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ARTICLE

# Decloaking whiteness: Linguistic and pedagogical imperialisms of International Baccalaureate teacher education in Japan

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**Abstract**
This article examines everyday *International Baccalaureate Educator Certificate* (IBEC) environments in Japanese higher education through a theoretical framework of whiteness. Exploring dissonances shaped by English and constructivism at two universities, I argue that communities challenge Anglo-American and Euro-American epistemologies imbued within globalist education. I call for scholarship on whiteness to better prioritize decloaking its plethora of still concealed artifacts, an issue I elucidate with two examples in language and pedagogy.

**KEYWORDS**
International Baccalaureate, Japan, language, pedagogy, whiteness

## INTRODUCTION

January 2021. 3:00 am. There I sat, at a dimly lit desk while cocooned inside my dormitory in Oxford (UK). Fast approaching the halfway point for my year of participant observation, I was now somewhat accustomed to the routine. Of course, one could only acclimatize so seamlessly when forced into extreme improvisations. Had COVID-19 ceased to be, my body would have physically been in Japan, the principal territory of my research interests. Instead, that infamous pandemic forced an entire year of digital—and nocturnal—ethnography teeming with formidable hurdles (Shah, 2023). Yet miracles also emerged, one being the field sites themselves, permitting this work to be conducted halfway across the northern hemisphere. For my purposes here, they manifested in the form of two pseudonymized higher education institutions: Asagi University (hereon "Asagi") and Rindo University (hereon "Rindo"). Reshaped into online communities, the events of the following night took place like most

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others: participating with postgraduate students engaged in the paradox of "international" teacher education.

## Linguistic imperialism

"[English][1] Why should they get away with this?" (Field note, January 2021). The question was greeted by a chilling silence over Zoom, one eventually broken by a single verb: "[English] don't" (Field note, January 2021). It appeared all the module's core facilitator, Hilda,[2] could muster, confronted by a query of overwhelming magnitude. By "they," Javeria—a student of South Asian ethnicity[3]—implied Anglo-American imperialists, and by "this," she inferred Anglo-American English (hereon "English"), the undisputed apex of today's linguistic hierarchy on Earth (de Swaan, 2001). Hilda's reply—as a "White"[4] individual of Anglo-American origin—was prudent. After all, she had just stressed why the need to accept English as the planet's lingua franca lay not in upholding such imperialist legacies, but rather in the exclusive interest of pragmatics. The reality that commanding English in academia would enable a scale of outreach and engagement unfathomable in any other language.

Hilda's reply was partly in pursuit of ensuring students practiced solely in English on a module formally registered as English-taught. Wise to the knowledge of some reverting to Japanese when fumbling with the former tongue, Hilda's intensions were purposed to inspire, yet inevitably spoke to larger frictions. That Anglo-American imperialism—*imperialism* here meaning that derived "from the Latin *imperium*, covering military and political control by a dominant power over subordinated peoples and territories" (Phillipson, 2018, p. 1)—was the original force imposing today's pragmatics, doing so with devastating success (Phillipson, 1992, 2009). That the majority of postcolonial territories by Anglo-American powers have since been forced to wrangle with how English should be situated with their own language/s (Canagarajah, 2013). That this battle naturally extended to the academy itself (Gordin, 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2010), not least owing to English's ever-expanding dominion over all other languages in citation indexes (Vera-Baceta et al., 2019). That so comprehensive is its dominance of Earth's scholarly landscape today, the extent beyond this description remains unknown precisely because of these same systemic inequities bolstering colonial hierarchies (Bell & Mills, 2020).

Now add to this the context of what these students were undertaking: the International Baccalaureate (IB) Educator Certificate (IBEC).

