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Language, gender and sexuality in 2020: forward Global South

Jaspal Naveel Singh

Abstract

The Global South is a postcolonial imagined community that bears the potential to imagine powerful south-south solidarity between the struggles for decoloniality of diverse populations across the world. To prepare our field's pan-global future, this year-in-review overrepresents literature on gender, sexuality and language from/on the Global South. This decolonial move aims to notice and promote southern tactics of resistance, southern epistemologies and southern theories and evaluate what can be learnt if we look southward on our way forward. Some literature from the Global North will be considered too. The review is structured using three overlapping foci: (1) embodied and linguistic resistance, (2) mediatisation and scale and (3) fragile masculinities. I conclude by suggesting that our research should stay locally situated and globally radical.

[Abstract in Hindi]

ग्लोबल साउथ एक पोस्ट-कलोनीअल काल्पनिक समुदाय है जो दुनिया भर में विविध आबादी की डीकलोनीऔलिटी के लिए संघर्षों के बीच शक्तिशाली दक्षिण-दक्षिण एकजुटता की कल्पना कराने की क्षमता रखता है। हमारे क्षेत्र के वैश्विक भविष्य को तैयार करने के लिए, इस साल की समीक्षा में ग्लोबल साउथ से / पर लिंग (जेन्डर), लैंगिकता और भाषा पर साहित्य का प्रतिनिधित्व किया गया है। इस डीकलोनीअल कदम का उद्देश्य प्रतिरोध की दक्षिणी रणनीति, दक्षिणी ज्ञानमीमांसा और दक्षिणी सिद्धांतों को पहचानना और मूल्यांकन करना है कि अगर हम अपने रास्ते पर दक्षिण की ओर देखें तो क्या सीखा जा सकता है। ग्लोबल नॉर्थ के कुछ साहित्य पर भी विचार किया जाएगा। समीक्षा को तीन अतिव्यापी विषयों का उपयोग करके संरचित किया गया है: (१) सन्नहित और भाषाई प्रतिरोध, (२) मध्यस्थता और स्केल (scale) और (३) संवेदनशील पुरुषत्व। मैं यह सुझाव देते हुए अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूँ कि हमारा शोध स्थानीय स्तर पर मौलिक और विश्व स्तर पर क्रांतिकारी होना चाहिए।

KEYWORDS: EMBODIMENT, GLOBAL SOUTH, MASCULINITY, MEDIA, RESISTANCE, SCALES

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Go south!

If coloniality goes west, decoloniality must go south. The editors of this journal, in their state-of-the-art historical overview of our field in *The International Encyclopedia of Linguistic Anthropology*, concluded with the suggestion that ‘moving southward is the way forward for the future of language and gender’ (Hall, Borba and Hiramoto 2020:906). They argue that if we want to understand how language, gender and sexuality intersect with current forms of coloniality, racism, governance, media and transnational flows, it is not enough that northern scholars visit, research and write about the Global South. Rather, to imagine ‘the field’s pan-global future’ (905), we need to develop southern theories, southern tactics and southern epistemologies (see also Milani and Lazar 2017). In this year-in-review, I take up this call by paying particular attention to how such southern epistemologies were presented and discussed in academic articles and books on gender, sexuality and language in 2020.

If our decolonial future is the south, it must be noted right at the outset that the majority of publications in the previous year were northern, written by scholars from the north and about the north, and were therefore past-oriented. On a simple plane of quantity of publications, the south was evidently underrepresented in 2020. All scholars, authors, editors, reviewers, publishers and funders who are somehow linked to our industry thus have to work much harder to include more voices and theories from the south in our internationally renowned publication outlets. This is certainly easier said than done, given the stark discrepancies that exist between the north and the south in terms of institutional infrastructures, professional networks, access to funding, ease of writing in a recognisably standardised English register, safety, freedom of speech and other shibboleths. But it seems to me that rejecting a paper or book manuscript simply because ‘the grammar is bad’, it is ‘not quite cutting edge’ or doesn’t engage with Euroamerican theory is bad practice for decoloniality. If we want to do our part in undoing global injustice, we all need to review empathetically, assess nonthreateningly and be generally kind in our academic politics and business. We might come around to the idea that perhaps the grammar could be fixed and that topics discussed in, say, North America thirty years ago might still or again be relevant in Asia, Africa and Central and South America today. Academic research and the cultures it describes develop at different speeds and relative to different cyclical paradigm shifts. We should embrace such global chronotopic complexity and resist any ethnocentric or colonially inherited temptation to interpret the North Atlantic’s temporality as the universal apex of development and the research conducted in universities in northwestern Europe, the USA and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and perhaps in other settler colonial contexts too, as always, *per definitionem*, ahead of everybody else’s research.

Yet in this review I do not want to paint a negative picture of the current state of affairs in gender and language research. I want to stay hopeful. (For more on the metapragmatics and political potentials of ‘hope’, see Borba 2019; Hiramoto, Borba and Hall 2020; Silva and Lee, 2021.) Although quantitatively the south was underrepresented, qualitatively speaking, 2020 was an incredible year for expanding our field’s global scope and thereby interrogating our theoretical and methodological normativities, continuing the laudable development noted by Calder (2020) in their 2019 year-in-review in this journal. Our field’s global scope has allowed us to advance our critical engagements with decoloniality, southern theory, racialisation, intersectionality and queer resistance against colonial and capitalist cisheteropatriarchy. To shine a light on these developments, articles and books that deal with such issues will be put front and centre of this review. I will mainly consider publications on and from the Global South.

