Twitter Thread by Hanna EK



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Why should a language scholar from Finland care about decolonization? “All I wanna do is study languages, and Finland never had any colonies. Why should I care?” I’m glad you asked. #thread #coloniality #decolonization? #language #Finland/

Let’s start with the innocent-Finland discourse. Finland has participated in and benefited from the colonial enterprise in many ways, which other scholars have said more eloquently than me (eg Keskinen et al., 2009).../

yet the notion of Finland being “different”/“innocent” (aka Finnish exceptionalism, eg Rastas, 2012) is persistent. A starting point: https://t.co/BREs8Utx5w /

Unless we understand Finland in a larger context of global systems of oppression, we are not seeing a big part of its history. Those systems of oppression do not allow for neutrality. /

Now let’s talk about language, the very notion of “a language” as a system you can clearly define, assess, compare, organize into families ... -- where does this come from? (hint: Heller & McElhinny, 2017, hint#2: colonialism, capitalism)/

But this is not just about the notion of language. Let’s consider for a minute how languages are (de)valued, hierarchized, standardized, taught, commodified - how can we NOT see coloniality at work? (Neoliberalism you say? Exactly.) /

I’m fluent in quite a few colonial languages. Not fluent in any others. How about you? (see also Phipps, 2019)/

For the Finnish context, I think Indigenous languages when I think coloniality. There is a lot more. How language(s), identities, knowledges intertwine, how they are seen/ignored, hurt/protected -- has EVERYTHING to do with where we all stand in the colonial game. #WhoKnows /

Once we've understood both Finland and language (education) as complicit in coloniality, where do we go from here? Part of an answer could be to listen to the scholars/activists in Finland who are invested in educating others about these matters. @_LeoCustodio_ is one. /

There is a lot of stuff out there to be read/watched/listened to. Will you add to the list? Who has read @alison_phipps poetic & pain-full manifesto “Decolonizing multilingualism”? I’d love to chat about it.
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Donaldo Macedo gathered some rockstars for this volume, also makes a fine textbook.
https://t.co/kThBZbG7J1 /

Suresh Canagarajah has recently published a conversation on decolonizing language with Ngugi wa Thiong'o:
https://t.co/WlFQM7uAOI
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I still love Su Motha’s Race, Empire, and ELT (also great as a textbook), and every time I read it it feels like the first time. If you’ve read this thread so far, chances are you’ll love this book too. /

Back to Finland, there are excellent events such as the ETMU/NMR conference from Jan 11-14 that bring together scholars around topics of Colonial/Racial Histories, National Narratives, and Transnational Migration. #thisisETMU
https://t.co/3oN6fkllpW /

I’d have a hard time offering a neat definition of decolonization, but I try not to be paralyzed by the absence of a definition, a step-by-step guide, or a “strategy” as they say here. “The only way to decolonise is to do it” says Phipps (2019, p.5). //