Symposium on "Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Culture" at the University of Iowa

Title: A-political linguistics doesn't exist, and it shouldn't: Setting the framework for Liberatory Linguistics

Over the last few years, linguists have begun to take seriously the racist and colonial histories of the field of linguistics. Charity-Hudley, Mallinson, and Bucholtz (2020) wrote a call towards racial justice in linguistics, challenging current scholars to increase inclusivity while decolonizing the field of linguistics. As a result, several authors, including myself, responded with their own reckonings with continued colonial and white supremacist practices within the field, which eventually resulted in a special issue in *Language*, a premier linguistics journal. Following the publication of this special issue, Charity Hudley, Mallinson, and Bucholtz presented a call for the development and publication of two volumes toward racial justice and inclusion in linguistics: Decolonizing Linguistics and Inclusion in Linguistics (forthcoming, Oxford University Press). In the current talk, I discuss an upcoming chapter in the volumes, focusing on the implications of privileging value-based political research agendas in linguistics and affirming the impossibility of neutral and objective scientific linguistic research. I end the talk by sharing the ways that these volumes contain the blueprint for a more liberatory linguistics and language study, providing insights to how we can incorporate the volume into our teaching, our research, and ultimately into our praxis as scholar activists.

(add to abstract depending on space availability in either program or marketing materials).

I argue that linguists must cultivate a practice of transparency, noting not only their positionalities (see Lin 2015; Clemons and Lawrence 2020 for reference to these calls) but also in their political motivations, relationships with the language communities they investigate, and ensuring access to investigative work beyond the academy. Primarily, this talk develops three key takeaways: (1) As language is intimately and inextricably tied to the body, scientific objectivism is an impossibility. Therefore, to develop ethical practices towards social justice, researchers should implement practices of political transparency in the conducting and reporting of linguistic research; (2) Political transparency allows your readers to understand your interpretative frames and the goals for your research; and (3) Centering the language communities under investigation and ensuring they have access to the work you produce is necessary for a justice-oriented linguistics. All other forms of research fall into current ideological hierarchies of white supremacy and colonial formations of power. Specifically, I review the ways in which political transparency has been enacted as Black Feminists Praxis and provide several provocations toward a transparency-based approach. I evidence the benefits of this practice through an example of a value-based research project, which applied African American English (AAE) research traditions to an exploration of Dominican language practices. Through this application, I was able to argue for a Hemispheric Black Community of Practice approach to the study of Caribbean Spanish, ultimately destabilizing the generative and variationists approaches which have dominated the study of Caribbean Spanish in linguistic traditions (Lipski 1993, 2018).

Bio:
Aris Moreno Clemons is an Assistant Professor of Spanish Linguistics in the Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures department at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. Having completed her doctoral degree in the Spanish and Portuguese Department and the Mexican American and Latina/o Studies Department at the University of Texas at Austin, her work spans the fields of linguistics, education, anthropology, and Black and Latinx studies in order to interrogate the intersections of language, race, and identity. Originally from (all over) the Bay Area in California, she has been steeped in the traditions of anti-racist pedagogies and has dedicated herself to developing and sustaining these practices in her own research and teaching. As such, her research agenda is rooted in social change through an examination of the ways that what appears to be common knowledge is often constructed and ideologically maintained by various social institutions. She was the recipient of a Spencer doctoral fellowship, which allowed her to complete research surrounding Dominican language and Identity in digital and educational spaces. And she has recently been awarded an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) fellowship to continue her work on teacher evaluations of Dominican Language as Black language practice. Overarchingly, Aris questions the linguistic mechanisms—

repetitions, stance taking, tropicalizations, etc.—responsible for the (re)construction and maintenance of racializing and marginalizing ideologies.