A quick (and entirely unexhaustive) definition seems necessary here. What is the Global South and where does it begin and end? (For more sophisticated discussions, see e.g. Pennycook and Makoni 2020.) I take the position that the Global South is not a neutral geographical description that could simply be pointed at on a map before an analysis of colonial oppression; nonetheless, the term derives its argumentative power from the freedom struggles and quests for identity of the people from the globe's southern hemisphere, or people who are otherwise connected to geographies that lie south of Europe and that have been invaded, racialised and colonised by white Europeans, such as the entire African continent, large parts of the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, Australia, the Pacific and the Americas. But we know that European colonisation was not a geographically static type of oppression; rather, it involved – and still involves – large-scale displacement of people, forced migration, slavery and genocide. Thus, instead of a Euclidian geography, the Global South is a postcolonial imagined and imaginative community that bears the potential to imagine powerful south-south solidarity between the struggles for decoloniality of diverse populations across the world, such as, for example, Palestinian freedom fighters, Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, Nigerian or African American protesters against police brutality, Kashmiri Muslim women resisting military lockdowns and many others. What these southern struggles share – although each of course in their own idiosyncratic ways and perhaps entirely differently articulated by spokespersons of these struggles – is a recognition that global inequality, induced by 500 years of colonial modernity and intensified in the current neoliberal postcolony, has created unliveable circumstances that must be redressed in order to imagine the future as hopeful – a way forward out of coloniality, so to say. However, on our way 'forward' we must – and this is the difficult bit – find a route that will lead us *away not towards* coloniality's mesmerising narrative of linear progress, modernity, development and civilisation.

These will thus be the themes, perspectives and tendencies that I try to carve out of the vast body of literature on gender, sexuality and language that was published in 2020. By no means is this review 'representative' of last year's publications, if we understand the term as having something to do with quantitative verification. Yet to move forward and to imagine hopeful futures, allow me this space to overrepresent what is underrepresented in our field. I will look southward to imagine the future directions of our field as hopeful. What are the theories, the methods, the epistemologies and the perspectives with which people in and of the Global South construct language, gender and sexuality? How can these southern tactics inform our understanding of global politics, dissent, resistance and subversion? How can we achieve better intersectional global solidarity that is less likely to be co-opted by Empire? To explore these questions, I structure the review using three overlapping foci: (1) embodied and linguistic resistance, (2) mediatisation and scale and (3) fragile masculinities.

Embodied and linguistic resistance

Bhatia and Gajjala (2020) analyse narratives collected among Muslim women who participated in the Shaheen Bagh protests in Delhi, India, which took place in late 2019/early 2020. The protesters opposed the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), put into force by the Indian government, which is currently dominated by the BJP, a rightwing Hindutva nationalist party. The CAA, the protesters claim, disproportionately discriminates against Muslim refugees in India and therefore violates India's constitutionally enshrined state secularism. Bhatia and Gajjala (2020:6291) argue that the sheer physical presence of Muslim women in public space became a tactic for intersectional subversion: 'the insertion of Muslim

female bodies within politically charged, Hindutva-dominated public spaces, subverts the biased discourse that Muslim women lack agency and are oppressed by patriarchal Muslim men'. In order to be effective, these subversive tactics of embodiment needed to be mediated. Bhatia and Gajjala show how the protesters used social media to become globally visible and build connective solidarities with other female-led protests around the world. These forms of mediation seem to be imbued with an ethics of care, which creates a welcoming atmosphere of intersectional conviviality, affect and love. Bhatia and Gajjala (2020:6300) caution us not to interpret such decolonial notions of care within 'White feminist frameworks', which frame the caring woman as supportive and nonviolent. By making their bodies publicly visible, the female protestors at Shaheen Bagh had to constantly face and repel police brutality, attacks by Hindu fanatics, public shaming and online harassment. Thus, the authors emphasise that we need to understand the Shaheen Bagh protests in the context of local systems of oppression that, while they stand in historical connection to British imperialism in India, need to be resisted by these Muslim women with historically situated tactics of the mediated body that are meaningful in contemporary Indian society. Care, as it emerged during the Shaheen Bagh demonstrations and on social media, might then be understood as a southern theory, a hopeful resistance against the colonial forces of the immediate spacetime. For different understandings of care, see Friend's (2020) study of gay digital peer educators in Senegal, which I will discuss in a later section, and Motschenbacher's (2020) linguistic landscape analysis of affective regimes of love and care in a 'gay-friendly' neighbourhood in southern Florida.

