Re-visiting ”turn” positions and making languaging visible

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Recent ”turn” positions, like the semiotic-, epistemological-, cultural-, interpretive-, mobility-, multilingual-turn, take a point of departure and incorporate ideas enumerated in European 19th-20th century discussions of the relationship between language and philosophy encapsulated in the concept ”the linguistic-turn”. Thus recent turn positions share an understanding vis-à-vis the significance of language in representing and co-creating human realities. While granting that language, discourse and culture play a significant role, some scholars argue that language and cultural representation have ”been granted too much power” (Barad 2003:802). Such post-humanistic discussions refocus attention to materiality and its relationship to language and (continue to) draw upon a philosophically oriented tradition.

With the above as backdrop, my paper draws attention to a dual-gap related to conceptualizations in the area of language itself and the relative paucity of scholarship that center-stages languaging. Thus, while the linguistic-turn highlighted the representational dimensions of language, there is little focus on how representations in themselves co-create specific ways of understanding what language is, where, when, why and for whom it is. In other words, there is need to put the gains accrued from the linguistic-turn in scholarship onto language itself. I will draw upon my work on the boundary-turn (Bagga-Gupta 2013, 2015, 2016) position to highlight the pitfalls and strengths of current ways in which conceptualizations of language itself can contribute to issues of learning in a globalized world. The central aim here is to empirically illustrate the democratic and equity dimensions of focusing the ways in which language itself is conceptualized in school arenas and contrast these with performative ways-of-being-with-words or the languaging in social practices across different settings. I will frame my presentation in what I call a critical social humanistic perspective that draws upon sociocultural theories of communication and learning and a decolonial framing of communication and identity.

Keywords: Boundary-turn, Linguistic-turn, Sociocultural, Languaging, Decolonial.