

Kinship, Community, and Belonging in Language Education

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As a deeply relational practice, language education shapes and is shaped by cultural identities. The language classroom is a place not only to study the linguistic intricacies of a language, but to explore how humans are globally interconnected and interdependent. Part and parcel of this global interconnectedness is our rootedness in local geographies, histories, and ecologies. More recent approaches to English language education focus on exploring these elements further. For example, place-based language education, emphasizes the importance of local embeddedness for fostering a sense of belonging and identity. This approach is particularly pertinent to Indigenous language revitalization efforts, where language is intimately tied to ancestral knowledge, relational ethics, and sovereign worldviews. Similarly, a focus on diaspora and migration narratives offers rich insights into how languages mediate identity, memory, and transgenerational kinship across dislocated or hybrid spaces. Fictions of migration, in particular, reveal the affective dimensions of language loss, acquisition, and code-switching, making the tensions and possibilities of belonging in multilingual and multicultural contexts tangible. In light of increasing diversity in the classroom, plurilingualism further complicates notions of linguistic identity by acknowledging the dynamic, fluid practices of speakers who navigate multiple languages and cultural frames, such as Spanish and many other heritage languages in the USA and in Germany. In this view, language learners are not passive recipients of standardized norms but active participants in meaning-making across shifting social and linguistic boundaries, which are embedded in and result of complex power hierarchies. Further, from a posthuman perspective, environmental learning intersects with these themes by positioning language as a medium for cultivating ecological kinship and interspecies relationality, particularly in pedagogies that foreground Indigenous epistemologies and more-than-human agency.

On this basis, several questions arise for English language education, such as: How can or should English language education contribute to the fostering of a sense of belonging and identity? How can the language classroom become a space for exploring and fostering kinship and community – and which narratives, languages, and perspectives can be included or amplified in order to create this space?

We invite papers, projects and (empirical) case studies on questions of kinship, belonging, and community in the English language education context. Proposed papers for this workshop may focus on, but are not restricted to, the following issues:

- Approaches to community-building in the language classroom, ranging from place-based language learning to virtual exchange – this can include concrete suggestions and ideas for integrating these approaches in language education, from school classrooms to university seminars.
- The value and potential of literature for addressing issues of kinship, belonging, and community in the language classroom (e.g., Indigenous texts, diaspora literature, fictions of migration).
- Issues related to theory formation and a theoretical framework for citizenship(s) education in ELT, e.g., the role of critical pedagogy in language education or the role of English (and language in general) for citizenship(s) education and questions related to the connections of language, kinship, and community.
- Creative and artistic approaches to issues of belonging, e.g., concepts and ideas for interdisciplinary and project-based teaching.
- The role of plurilingualism in the context of belonging and identity in language education both in the USA and in Germany

Speakers

- Dr. Anne Mihan (HU Berlin) – requested

A proposal should include information about your affiliation, the title of your paper, an abstract of about 300 words, a brief biographical statement, and a note on any audio/visual requirements. Please submit your abstracts and supporting information to both:

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