Milani, Awayed-Bishara, Gaftar and Levon (2020) discuss queer protests and resistance against coloniality in Israel/Palestine. They argue that stasis – staying put, slowing down and stillness – can forge a radically progressive politics of dissent. Stasis stands in dialectical relationship to movement, an idea that is more readily associated with progress. The authors present examples of banners and performative enactments of protests opposing the 2018 Pride Parade in Tel Aviv, an annual event which had been co-opted by a national branding strategy that seeks to frame Israel as progressive and 'gay-friendly', which in turn frames Palestinians and Arabs as backward and homophobic. Such pinkwashing was opposed by queer Palestinian activists and queer Israeli groups from the left. Milani et al. show how protesters used references to and imagery of the checkpoint – a material technology of movement reduction and a metaphor for Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza – and turned it into a queer counterpoint (drawing on Edward Said), 'an instrument of sexual insubordination through which to speak back to Israeli pinkwashing' (Milani et al. 2020:1662). By blocking the march, slowing it down or refusing to acknowledge it, these protesters queered the status quo. Stasis can thus be seen as a queer utopian counterpoint to the current dystopia of coloniality. Stasis, perhaps another southern theory, is progress because it reimagines colonised space as part of an intersectional antiheteronormative struggle.

Milani et al.'s paper, together with seventeen others, appears in a special issue on resistance in today's fragile democracies edited by Moita-Lopes and Plaza Pinto (2020) in the Brazilian journal *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*. The articles, many of which discuss gender and sexuality, focus on people's resistance against oppressive state powers and rightwing and antidemocratic movements in various parts of the world, such as Brazil, Britain, Italy, South Africa and Poland. For example, Araújo, Biar and Bastos (2020) present narratives of mothers and other relatives of victims of police violence in Rio de Janeiro who united to form an activist network against state-sanctioned violence. Their narratives are transformative because they turn suffering and mourning into collective political struggle that disturbs

structural oppression. Pakuła and Chojnicka (2020) outline an ‘interagentive matrix’ of resistance strategies developed by LGBT+ students and activists in Polish universities. To resist discriminatory practices on several scales, including systemic trans- and homophobia, everyday ‘jocular’ abuses and rightwing student groups’ agitation, the queer students form advocative groups, organise queer lectures and reading circles and support each other individually. However, at times their resistance strategies are faced with counter-resistance by bureaucratic procedures of the institution or by individual moralistic vigilantes. In such cases, LGBT+ activists found new resistance strategies, such as removing the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ from titles for seminars and dissertations but keeping the contents the same (Pakuła and Chojnicka 2020:1774). Several other papers from this special issue will be discussed in later sections of this review.

Resistance is also the theme in Jones’ (2020) research into identity constructions in a community of practice of transgender youth and their parents in Britain. In interaction, the youth resist society’s transphobia and heteronormativity by constructing a positive self-identity that is validated and active rather than othered and submissive. Washington (2020) studies several resistance tactics – namely signifying, resignification and semantic reclamation – in African American Women’s Language (AAWL) (see also Morgan 2020). Washington considers three cases from US politics in which Black women speak back, stage protests and reclaim slurs. She explores how signifying practices and discursive features of AAWL are used to construct Black womanhood and imagine an intersectional Black feminist resistance against white supremacy, patriarchy and the border-prison-industrial complex. AAWL is thus a ‘counterlanguage’ – and perhaps also a southern theory – that ‘clapbacks against masculinist discourses’ (Washington 2020:371).

Martin-Anatias (2020) analyses codeswitching in dialogues from two Indonesian films that thematise homosexuality. She shows how characters in the films use codeswitching, locally termed *bahasa gado-gado* (*bahasa* means ‘language’, and *gado-gado* is a popular salad potpourri dish, the literal meaning of *gado* being ‘mix’), to mediate nonnormative sexual identities. For example, the term *gay*, which is recognised as ‘English’ and is used in speech contexts of *bahasa gado-gado*, is neutrally or positively charged in the films, while the terms *homo* and *homoseksual* are recognised as ‘Indonesian’ and carry negative and derogatory connotations. The bilingual practice of codeswitching, Martin-Anatias (2020:1558) argues, helps the characters ‘put homosexuality and Indonesianness side by side and view the pairing positively’.

Such embodied and linguistic tactics of resistance continue to be analysed by researchers in our field, as well as by researchers in the emerging field of translanguaging research or translinguistics (Lee and Dovchin 2020). Yet it seems from my review of the literature in 2020 that translanguaging is currently not very well theorised in language, gender and sexuality research (but see Fabrício and Moita-Lopes 2019 on transidiomaticity in performances of a queer Brazilian rapper). Better interdisciplinary connections between the two fields could be fruitful, not least for expanding the global reach of our research. It might well be the case that translanguaging scholars can learn more from gender, sexuality and language scholars than the other way around. Zimman’s (2020) proposal for trans linguistics represents a powerful starting point to rethink both the linguistic practices of trans people who find themselves represented in our work, as well as the perspectives and epistemologies of trans people who themselves conduct linguistic research. Trans linguistics is a new theoretical perspective on language, gender and sexuality that understands trans experiences and subjectivities not as rare exceptions within cissexist normativities but as central to the

production, understanding and development of sociocultural linguistic research and theory. In his review of relevant literature spanning the last three decades, including many articles and books on and from the Global South, Zimman finds that trans people and trans linguists have been successful in challenging several normative viewpoints in sociocultural linguistics by, for example, complicating our understandings of grammatical gender binarity (for an excellent survey of gendered pronouns, see also Conrod 2020), questioning dominant sociophonetic imaginations of ‘male’ and ‘female’ voices and challenging heteronormative and homonormative discourses.

