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Rethinking Translanguaging: Challenges in Multilingual EMI Classrooms

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Rethinking Translanguaging: Challenges in Multilingual EMI Classrooms

Abstract / Bio

Translanguaging practices are frequently promoted as a legitimate means of co-constructing knowledge and allowing learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoires in multilingual learning environments. Translanguaging has recently been theorised as a transformative “space” in which multilingual users negotiate various identities and positionings. From this “translanguaging space” perspective, this presentation explores how a Japanese L2 English user deployed their L1 in a university-level EMI course over one semester and how their translanguaging practices emerged in relation to their personal history, experiences, and environment. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and recordings of classroom discussions. The findings show that translanguaging supports the co-construction of meaning but may limit opportunities to interact in the Medium of Instruction (MOI), which other students may expect or prefer. Additionally, it may contribute to the exclusion of peers who do not share the student’s L1, leading to silence in classroom discussions. Drawing on the concept of community of practice and Norton’s (2004) notion of investment, I argue that the student’s translanguaging primarily functioned as a form of resistance to the program’s English learning goals and integration into the broader EMI community rather than as a deliberate learning strategy. These findings suggest that the uncritical promotion of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms may pose challenges, particularly in EMI contexts.

Cameron Flinn is a PhD Candidate at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan. He is researching the language socialization experiences and identity construction of students in an English-medium instruction program at a Japanese university. His research interests include language socialization, English-medium instruction, and teaching methodologies.

Author: FLINN, Cameron

Presenter: FLINN, Cameron

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