## IB and IBEC in Japan

IBEC is a credentialized teacher training enterprise administered by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), an educational Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) famous for its continuum of schooling programs that cover elementary, middle, and high school. In October 2024 the IBO registered over 8000 programs offered to over 5900 schools, covering more than 160 territories (IBO, 2024a). As an entity operating frameworks and curricula independent of any national government, its breadth of influence in the world remains essentially unchallenged. Its depth of authority across these areas, however, varies dramatically. In Canada, and particularly the United States, for instance, IB currently enjoys a relatively competitive status, despite noteworthy resistance to its presence in the case of the latter (Bunnell, 2012). Yet it continues to struggle around most Western European territories—as demonstrated by a once mildly popular United Kingdom (Bunnell, 2015)—despite its founding by a conglomerate of educators predominately, if not exclusively from "White" Euro-American origins (see Peterson, 1972, 2011; Sutcliffe, 2013).

Outstanding issues, notably including its—still often true—image as an education catered "for a small, elite group of university-bound global nomads in expensive, private international schools" (Hill, 2012, p. 344), has long beleaguered its expansion, as is glaringly showcased by the extent and nature of its presence in low resource Sub-Saharan African nations (Bunnell, 2016). These abiding struggles have since led to radical shifts in strategy from the late-2000s (Bunnell, 2014), seeing the IBO push for greater neoliberalist expansion with increasing exuberance (Resnik, 2012; Sunyol & Codó, 2019). A key reason for this newfound direction is cemented on a bid to spread its program offerings into more publicly governed education systems across the world. Asia has proven the site of especial success for this ongoing mission (Moosung et al., 2021), with more recent examples including partnerships with the Andhra Pradesh Government (India), as well as Offices of Education in Jeju, Daegu (see Park & Hong, 2022), and now considerably more provinces in South Korea.

Japan, meanwhile, has transformed into one of the region's latest epicenters for growth. A 2013-established promotional consortium (MEXT-IBO Consortium, 2024) with the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), has seen IB schools in the country rise from 16 in 2013 (Nagayama, 2013, p. 332) to 118 as of December 2024 (IBO, 2024c). It is an expansion partially attributed to the introduction of a majority Japanese-mediated, Dual-Language Diploma Program (DLDP), one seeking to boost linguistic accessibility of IB in a society with an extremely low use of the English language. However, the fact MEXT did not invest in a fully Japanese DP[5] speaks to broader intent by political and corporate elites to boost English linguistic proficiency (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011) as part of enacting "globalization from above" (Tsuneyoshi, 2018, p. 29). This extends to the Japanese Government itself, perpetually unaware of infusing its own inferiority complex with the imagined West into nationalist policies bannered by "international" and "global" confetti (Kariya, 2023). The now over 35 years old, generously funded Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program (McConnell, 2000) testifies well to these internalizations of English, as does a sizeable list of other schooling (e.g., Ninomiya et al., 2015) and post-schooling initiatives (see Poole et al., 2020). MEXT's formal collaboration with the IBO is an exacerbation of this long-charted trend (see Kariya & Rappleye, 2020, p. 207). After all, IB is the first notable example of a state-sponsored "global education" shaped independently from Japan's own cultural sphere.

Around half of Japan's IB schools are now registered as article-1 (i.e., those legally mandated to follow MEXT's national guidelines). This has led to an urgent demand for article-1 teachers who can additionally execute approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment as expected by the IBO. Enter IBEC. In January 2024 comprised of 56 universities spanning 16 IBO-registered territories (IBO, 2024b), its origins are traced to the early-2000s in the UK. The initiative matured in the 2010s as a peripheral project inside the organization's US-based Professional Development services, before eventually being transferred to its Outreach and Conferences division in 2020. As such a transfer symbolizes, IBEC is an intrinsically diplomatic venture, one seeking to build and consolidate bridges with higher education. It is for this reason that IBEC's original guise is little more than an open-ended framework, one universities siphon on to structure bespoke programs that are in-turn permitted by the IBO through an in-house Recognition Process. The result is a diverse implementation of IBEC between not only territories, but also local universities. That said, one relatively common pattern concerns its integration into postgraduate and undergraduate degrees, the former of which both Rindo and Asagi exemplify.