What all these examples demonstrate is that the languaging body, whether semiotically adorned with speech, symbols and intertextualities or simply visible, even in stasis, can become a decolonial tactic for political resistance (see also Stroud et al. 2020), an instrument for refusing normativities and a channel to establish transnational solidarity (for a related discussion on transnational feminist refusal, see Borba, Hall and Hiramoto 2020). We can further advance our decolonial efforts if we allow southern theories of the discursive body to resonate in our research more loudly. The call for an embodied sociolinguistics (Bucholtz and Hall 2016) and recent turns towards raciolinguistics (Rosa and Flores 2017) might be promising steppingstones on our route forward. We must also continue to pay attention to the ‘un-discursive’ body in stasis. Here we could learn from what Taylor (2020) calls a ‘politics of presence’. Simply being there might be the only hopeful option whenever we ask ourselves: ‘What can we do when apparently nothing can be done, and doing nothing is not an option?’ (Taylor 2020:2). This notion of embodied presence strikes me as an important future direction in language, gender and sexuality research, perhaps especially for the more anthropologically inclined research strands. What can a Geertzian being there and a Peircean indexical presencing, for instance, bring to the table?

Mediatisation and scales

As the literature reviewed so far suggests, today’s embodied and linguistic constructions of cisheteropatriarchy and coloniality – and resistance against such constructions – often take place through channels of (online) mediatisation; and this trend is likely to continue in the following years due to our dependency on online communication during the ongoing pandemic and climate catastrophe. Certainly this raises new questions about global injustice and subalternity. We need a better grasp of the workings of the digital divide to understand how those who can mediatise themselves and their struggles might – or might not – also represent those who cannot. Such questions are inherently connected to the problem of scales and scalability, which many papers published in 2020 used as analytical lenses.

A special issue in *The Journal of Language and Sexuality* (Campbell and Haynes 2020) features three articles (Friend 2020; Haynes 2020; Sinanan 2020) and one commentary (Russell 2020) that focus on constructions of the digital self in the Global South. Sinanan (2020) analyses social media posts by three young heterosexual women in a semi-urban town in Trinidad. By providing thick descriptions of the ethnographic and historical context, Sinanan shows how the women orient to different discourses of visibility and visibility in Trinidad and how they use different online platforms to navigate local and global scales. Haynes (2020) discusses online memes that circulate among male copper miners in Chile. The memes construct coherent digital selves for these miners by indirectly indexing heterosexuality as well as a type of modernity associated with mining and racialised notions of *mestizaje* linked to Chilean nationalism. Friend (2020) studies gay men in Senegal who are

hired by an eHealth NGO to become Digital Peer Educators (DPEs) and circulate HIV/AIDS prevention messages through social media and online dating apps. The DPEs use multiple online pseudonyms to engage other men in flirtatious online interaction and build up trust and expectation in order to then be able to send them sexual health prevention messages and fulfil their quotas. The NGO thereby instrumentalises what Friend calls ‘queer biocommunicability’. Employing a Wolof ethics of *sutura* (‘discretion’), which evokes containment of the disease as well as containment of seductive and erotic digital discourse, the NGO ultimately frames queer bodies as contagious and dangerous and thereby imposes heteronormative frameworks of care. The DPEs, however, also exceed the possibilities of the NGO’s heteronormative underpinnings of care to reimagine digital connectivity as care in and by itself. Friend describes how some of the DPEs got together to start their own eHealth NGO and reintroduced into their care and support work some of the digital affordances of queer biocommunicability, such as multiplicity of connections, virtual anonymity, translocal solidarity and individual agency. The Senegalese DPE’s reimagination of care can be read as a southern tactic which allows them to establish solidarity and imagine hopeful futures across scales while continuing to live under oppressive homophobic regimes.

Marino (2020) studies online videos made by Māori Takatāpui activists in Aotearoa/New Zealand. ‘Takatāpui’ is a culture-specific umbrella term to refer to Māori with nonconforming *wairua* (spiritualities and gender identities) as well as nonconforming sexualities and sex characteristics. While the activists’ primary aim is to make visible and thereby support Takatāpui people, provide information about HIV/AIDS and prevent suicide in the community, Marino also shows through her multimodal analysis that the videos make frequent reference to a range of other Māori theories and forms of sociopolitical organisation, such as *whakapapa* (genealogy, ancestors), *wairua* (spirituality), *korero* (need for speaking), *whanau* (family and community), *mana* (power), *te aroha* (the love) and *Marae* (an inclusive, convivial and safe meeting place). By constructing such precolonial chronotopes, the videos imagine Takatāpui identity as part of a broader intersectional revitalisation of Māori culture and as therefore not only a queer struggle but also a decolonial struggle. A similar intersectionality is discussed in Marques and Camargo’s (2020) study of Instagram posts of the black trans artist Djankaw, who is a resident of a *quilombo* settlement in the interiors of Brazil and also the first author of the article. In Djankaw’s carefully curated posts, their black trans body, adorned with mythical symbols and placed in nature, interrogates and challenges dominant ideas about race, ancestry, class, sexuality and religion in contemporary Brazil. The highly stylised posts make use of a wide variety of digital affordances of the multimodal web, which also challenges dominant ideas about access to technology on a scale of urbanity and rurality.

