developed from three key concepts (autonomy, communality, and territoriality) and questions universal frameworks (Cusicanqui, Domingues, Escobar, & Leff, 2016). We agree with Grosfoguel (2011, p. 4) that a critical perspective of Western epistemologies means being ‘critical of both Eurocentric and Third World fundamentalisms, colonialism and nationalism’.

To be able to apprehend non-Western methodologies and epistemologies in language policy and planning requires that we make an effort to change the way we (Western scholars) have historically framed them (non-Western non-scholars). In this sense, as scholars who share this ambiguous position of both belonging to academic life and witnessing the effects of colonialism (in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Brazil), we take seriously the idea that ‘[t]he experience of being colonized therefore signified a great deal to regions and peoples of the world whose experience as dependents, subalterns, and subjects of the West did not end’ (Said, 1989, p. 207). In this sense, we believe that non-Western contexts challenge us with ethical issues in regard to the effects of colonialism in the lives of those whose language practices we aim at studying, describing, and analyzing. This means that we should make an effort to avoid reproducing binary categories that frame hierarchical relations between Western and non-Western people and modes of living and framing the world. One example of how such dichotomies can be overcome is the way that Aymara and Bolivian scholar
Silvia Cusicanqui frames her perspective on what could count as the political role of ‘social science’ in (ex-)colonized contexts:

> En cuanto a la colonización mental, la ciencia social – junto a varias otras – debería enfocarse en crear las herramientas conceptuales, técnicas y materiales que permitan resistir el saqueo, tanto de recursos materiales como de personas (manos, cerebros) o, por lo menos, ayudarnos a sobrevivir a él.2

(Cusicanqui et al., 2016, p. 3)

How can we learn from non-Western contexts – or ex-colonies – in a way such that methods of research in applied linguistics and language policy and planning avoid reproducing the historical colonial practice of plundering and exploring people’s modes of living and framing the world and can be used to further decolonial projects? To answer this question, we present two examples for which the idea of community and solidarity can help us to frame what counts as language and politics: (a) the African-Brazilian concept of Quilombo and (b) the African politics of proper names and the philosophy of Ubuntu.

**Quilombo, language and ‘us’**

The term ‘Quilombo’ in contemporary Brazil assembles several political, cultural, and juridical meanings. In general terms, it refers to the way that Afro-Brazilians historically organized their struggles and collective experience against colonialism and slavery. Abdias do Nascimento (1914–2011), a Brazilian scholar, politician, and Pan-African activist, wrote a kind of manifesto (1980) in which he presents and defends the concept of Quilombism as a political and cultural project of Black people in Brazil: ‘Quilombismo articulates the diverse levels of collective life whose dialectic interaction proposes complete fulfillment and realization of the creative capacities of the human being’ (Nascimento, 1980, p. 161). We assume that Quilombo and Quilombism contribute to problematizing universal and essentialist concepts of politics and identity by placing communality and sharing at the core of a political experience. In addition, the evolving nature of the concept of Quilombo signals the way that local context is dynamic, responding to local urgencies, which means that, as a political tool, Quilombo – and Quilombism – operates as a form of resistance to power relations that are dynamic, flexible, and moving (Foucault, 1978). In this sense, the expansion of the concept of Quilombo helps to denounce renewed forms of domination and control over Black people in Brazil. One example of such a renewed form is a post-utopian perspective of Quilombo that ‘represents a deconstruction of color and race as a criterion of exclusion, highlighting the Quilombo as a human right’ (Leite, 2015, p. 1227).

We assume that contextualized epistemologies and methodologies concern the way that local people engage in their historical struggles and construction of specific modes of experience and sharing. Quilombo and Quilombism are political and cultural frameworks that gather several social practices for which language plays a role. In this sense, instead of a descriptive and ethnolinguistic perspective that analyzes language as an abstract and shredded system, we argue that language emerges as a product of social practices. In Brazil, several linguistic studies have described the language spoken by ‘Quilombolas’ (people who live in Quilombos) as a rural Afro-Brazilian Portuguese, a language variety that emerged from a process of language contact and irregular language acquisition (Lucchesi, Baxter, & Ribeiro, 2009). We understand that such a way of framing local language practice contributes to the colonial practice of erasing the way that contextualized and historical practices rearranged or invented local ways
of understanding what counts as language. We contest the reduction of African linguistic and discursive experience into categories as verbal and nominal agreement or a pronominal system or into a schooling invention that helps to reinforce the idea of language as having orthography and system. Even though ethnographic methodologies may help us to deal with local experience, we assume that such a framework is not immune to the colonial categories that have helped to frame linguistics and applied linguistics.

