

Decolonizing (Socio-)linguistics – Project or Provocation

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At first glance, sociolinguistics might seem an unlikely candidate for decolonization: it has a long history of being committed to social justice and progressive language activism; of interrogating the workings of power; of recognizing language and semiotic practices in their plurality and multitude; of valuing diversity and challenging hegemonic uniformity. Yet – its commitment to social justice notwithstanding – sociolinguistics carries traces of coloniality and much of the work that we teach, and draw on, is marred by Eurocentrism. Decolonization is not just an act of uncovering, deconstructing and unlearning, it is also an act of building new worlds. It is equally about ‘dismantling the master’s house’ as it is about building new intellectual homes. In this talk I want to engage not only in critique, but also reimagine scholarship about language – broadly understood as meaning-making and semiosis – by drawing inspiration from the black radical tradition and Indigenous scholarship.