Yet in our celebrations of the participatory web we mustn’t forget that media can also be used to propagate cisheteropatriarchy. Ellece (2020) studies homophobic online comments in response to a newspaper article reporting on a gay wedding in Botswana. The online comments depict homosexuality as a threat to morality, religion, public health and cultural heritage. However, Ellece also shows examples of more tolerant comments that challenge homophobic discourse. Borba and Silva (2020) discuss debates that occurred on social media in relation to a poster advertising a transphobic lecture organised by members of the Brazilian rightwing group *Articulação Conservadora* (Conservative Alliance). The poster frames transgenderism as an epidemic, effectively re-pathologising nonnormative expressions of gender and sexuality. Borba and Silva use a theory of scales to analyse the online circulation of the poster and ensuing debates about re-pathologisation as reflecting larger tendencies of

de-democratising and re-democratising in Brazil's history. Eventually, the activists were successful in stopping the lecture from taking place.

Such remediatisations (see Lazar and Ke 2020, discussed in the next section) between 'old' and 'new' media are fruitful areas of investigation in our field. Articles in Nakamura's (2020a) special edition of this journal explore constructions of masculinity and femininity in Japanese popular media such as novels (Suzuki 2020), TV dramas (Nakamura 2020b; Saito 2020), talk shows (Fukuda 2020), TV advertisements (Konstantinovskaia 2020) and online posts about manga (Unser-Schutz 2020). The collection continues the long tradition of gender, sexuality and language research in Japan, perhaps one of the more familiar non-western – but perhaps not geographically southern? – contexts in our field. Particularly noteworthy for the purposes of this review is that many of the papers in this special issue take intersectional perspectives and discuss gender, sexuality, media and language alongside processes of racialisation.

Another important work on media constructions of gender, sexuality and desire in contemporary Japan is Maree's (2020) monograph *Queerqueen*. Maree studies how popular Japanese media producers inscribe a hyperbolic variety of 'women's speech' to construct a mediated figure of the queerqueen; a male, heterosexual fashion and lifestyle icon who appears in the media as a makeover artist or celebrity. Drawing on Inoue's earlier work on 'women's speech' constructed and mediated by the male listening subject, Maree shows how the persona of the queerqueen is constructed, even ventriloquised, through the collaborative efforts of teams of transcribers, editors, graphic designers and content media producers. In these constructions, the speech of the queerqueen is imagined as excessive, a register that is at once perceived as playful and as something to be tamed or controlled.

Rojas-Sosa (2020) examines constructions of gender and race in an English language beauty magazine targeting Latinas in the USA. In this magazine, racialised stereotypes are ordered according to a neoliberal assimilatory logic of scalar acceptability in mainstream America, or what the author also calls 'levels of Latinidad'. Focusing on feature articles that give advice about hairstyles, Rojas-Sosa finds that the magazine suggests that Latina hair should be 'controlled', 'tamed' and 'coloured', effectively regularising and domesticating the Latina body, while still suggesting that young Latina bodies should be 'exotic' and 'spicy' enough to fulfil their potential to become a commodity as an 'Other' in mainstream American capitalism.

Age is thus another category that received attention this year. For instance, Hadodo and Kanwit (2020) analyse the role of morphological diminutives, typically associated with children and women, to index perceived gayness in male speech in Madrid Spanish. Using perception experiments, they find that diminutives play into the construction of perceiving adult men as gay. Starr, Wang and Go (2020) provide an acoustic analysis of young Chinese female vloggers who project certain voice qualities that trigger ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) in their listeners. Among these voice qualities is a particular high-pitched voice connected with the *sajiao* ('whining') persona, which is typically associated with a young and sexualised amateurish camgirl. The authors trace how such voice qualities construct affective stances of sensuality and sexuality and how the Chinese performers juxtapose local and nonlocal semiotic resources to index their participation in the transnational ASMR online community. Koh's (2020) semiotic study of unusual 'fancy' colour terms used by the South Korean cosmetics industry finds that the linguistic mediation of naming entails a scaling of femininity: first a scaling into age brackets and a subsequent

rescaling into types of customers with different purchasing potentials. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2020, originally published in 2016 in this journal) conduct a multimodal analysis of stock images and corpus analysis of western English language discourses of grandmothing and ageing. They find evidence for ageist and sexist semiotic representations that trivialise and derogate the figure of the grandmother. Understanding such intersections of gender, language and age is a crucial strategy for identity research, media studies, (critical) marketing research and critical discourse analysis. A gerontological perspective should remain front and centre in our research – perhaps particularly if we want to adequately respond to the new challenges brought to us by the pandemic and its aftermath, which, it seems, has reinforced gerantophobia in societies worldwide, overwhelmed infrastructures of professional and private care and made age available as a new biopolitical strategy for Capital and Empire.

