
Portraits of the territory: rethinking human-nature relations through languaging practices

Abstract

This workshop aims to rethink human-nature relations through the lens of language practices using a reflexive exercise based on language portraits (Busch 2017, 2018). The workshop will start with a brief illustrative introduction showing how autochthonous people in Amazonia relate to nature within the *chagra* (multispecies horticultural Amazonian gardens). We will then follow with a brief description of how language is experienced as a lived and embodied experience. This will allow participants to reflexively describe their own lived experience of language using a silhouette. Alternatively, they can utilize a white paper to freely represent their language portraits as they deem appropriate. Limited to 30 persons, the workshop will be held in person and last 2 hours and 30 minutes. As the workshop focuses on language descriptions, we expect to see various languages, repertoires, and varieties in language portraits, despite French, Spanish, and English being the vehicular languages for the exercise. When a different language appears in language portraits, participants will ensure that their translations are comprehensible to the entire group. Once the participants have finished the description of their portraits, they will socialize the outcomes in small groups (Five groups of 6 people). To do so, we will use a group technique called Autumn leaves. The participants from each group must stand up and form a semicircle. On a large piece of paper (A0), the facilitator writes the question: *How is the relationship between humans and nature expressed in your language portrait?* and then place it on the floor in the middle of the semicircle so that all participants can read it. The facilitator asks participants to think individually about possible answers to this question, in silence. As the participants start to have some ideas, they should write them in a synthetic, clear and legible way on an A4 sheet (provided). Participants can write down as many ideas as they wish following the rule: "one idea = one sheet". They then place the (autumn) leaf next to the question that is on the ground. Participants can read the ideas on the floor for inspiration and group similar ones together. In this way, participants can complement each other's ideas. The placement of the ideas on the ground is the responsibility of the group and not of the facilitator. Once the participants have finished depositing their "autumn leaves", the facilitator ask them to make sure that the grouping of the sheets (leaves) corresponds to what the group wants. Facilitator doesn't bundle ideas; he just makes sure that everyone participates respectfully in the grouping of ideas. When the group agrees with the grouping of ideas, the facilitator in plenary reads the main groups of ideas as a synthesis and provide explanations/clarifications. They can also ask participant.es for clarification on ideas that are unclear. We will need ten craft papers (A0 format), 60 A4 paper sheets (120grs), 30 markers in different colors, 30 A4 white papers (80grs.), 5 boxes of colored pencils.

Keywords: Language portraits, lived experience of language, language as a social practice