The first Japanese IBEC institution emerged in 2013 and has since grown to eight, the most of any territory barring the US as of January 2024. An additional reason for this enthusiastic adoption relates to its hopeful contribution towards an article-1 teacher workforce capable of executing MEXT's revised "active learning" guidelines (see Fujino, 2021). Indeed, the IBO, like other institutions soaked in Euro-American epistemologies (e.g., Tan, 2024), have long encouraged these sentiments through a specific vocabulary: constructivism.

## Pedagogical imperialism

Habitually urged by globalized authorities (Robertson & Sorensen, 2018), constructivism seeks the co-production of knowledge between learners and facilitators through active contribution by all. Might its uncritical promotion by the globally privileged, however, be inadvertently effacing tolerance for indigenous alternatives?

Previously on this same night, 34 postgraduate students at Asagi completed their IBEC class devoid of the dysphoria encountered at Rindo. This was to be expected in an environment comprised entirely of Japanese nationals—students and facilitating staff included—where their IBEC and overarching degree was singularly mediated in Japanese. And yet, something equally unsettling lurked in the shadows, manifesting through peculiar instances of reticence in what should have been lively discussion-based activity. Instances where a single individual would speak incessantly, only for another to do no more but listen. Moments when one would attempt to stimulate others into conversation, only to be met with emphatic failure. Prolonged phases, even, of awkward, comprehensive silence.

Concluding the reasons to relate to incompetence was neither convincing nor likely. Asagi has long held prestige for educational studies in the country, while its IBEC is housed inside a graduate school where about a fifth of its students hold five or more years of professional teaching experience. Several of these latter members formed part of this very IBEC community, many of whose enrolment was made possible by funding from their respective Boards of Education. No, something more was afoot. Something pervasive, influenced by both the workings of a specific departmental culture, and that of a broader Japanese society permeating it. By local practices of human relationality at odds with a pedagogy exclusively theorized by Euro-American thinkers *for* Euro-American spaces. Asagi's internal dissonance was better masked than that at Rindo, but when expunged its root cause could be explained by the same phenomenon: whiteness.

## Argument and structure

At this article's core rests an argument, one predicated on a demonstration that whiteness, as a socio-cultural force, silently shapes IBEC programs in Japanese higher education through assumptions over language (i.e., English) and pedagogy (i.e., constructivism). Namely, that a closer ethnographic examination of these programs reveal how members of these communities disrupt and complicate these assumptions. This exposure is paramount for educational research, offering timely pathways to inquire how transnationally privileged bodies like the IBO, magnified by “global” and “international” branding, might begin to substantially deconstruct such vestiges of whiteness in coordination with local actors.

Before advancing I briefly pause to detail my methodologies, while considering my positionality with data gathered. Next, I proceed to unpack my treatment of whiteness, before demonstrating this framework in operation via separate examples of language at Rindo, and pedagogy at Asagi. I then move to reflect on the implications of the above findings. Here I engage with current theoretical trajectories of whiteness in the academy, where an overarching paucity of scholarship in Japanese educational settings (Koshino, 2019) and broader society (Russell, 2017), is being complemented by work in the region that brings into question the “necessity or inevitability” for theorizing many aspects of benefit as “(white) privilege” (Debnár, 2016, p. 10; Hof, 2021). Positing this landscape as woefully problematic, I call on social scientists to dedicate greater effort to unveiling whiteness’ vast array of still cloaked features on the ground. I end by venturing a few potential approaches for how the IBO might embark on deconstructing linguistic and pedagogical whiteness in Japanese contexts and further afield.

## METHODOLOGY AND POSITIONALITY

Why, after decades of indifference since its official recognition in 1979, was the Japanese education system now taking notable interest in IB, and how are Japanese schools currently negotiating with its presence in everyday life? These were the two macro questions departed with in 2019 as I embarked on doctoral research. Beyond this I remained faithful to a *grounded theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) ethnographic approach, one seeking to avoid any overly prescribed research questions when entering the field. Resulting theoretical frameworks, like that of whiteness introduced in the following section, were therefore later formulated by analyzing empirical data using thematic interpretive analysis (see Geertz, 1972, p. 26).