We understand that the label of ‘rural Afro-Brazilian Portuguese’, as applied to designate language practices in Brazilian Quilombos, is problematic, as it reinforces categories that helped to shape the idea of Quilombola as, for example, a lacking identity. Rurality, illiteracy, Africanness, and Portuguese are invented categories that politically tend to group differences, segregate similarities, erase and silence local voices, and invent ways of framing the Other. We argue that such politics of framing the Other, adopted or invented by linguistics or applied linguistics, also helped to shape the view of scholars in certain ways. Our effort to contextualize language practice and the way that we frame such practices also implies deconstructing linguistics and applied linguistics as generic and universal fields. This means that not only is the field under question but also the scholar’s identity. We wonder how far we can go in creating opportunities to resignify ourselves in front of the other or how far we can go in confronting our history and academic mode of framing the world with non-academic experiences. We believe that non-Western methodologies and theories are more than academic and intellectual exercises of creating new categories in a kind of ongoing academic spiral. They also have to do with ethical and political issues that problematize how we became who we are in the geopolitics of knowledge.

By bringing the example of Quilombos in Brazil, we can present several interesting ‘local language practices’ that help to expand the way that we, linguists and applied linguists, have framed language, including the role played by songs, narratives, and silence in constructing a sharing life; the relationship between body, nature, and language; the use of ‘hybrid’ language to assemble different cultural perspectives; the way that community uses language to deal with local conflicts; the way that such people use language to legitimize their history and struggle in dialogue with the dominant; the concept of ‘orality’ and ‘literacy’; and so on. One example is the way that Black people, defined as ‘remainders of Quilombos’, understand the idea of Quilombo as connected to territorial conflict. In this context, shared narratives of a common collective experience in different regions of Brazil helped to shape a national politics of Quilombo as a constitutional right since 1988. For this, elderly voices played a major role:

The testimonies of leaders over 80 years of age recounted the narratives of their ancestors about innumerable efforts legalize their lands. These oral histories of those conflicts discredited the dossiers, maps and land titles presented by the expropriators of their lands, exposing the frauds utilized by bureaucracy to cheat them of their customary, rights to land.

(Leite, 2007, p. 4)

This is an example of how testimony and first-person narrative of elderly people help to shape a sense of community and a collective memory about what counts as justice. In this sense, we ask: how have we, linguists and applied linguists, been able to hear these historical, silenced voices? What is the connection between our concept of language and our capacity to comprehend invisible people’s claims for land and dignity?

Rather than mapping and describing language practices, we aim to problematize local research by taking a step back and questioning our interest in the other. In other words, we ask,
'how willing are we to change our minds about what counts as language and the role that it plays in (un)shaping people’s life, including ours?'

The African politics of proper names and the philosophy of Ubuntu

In this section, we approximate the politics of naming with language policy in consideration of research methods in applied linguistics. We assume that the epistemology that underlies the process of name attribution reveals a political perspective that may reinforce individualist or collectivist frameworks. The relationship between the name and what is being named can be understood from two broad perspectives: an arbitrary one, in which the relationship between the name and its reference does not follow any previous rule, whereby the choice of a name is product of a personal preference, and a motivated perspective, whereby the naming practice follows an ethical or political rule shared by a community. In Christianized societies, the adoption of a proper name is associated with baptism as a sacrament by which ‘Christ unites us to the Church which is his body’ (Bright, 1956, p. 158). In modern and bureaucratic societies, the use of a proper name is connected to juridical issues, by formally individualizing and identifying someone as belonging to a society. Even though we may consider that the politics of proper names is never completely arbitrary, we highlight the rules that explicitly associate the connection between a name and its reference, following a motivated perspective. For doing so, we consider the Shona tradition’s context in which the choice of a name is ‘based on circumstances surrounding the birth of a child or sentimental expressions of parents (or name-givers)’ (Mushangwe, 2016, p. 64).

In Zimbabwe, the practice of naming has a symbolic role that marks ‘the coming into the world of a new being’ (Simões, 2010, p. 1), whereby behind a name there is a meaning that associates that person’s life to a previous or coming experience or to the social and cultural context of a clan or group. Some names, for example, may refer to socioeconomic status, for example, the name Mushayabhachi (someone who cannot afford a jacket), whereby poverty is seen as a misfortune or the product of some kind of calamity; this name also may mean ‘plain skin, a lizard without a single fur’, or ‘someone who is of limited means’ (Simões, 2010). Other examples include the family name Nyamupangedengu, ‘one who gives by the basket’; Karadzandima, ‘one who lets the field lie unattended’; and the clan praise name Mazvimbakupa, ‘one who yearns to give’ (Simões, 2010). Another example that reveals an interwoven relationship between the Shona and Western naming traditions is the use of English names, following a local traditional rule, as in the proper names of Given (Chipiwa), Trymore (Pamhai), Beauty (Runako), Clever (Ngwarai), Remember (Rangarirai), Nomore (Hakuchina), and Trust (Vimbai), all of which are known as Shonglish names (Mushangwe, 2016).