Heinrichsmeier's (2020) book on constructions of age and aging in older women's everyday talk in a small village hair salon in Britain was a refreshing read for me while I was preparing this review. Heinrichsmeier shows that hair and appearance – and associated talk – even though downplayed as trivial by the women, are important aspects for their multiple constructions of identity. The salon is also a space of social conviviality, and clients experience considerable pleasure from being 'pampered' and being 'taken care of'. Ladies' talk about hair in a salon in a small and entirely white village in Britain might strike us as the polar opposite of – though perhaps a valuable counterpoint to – the Global South realities that I aimed to emphasise in this review. Yet, like when asking about the scope of the Global South, we have to ask ourselves: where does intersectionality begin and end? Is it possible to imagine global solidarities between white elderly ladies doing hair talk in a salon, Muslim women protesting in Shaheen Bagh and Māori Takatāpui activists?

A tentative and partial answer is provided in Al-Ali's (2020) discussion about the challenges, initiatives and dilemmas of Covid-19 for feminism in the Global South. Although not immediately about language, Al-Ali's article serves as an important reminder that our pan-global intersectionality must be multiscalar. Like many other papers reviewed here, Al-Ali emphasises the need for locally and historically situated solutions which at the same time allow new opportunities of transnational feminist solidarity and democratic participation. Al-Ali suggests that this multiscalar orientation can only be possible if northern feminists actively work to give voice and control to feminist initiatives from the Global South. If the south is the future, southern feminisms – which we could also conceptualise as Indigenous feminisms (Coburn and LaRocque 2020) – will need to take the lead role in the next decade when it comes to setting the agenda and predicting the directions for our pan-global activism against patriarchal and heteronormative coloniality.

Fragile masculinities

Despite the progress made in articulating and finding mediated southern tactics for queer and female resistance, masculinism and chauvinism seem as successful as ever in today's international politics (for analyses of language in the Trump era, see chapters in McIntosh and Mendoza-Denton 2020). To scholars of language, gender and sexuality, the global success of male political leaders who capitalise on stereotypical imaginaries of masculinist behaviour, language and bodies for voter mobilisation must appear like bizarre parodies of an era we thought we had long overcome. The masculinist revival that we see playing out on the political stages of some of the largest and most 'important' (geopolitically and economically speaking) countries of our times, such as China, Brazil, India, Russia and the USA, make our

political democracies fragile (Silva and Rosado 2020), and they must also have some effect on individuals' constructions of masculinities and researchers' critical conceptualisations of masculinities. Also, as a person who largely identifies as a heterosexual, cis male, I have a personal interest in understanding how I can further deconstruct and unlearn some of the patriarchally sedimented patterns and behaviours in the presentation of my fragile self in everyday life. So, I could not resist including materials on masculinity for this review.

Relevant publications in 2020 tended to emphasise masculine fragility, i.e. a sense of male anxiety and insecurity concerning the appropriateness of linguistic and embodied constructions of gendered and sexualised relationships. Bogetić (2020) uses corpus analysis to study Serbian gay men's scaling practices on the self-presentations on online dating profiles. She finds that many personal ads emphasise grammatical collocations and cultural concepts that create distance from stereotypical associations with fully delegitimised identities of male homosexuality, such as being effeminate, and instead align with more normalised and dominant ideals of neoliberal modernity and Serbian national male heterosexuality. García-Gómez (2020) shows how heterosexual and queer Spanish men occupy masculine and feminine positionalities on dating apps. Their stancetaking seems to involve a policing of femininity, but also raises questions about contradictory gender ideas on these profiles and in Spanish society at large.

Lazar and Ke (2020) study discourses of motherhood in a Chinese TV reality show and their remediations on social media. Although these discourses of motherhood show some changes in the shifting socioeconomic conditions and gender relations of contemporary China, they largely reproduce a culture-specific *nei-wai* ('inside/outside') ideology that positions the mother as responsible for domestic reproductive labour and the father as the main breadwinner who is partially freed from the everyday responsibilities of the home. The discourses of motherhood as they appear on TV and social media thus stand in dialectic relationship to discourses of fatherhood. Similar findings are presented in SturtzSreetharan and Shibamoto-Smith's (2020) article on discourses of fatherhood in the Japanese TV drama *Massan*. Set in the 1920s, the drama tells the story of the Japanese man Masaharu Kameyama who returns to Japan from Scotland with his Scottish wife Ellie to pursue his dream of making Scotch whiskey with Japanese-grown ingredients. The analysis focuses on dialogues between Ellie and Japanese women and men. The presence of the foreign wife initiates overt discussions about husband-wife relations and discourses of fatherhood in Japan, which, as SturtzSreetharan and Shibamoto-Smith argue, resonate with contemporary discourses of Japanese salarymen (see also Saito 2020), who are imagined to be emotionally awkward and eager to find women willing to become professional housewives.

Li and Blommaert (2020) provide an analysis of nonsexual female masochism on Weibo, a social media platform in China. They discuss the case of women sending pictures of themselves to Liujishou, a male internet celebrity, eagerly awaiting his abusive comments on their appearance and personality. This might at first sight seem like a subordination of these women to gendered hierarchism and the male gaze. Yet Li and Blommaert argue that in fact this practice contributes to a deconstruction of patriarchy and sexism. As Liujishou does not know these women personally and because he has to respond to so many of them, his abuses are made up of ridiculous storylines that say more about his own anxieties and psychological complexes than about the women's appearances – a kind of Bakhtinian grotesque realism that affords a ludic-carnavalesque response from women collectively laughing back at him.

