Portuguese as a communicative resource in globalization hybrid times: the how and why of new directions in theory-building

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This presentation is divided into two sections. In the first, a particular view of language, informed by a post-colonialist and post-structuralist perspective is presented. It is argued that we are living in times in which there is increasing language mixing (transidiomaticity) and in which global changes in communication are having far-reaching effects in our social lives in a society of fluxes and hybridity, in which people and their texts are in movement through borders. In order to deal with these issues, it is necessary to operate with a view of language which does not restrict itself to the internal structures of language, but which understands language as a doing, in which social actors and their linguistic practices are centered on. By criticizing modernist, structuralist and positivist epistemological perspectives, I move into a discussion of linguistic-theory building as linguistic ideology, unpacking the idea that theory merely builds on linguistic forms, which exits naturally in the world, independent of what theoreticians want to do with their theories in social life. Next, I set out to discuss some theoretical constructs (language, identity and linguistic community) in order to better account for contemporary language practices, by de-essentializing their traditional conceptualizations as pure, pre-existing language use and bounded. This linguistics of practices seems to be more adequate to account for the zones of contact and the digital borders in which contemporary speakers of what we call Portuguese are situated. In the second section, I provide examples of new ways in which we might understand contemporary linguistic practices, in which ’Portuguese’ is used as a communicative resource, in electronic mail, in rap and adverts in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro, focusing on the indexicality of identity performance.

Keywords: transidiomaticity, indexicality, de-essentialization.