
Cultural ontologies, language science, colonialism

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Résumé

The colonized has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the colonizer. From one day to the next, the colonized have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own.

- Frantz Fanon (2021 (1960): 90).

Our aim is to create a dialogic encounter in which to critically examine the sciences of language as practices/theories in a complex of inter-related social, cultural, political and ideological ecologies. The central focus of the dialogue will be the grounding of knowledge, language and "knowledge of language" in ontological presuppositions that remain largely unacknowledged and unexplored by language sciences. Our reference to 'cultural ontologies' has its roots in a theoretical orientation shared by influential anthropological writings in the last decades (e.g. Descola 2013; Viveiros de Castro 2015). The ontological turn signifies an exploration of the plurality of worlds (including the diversity of natures) that are lived in by people in different cultural settings.

The multiplicity of ways of organizing the fundamental categories of being (ontological pluralism) can be considered as principal sources of variation in the experiential envelope that holds the 'being-in-the-world' of members of a cultural community. Cultural ontologies embed both the conceptual and linguistic organization of the world that languaging is about, and the 'ecologies' of socially situated practices (Sinha and Silva Sinha 2024). Traditional western linguistics largely neglects (as both cause and consequence of a colonial, extractive ideology and ecologic) ontological pluralism in analytic procedures ranging from typology to metaphor theory. We shall invite scholars (including Indigenous scholars) from around the world to share their knowledge and insights, in person and if necessary online, in order to further an agenda of language eco-sciences.

References

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