Before outlining my specific methodologies, I introduce the following about my socialization to better position myself with several relevant phenomena in this paper. Born and predominately raised in the UK, my formative upbringing contains a transnational assemblage of cultural influences, including those Japanese, Canadian, Guyanese, and Indian. English is my first language, while Japanese is a part-indigenized second language. My visual ethnicity is frequently labeled as "Asian" or "Indian" by multiple societies around the world.

### Participant observation

Originally scheduled to work as a Teaching Assistant at a Japanese IB school from April 2020, COVID-19 forced a dramatic shift in both approach and context. Namely, in-person participant observation transformed into a digital and nocturnal experience, while fieldwork veered away from schooling, and on the discovery of IBEC, into higher education (see Shah, 2023, pp. 180–183). Hedging bets that universities might encounter less disruption compared with schools, I successfully began fieldwork in September 2020 as an assistant and participant on Asagi's IBEC program. In addition to classroom participation and co-facilitation, engagement through a *polymediation* (Madinau & Miller, 2012) of apps like LINE—Japan's mainstream social chat software—and Teams, effectively defined social life with the student community. I was also present in regular staff meetings on Zoom, and embedded to the extent that I was selected to co-represent Asagi for its formal Renewal Process of its IBEC with the IBO. Comparative work was carried out during this same juncture. Some occurred inside the IBO itself, while the rest involved five more IBEC universities in Japan. This sometimes included guest participation on select IBEC-related modules, such as one undertaken at Rindo.

Navigating a *liminal space* (van Gennep, 1909) at Asagi proved both testing and rewarding, permitting access into the everyday lives of both staff and student, while occasionally juggling information not suitable to divulge with the "other side." If defining the concept as "the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions" (Turner, 1974, p. 237), these two positions could be labeled *sensei* ("teacher") and *insei* ("postgraduate student"), with some form of *IB senpai* ("senior")—a concept detailed later—acting as the liminal midpoint. This is because of two prior connections with IB. First, I undertook the entire continuum of its schooling programs as a child. Second, I worked for a brief period as a teaching assistant and cultural integration counselor at an IB school in the UK. With these facts made known to Asagi's student body, I made robust efforts throughout the year to downplay any sentiments of seniority bestowed by module facilitators. Examples of these countermeasures included actively participating in classwork, and attending independently organized digital socials (e.g., Shah, 2023, pp. 183–184). A series of efforts made to foster a deeper sense of cohesion with the student community, and better cultivate individual friendships. Navigating liminality proved less of a task at institutions like Rindo owing to participation as a guest, making it easier to ground myself with its student cohort in similar ways.

## Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the other principal method deployed, 42 of which are drawn on in this article. This number comprises of all IBEC students at both Asagi and Rindo during fieldwork, broken down to 34 at the former, and eight at the latter, with all taking place somewhere around the end of their respective academic years. I initiated with the same opening questions, inviting them to provide a tale of their life to date. This was followed by asking them when and why they decided to pursue careers in education, a theme that would eventually lead to understanding why they decided to undertake their postgraduate degrees. After this, I narrowed in on IBEC, inquiring into their experiences of the given program, and how they see themselves applying any knowledge gained into their futures. Interviews at both institutions frequently resulted in personal narratives, alongside reflective and interactive discussions led by the participants' themes of interest (see Charmez, 2002). Interviews averaged around two hours—with a few doubling this length—and took place online inside personal environments (e.g., apartments, familial property). At Asagi these were all but entirely realized in Japanese, the exclusive language of most participants. At Rindo, all non-Japanese nationals were conversed with in English, while Japanese nationals were either interacted with in Japanese, or *translanguage* (Lewis et al., 2012) Japanese-English (hereon "Japanglish") depending on their preferences. Transcripts for each audio recording were subsequently drafted before being collectively examined, together with observational fieldnotes, via interpretive analysis.