Another example that helps us to problematize the universal and generic categories used in non-Western research methods to describe what counts as language is the South African philosophy of Ubuntu, a system of values and beliefs about people’s experiences and their ability to deal with disputes and conflicts. Such a philosophy, sometimes viewed as utopian, helps to create a sense of collective belonging, with a focus on humanistic values. The collective nature of Ubuntu can be grasped by the Zulu proverb ‘Umuntu ngumuntu nbabantu’, meaning that a person is a person through other persons (Makoni & Severo, 2017). The complexity of Ubuntu can be exemplified by the co-occurrence of the following elements in Zulu (Venter, 2004): unzimba (body), umoya (breath), umphefumela (spirit), amandla (energy), inhliziyo (heart), umqond (head), ulwimi (language), and ubuntu (humanness).

In this perspective, language cannot be understood as isolated from other social and cultural practices, as personhood, language, and being human are strongly connected. In
addition, language cannot be taken apart from an interconnected concept of body and emotion, which deconstructs the rational and abstract idea of language as a logic system. We argue that Ubuntu as a framework carries an ethical perspective that helps us to deconstruct the Western perspective of language and to reframe our research methods. Even though Ubuntu does not explicitly define what language is, we assume that language must be seen through a complex perspective, which means that even the idea that languages exist may be brought into question.

Conclusion

In non-Western research methods, we are interested in ‘relationality’, ‘[t]hat is, in the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings, and contest the totalizing claims and political epistemic violence of modernity’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 1). Relationality, which means cross-geopolitical comparisons, may mean, as we have tried to illustrate in this chapter, comparisons between the nature and impact of colonialism and post-colonialism in different contexts, such as Angola and Brazil (Severo & Makoni, forthcoming). Our understanding of relationality is also consolidated by the notion of vincularidad, which is an awareness of the ‘integral relationship and interdependence amongst living organisms (in which humans are only a part) with territory or land and the cosmos’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 1).

In non-Western research methods in applied linguistics, we have to go beyond analyzing how language is used between humans to understand how language is used to enter into complex communicative relationships with non-humans, often by using specific linguistic registers and genres. An analysis of these communicative practices between humans and non-humans will broaden the nature of our understanding of the role of language in non-Western contexts and enrich Western applied linguistics’ understandings of the nature of language. The challenge that applied linguistics poses in non-Western contexts is how to develop research methods that adequately describe the nature of the communicative relationships between humans and non-humans in diverse contexts without falling into the trap of searching for new abstract, fictitious universals.

Our perspective, outlined in this chapter, does not mean a rejection or negation of Western research methods in applied linguistics, as Western research methods are, indeed, part of the pluriversal research methods, as noted in the opening of this chapter. Our position should not be construed as referring to an uncritical acceptance of Western research methods. Rather, our perspective is different from the conventional Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentric research methods. Our perspective seeks not only to decolonize research methods in applied linguistics but to de-Westernize them as well by seeking to challenge some of the assumptions which form the basis of research methods in applied linguistics, by questioning distinctions between language and non-language, culture and nature (Descola, 2005), human and non-human. The chapter should therefore be read as an ideological critique of research methods in applied linguistics particularly the way language policy and planning is carried out in non-Western contexts. In this sense, ‘[o]ur proposal is for creating and illuminating pluriversal and interversal paths that disturb the totality from which the Universal and the global are often perceived’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 2).

Applied linguistics is value loaded; it means different things to different people, in different contexts, it can either enhance or undermine different users. From such a perspective an analysis of the research methods of applied linguistics as part of the investigation of the
political epistemology of applied linguistics is justifiable. It is justifiable not only because it is appropriate to non-Western contexts, but because the applied linguistics research methods which are appropriate to Western contexts can be utilized in Western contexts because of the immigrant and other vulnerable communities in the Western worlds.

Notes
1 Examples include the chapters by Spencer (‘Colonial Language Policies and their Legacies in sub-Saharan Africa’) and Welmers (‘Christian Missions and Language Policies in Africa’).
2 ‘As for mental colonization, social science – along with several others – should focus on creating the conceptual, technical and material tools to resist the plunder, both of material resources and of people (hands, brains) or, at least, to help us survive to it’.

References
Solidarity and the politics of ‘us’


