

A linguistic ethnography of English language classrooms in a Japanese secondary school

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This session, from my ongoing PhD project, examines the co-construction of an English language classroom by students and an ALT at a large Japanese private boys' secondary school. English language education in Japan continues to face a number of hurdles, whose reasons are often oversimplified and overlook the diversity within the Japanese sociocultural context. To bridge this gap, I conducted a linguistic ethnography to provide a thick description of the language classroom, drawing upon the theory of second language socialization. Data for study includes classroom observations with fieldnotes and video/audio recordings, student questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with the ALT, and teaching materials. Through analyzing the ALT's Japanese language use by applying systemic functional linguistics (SFL), I found the multidirectional process of his socialization into the social relations of the Japanese classroom. He was replicating the interpersonal resources of the Japanese language to adopt the norms of Japanese teachers and exert his authoritative power and certainty as a teacher, as well as mitigating his hierarchy and being open to negotiation with students. I conclude with a discussion of the interrelationship between expectations towards ALTs, their intercultural awareness and socialization, as well as my personal reflections as a Japanese high school teacher.