# LOCATING WHITENESS

Whiteness, as defined by other anthropologists thoroughly engaged with the concept, summarize it "a term which refers to the cultural web of assumptions of normality and invisibility that maintains social privileges, power, and hierarchies typically associated with White skin" (Ramos-Zayes, 2001, pp. 342–343). This *thickly described* (Ryle, 1971) cultural web has been analyzed by scholars to be systemically disguised in objective rationalism (Hughey & Byrd, 2013)—ignorant (Mueller, 2020) and otherwise—frequently rendering its elements categorically elusive (Lewis, 2004). And yet ethnographers have documented practices of whiteness that reshape its privilege over non-whitenized others in everyday life (e.g., Housel, 2009). An aged, but still remarkably influential description on the phenomenon views it a "public and psychological wage" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 573), while more recent attempts understand it as a "pervasive, taken-for-granted interpretive schema that invites a stance of presumptive ownership toward the 'darker world'—its people, land, and resources" (Myers, 2019, p. 8). The notion of whiteness as ownership has been a salient feature of interest, with prominent works scrutinizing the force as that legally legitimizing "expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (Harris, 1993, p. 1715).

The above literature offers invaluable insights on current understandings of whiteness, but, as I review next, it simultaneously exposes its still elementary stage of conceptual development.

## Theoretical impediments

As astutely pointed out by others, one persistent obstacle for scholarship on whiteness remains its struggle to chart its own fluidity, and "make visible a category that by its very nature is unmarked—everywhere *and* nowhere" (Nelson, 2008, p. 42). In other words, a lack

of critical analysis over how whiteness was, is, and—for as long as it stays relevant—always will be at the mercy of its own dynamism. That it is inextricably linked to processes of racialization and culturalization, and therefore the continuous (re)configuration of racial others and cultural markers.

One of the longstanding disruptors preventing whiteness' theoretical development resides in existing literature's severe geopolitical bias. Namely, one overwhelmingly—if not often entirely—biased toward North America and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe, as all the above citations in this section exemplify. This unintentional prejudice of human geography risks a copy and paste universalization of its current semantics across a decidedly more diverse world. For but one example, colonialism, as executed by various empires defining the era of “modernity,” cannot be synonymized with an encroachment of domineering whiteness by “the West,” as Japan's own legacy of empire (Myers & Peattie, 1984) fittingly illustrates.

For greater nuance I return to Ana Ramos-Zayes' earlier quote. Specifically, the understanding of whiteness as that “typically associated with White skin.” The word “typically” has been shrewdly entered here, and for good reason. Practices of whiteness, after all, can be adopted and embodied by those with “non-White skin.” This line of thought can be interrogated further. That is to ask, what is the process of whitening? Or more problematically, to inquire by whose agencies and concessions are people bracketed into the categories of “White” and “non-White” in the first place: the genesis for how bodies are transformed into racialized products (Fassin, 2011; Shah, 2024). The nature of this mechanism warrants no further consideration here, suffice to say that the imposition of, and—reluctant or otherwise—embracing of racialized identities is steeped in localized social practices, and is under permanent negotiation.

Examples like Brazil (Osuji, 2013) and broader Latin America (Ramos-Zayes, 2020) display the fluidity of whitenized identities aptly. They help exhibit how being positioned as, or otherwise bartering to become “White” by no means guarantees their inclusion with those generally ascribed as such in current Euro-American contexts. The same is true of several Asian modalities of whiteness (e.g., Park & Hong, 2021; Xie & Zhang, 2013), including Japan, where far older conceptualizations of “white skin” (Wagatsuma, 1967) frequently work to distinguish itself from other imaginaries that involve, but are by no means limited to Euro-American whiteness (Ashikari, 2005).

### My treatment

Given the above, deploying “whiteness” and “white skin” without locating, and suitably hyphenating the schema/s of focus is an unwise and, at its inadvertent worst, potentially exclusivist action to other manifestations of the phenomena in the world. I therefore take this space to clarify that, for the remainder of this paper, my deployment of whiteness is positioned within two of its most domineering cultural webs existent in the world today. First, as deployed in the following section, is Anglo-American whiteness, revealed through the English language. Second, as later encountered at Asagi, is a broader Euro-American whiteness, made visible through the popular theorization of educational constructivism.

