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Constructing Local Knowledge as a Decolonial Activity in the EFL Classroom

Sunday 18 May 2025 13:40 (25 minutes)

TITLE

Constructing Local Knowledge as a Decolonial Activity in the EFL Classroom

RELEVANT SIG

Global Englishes

FORMAT

Research-oriented Oral Face-to-face presentation (25 minutes, including Q&A)

Short English description

KEYWORDS

decolonial, translanguaging, ideology, bilingualism

First-time presenter?

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ABSTRACT

The decolonizing and critical multilingual turn in applied linguistics has called for a "delinking"from colonial understandings of language learning and "relinking"of local knowledge within classrooms (Canagarajah, 2023; Garcia, 2017). In a Japanese context, this involves helping students recognize colonial histories of English in Japan and how it has shaped Japan's educational goals for learning "standard native-speaker"English. It also encourages students to use their autonomy in constructing their own understanding of which language skills are valuable to pursue. This presentation presents two intermediate EFL speaking projects: 1) a class research project interviewing Japanese workers about multilingualism's importance for their careers, and 2) student autoethnographies where they presented critical incidents in their lives that influenced their beliefs towards language learning. A thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was performed on students'interviews and presentations, revealing that English and other language skills were important for upwards mobility within

interviewees'careers. Although students did not feel a need to be "native-speaker-like"to pursue these careers, many continue to feel anxiety when speaking English outside class due to various pressures they discussed in their autoethnographies. Such tensions between pursuing "intelligibile"English vs. "standard native-speaker" English are further discussed.

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