Carnavalesque laughing is also the topic of Bekker and Levon's (2020) study on media and academic discourses around the internationally successful South African white Afrikaner rap-rave group Die Antwoord, who stage and mediatise parodic (i.e. varidirectional) performances and incongruous juxtapositions that restate problematic dominant constructions of race, age, gender, sexuality and language in post-apartheid South Africa without offering a solution or an answer. Such positions are culturally understood as connected to *zef* identities (somewhat similar to North American conceptualisation of 'white trash' identities). For some the group represents cultural appropriation of the musical and aesthetic achievements of Cape Coloured hip hop cultural practitioners, while for others Die Antwoord offers a subversive and intersectional move away from the country's apartheid past and 'a possible way forward toward a "postracial" South Africa' (Bekker and Levon 2020:117). The article presents a detailed semiotic analysis of Die Antwoord's 2012 music video 'Baby's on Fire' to argue that the group's performances of *zef* identities go beyond a simple binary between either parody or cultural appropriation. Instead, Die Antwoord's propagation of *zef* seems to enact a highly reflexive metaparodic position through, for example, hyperbolic depictions of white heterosexual masculinity, which can be interpreted as, again, a form of Bakhtinian grotesque realism that affords '*ambivalent laughter*, a statement of the arbitrariness (and ridiculousness) of the current South African racial order' (Bekker and Levon 2020:136, original emphasis).

Alim, Lee, Carris and Williams (2020) investigate how freestyle rappers in Cape Town and Los Angeles in improvised and co-constructed verbal rhyming performances challenge the dominance of whiteness and celebrate Blackness/Colouredness, yet this happens at the expense of already marginalised gendered and sexualised bodies. Thus, the rappers, while doing important antiracist work in their communities, reproduce cisheteropatriarchy. Somewhat similar racialised inflections of masculinity are also explored in Pua and Hiramoto's (2020) analysis of Hollywood portrayals of the white North American ninja hero and the Japanese ninja. The Japanese ninja, whether in the role of the villain or the ally of the white American hero, is depicted as asexual and restricted by clan associations, while the white American ninja hero, although adorned with certain simulated indexes of traditional Japanese ninja culture and history, essentially embodies ideals of white American heroism, namely heterosexual virility and independence. Pua and Hiramoto argue that Hollywood ninja films are thus simulacra, or copies without originals, of traditional Japanese culture that inflect hegemonic masculinity with dominant racialised stereotypes that have currency in mainstream Anglophone cinema.

Heritage and Koller (2020) use corpus analysis and appraisal theory to study incels' constructions of sexuality and gender. Incels, a portmanteau of 'involuntary celibates', are mostly white heterosexual men from North America who use online forums and blogs to discuss their own inability to have romantic and sexual relationships with women. Understanding their sexualities as 'nonnormative', incels construct scales of desirable masculinities, and associated femininities, who they give certain classed and racialised names. For instance, men to whom women feel attracted are called 'Chads'/'Tyrones', and good-looking women are called 'Stacies'. The incels' sexual insecurities find expression in their misogynistic, homophobic and racist online interactions but sometimes also spill over into the offline world when terrorists who subscribe to incel ideologies commit violent crimes such as mass shootings and vehicle-ramming attacks.

Higher education institutions around the world remain sites in which exclusionary discourses and practices of male toxicity become noticed and written about. This is perhaps because university campuses are often construed as spaces that provide relative safety for women and

queer people and thus act as contact zones wherein older heteropatriarchal ideologies are confronted with the presence of trans and queer bodies and feminist ideas. Vandana (2020) studies violence and harassment against Dalit girls in a north Indian university, which is controlled by upper castes and dominant classes. Analysing narratives from interviews and emphasising the importance of intersectionality between gender, class and caste, Vandana shows that Dalit girls report a range of discriminatory practices with sexual undertones, such as rejection, amusement, astonishment, public humiliation, scolding, male exposure, groping, rape threats and overt and subtle exploitation. Diabah (2020) analyses profane and uncouth language used in songs and verbal practices in all-male halls of residence at the University of Ghana. The male students use misogynist language about female anatomy to project hegemonic masculinities and establish male dominance over women. By metapragmatically framing such profanity as ‘just for fun’, Diabah (2020:117) argues, the young men are able to ‘explore their obsessions without a sense of guilt’. Vanyoro (2020) provides an autoethnographic account of her experiences with sexist, misogynistic and homophobic discourse in Zimbabwean and South African universities. The instances of masculine toxicity in the speech of male lecturers gain their validity and normalcy, she argues, through a colonial matrix of power that roots heteropatriarchy in neoliberalism and coloniality. In line with her autoethnographic approach, Vanyoro suggests that the way forward is not to give abstract recommendations that aim to transform the institution as a whole, but rather to develop individual commitment, assist with individual change and educate individuals who are part of institutions.

McDowell’s (2020) volume *De-gendering Gendered Occupations* collects chapters that focus on a recent development in the field of gender and language, namely the study of men working in traditionally ‘female’ occupations. For instance, Chimbwete-Phiri and Schnurr’s (2020) chapter on male healthcare workers in a rural hospital in Malawi presents interactional data from HIV/AIDS counselling sessions and interviews to show that the male carers use collaborative strategies to construct themselves as caring, trustworthy and empowering. By doing so, they aim to establish an ingroup status and solidarity with women. Nguyễn (2020) uses data from classroom interactions at an English centre in Vietnam to investigate how a male teacher constructs himself as linguistically competent by drawing on speech features and discursive processes that index femininity. Other papers in this volume study the intersections between language and gender in various other occupational settings, for example with male nurses in New Zealand or male teachers in classrooms in various localities of Europe.

Gray and Baynham (2020) discuss men’s narratives about three types of queer migration: from villages or the countryside to the city, between cities in European Union and asylum-seeking from the Global South to the Global North. Gray and Baynham show how these queer migrants narratively construct spatial mobility as a complex intersectional phenomenon that includes questions of gender, sexuality, desire, abjection, economic necessity, politics and fear for one’s life. Rowlett (2020) analyses narratives of men in Siem Reap, a ‘queer-friendly’ tourist hub in Cambodia close to the world-famous Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom heritage sites. These men migrated to the multilingual space of the city in order to develop competence in English and befriend male tourists and expats from the Global North in exchange for financial support for themselves and their families, a practice locally termed as *sponsorship*. Rowlett (2020:638) shows how such southern tactics ‘work from the margins’, a perspective that also allows us to queer academic theories of second language socialisation. Despite the potentials that sponsorship offers to Cambodian men to participate in global economies, the men from the Global North also reproduce racialised colonial infrastructures

that grant them the mobility, relative wealth and linguistic resources to pursue romantic, erotic and emotional relationships in the Global South. Siem Reap thus emerges as sexual-colonial contact zone in which opportunities open up for all, yet in hegemonically structured and uneven ways.

Staying globally radical

My insistence on looking southward in this annual review has revealed that, in 2020, academics working at the intersections of language, gender and sexuality have produced robust accounts of people's diverse struggles against and under patriarchy, heteronormativity and coloniality. In order to further advance such developments, it seems to me that we need to continue exploring, theorising and unlearning some of the intersectional connections between language, gender and sexuality on the one hand and race, Indigeneity, métissage, colourism, racism, class, mobility, age and futures on the other. Additionally, what is so powerfully articulated in some of the work reviewed here is that we need to stay sensitive to locally and historically situated constructions of the self and the group while at the same time helping our participants and marginalised people more generally to foster global intersectional solidarities. Southern theories, tactics and epistemologies are always globally relevant because they are responses to global coloniality, but they seem most effective when they are understood and enacted in their spatiotemporal particularity. The prevalence of scales and multiscalearity in our analyses are a promising development, because scales allow us to explain spatiotemporal complexity and contradictions rather than reduce them for the sake of analytical clarity.

If and to what extent southern theories can challenge and inform mainstream Euroamerican academic orthodoxy remains to be seen in the decade to come. Several theoretical suppositions and methodologies that currently seem productive in our field may need substantial revision. For example, a sizeable proportion of papers featured in this review use ethnographic methods, interviewing and visual documentation, and many use narrative and scale as units of their analysis. Given that such approaches and research methods historically emerged in the Euroamerican academe during the height of European and US American imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we might want to be particularly careful when we use them for our decolonial projects. It will be a challenging and perhaps even discomfiting task for many of us to come to realise that we have to jettison some of the colonial epistemologies and ideologies that underpin our current analytical gaze and research moves. But I believe that airing out our libraries and decluttering our analytical toolboxes will open up hopeful unlearning possibilities for all and give us some conceptual headroom so that we can begin to seriously engage with southern theory.

As a final point, allow me to rehash Cameron's (2020) insistence that our field mustn't forget where it came from if we do not want to lose our radical edge in the fight against injustice (see also chapters in Caldas-Coulthard 2020 for a similar emphasis). Cameron notes that gender and sexuality have now become mainstream topics in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics and that our field has become more international, 'with active research communities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as the older strongholds of North America, Europe, and Australasia' (Cameron 2020:27). While she acclaims the global reach of the field, its attention to intersectionality and its commitment to antiessentialism, she also regrets that current research has largely moved away from its earlier focus on 'real-world sexual inequalities' brought about by 'patriarchal social relations [that] remain deeply

embedded in almost all societies'. While my review tries to cast a spotlight on research that investigates such resistance against locally produced and historically situated patriarchy, as well as resistance against homophobia and transphobia, I hope that my focus on literature on and from the Global South emphasises well enough that such gender and sexual inequalities always intersect with coloniality. In order for us to maintain and further expand our field's hard-earned international orientation, it seems of utmost importance to me that we embrace the decolonial turn that is currently unfolding across the humanities and social sciences. Only a decolonised approach to language, gender and sexuality research can imagine radical change and solidarity on a global scale, and only a queered decoloniality can do so in intersectional ways.

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