## ENGLISH'S JAPANESE THORN

“[English] Who cares!” (Interview, April 2021). So exclaimed Ishida[6] with a giggle during our interview. It was her initial response when reflecting on Hilda's earlier speech on the pragmatics of English in academia. One of five Japanese nationals (hereon “Japanese students”) at Rindo, Ishida appeared uneasy when reminiscing on the event, evidenced by moments

of sustained pause. Yet she struggled to locate why. Instead, attempting to uncover an explanator, she introduced a separate tale, one revolving around a certain joint-seminar series. Being my first interview with Rindo's IBEC students, I had yet to discover it a topic of major regard for all but one in this group of eight. Collectively explained by these interlocutors, the joint-seminar was a compulsory module linked to their postgraduate dissertations, tasking students with presenting an aspect of their research. Undertaken in front of their peers, key facilitating staff, and most other researchers in the department, it resulted in the sole occasion when all IBEC-related faculty were simultaneously present on their course. But Ishida raised the subject to speak on one specific aspect of its setup: language.

## Linguistic (im-)partiality

Language mediation was a nuanced affair at Rindo when compared with most other IBEC programs in the country, with dissertations composable in either Japanese or English. At the time of fieldwork, this was despite the existence of a formal listing indicating its IBEC-related components to be exclusively run in English. Given this dynamic it would only stand to reason that Japanese and English be equally welcomed for joint-seminar presentations. Based on accounts from a couple in this group of eight, this was seemingly the case for past iterations of the component, with students free to choose their preference. The only apparent caveat lay in an instruction to produce English translated handouts if choosing to present in Japanese, an expectation unreciprocated vice versa.

The approach was sound in theory. Choose to present in English, and Hilda, together with the fully Japanese and English bilinguals of Matsumoto and Yamaguchi, would provide the bulk of feedback. Elect for Japanese, and Egami—an essentially monolingual Japanese speaker—would direct commentary with Yamaguchi's and Matsumoto's support. In practice however, interview reflections exposed this structure as tempestuous, sometimes uncovering virulent tensions between students over this professed linguistic inclusivity. Discovering this theme first began through the following exchange with Ishida:

> ***Ishida:*** [Japanglish] We had a discussion about language policy.
> ***Akira:*** Oh, did you?
> ***Ishida:*** In our joint-seminar… ah I'm really interested in your opinion.
> ***Akira:*** Oh, sure, sure. What happened?
> ***Ishida:*** So this year, well [Bridget] announced, okay, in the joint-seminar, that English is strongly recommended [for doing] a presentation.
> ***Akira:*** Oh.
> ***Ishida:*** Yeah, and then you see… people like myself and [fellow students like Yanagihara] right, in Japanese, you know we write the thesis [for the degree] in Japanese.
> ***Akira:*** Right right right.
> ***Ishida:*** If I do it in English, it [would be] *so* shallow. (Interview, April 2021)

Ishida felt she was being lulled into presenting in English, despite the fact her research was being conducted in Japanese. One pithily delivered line summarized the extent of her disapproval: "[English] this is a graduate school, *not* an English language school" (Interview, April 2021). In this instance she found attempts at Anglicization to lie not with Hilda, but rather with Bridget, a fellow member of Ishida's cohort. A "White" American national experienced with teaching English as an acquired language in Japanese schooling, Bridget, like Hilda previously, was keen to uphold the notion of English as global language, and with especial zeal for the joint-seminar. Ishida was left unimpressed by various factual statements delivered by both individuals over the theme (e.g., how publishing scholarly work in English

allowed for the greatest worldwide outreach). But Ishida would not be deterred, robustly objecting to efforts privileging English when opportunities arose.

The clearest instance of this subversion took place during the very module I participated in. Transported to a Zoom breakout room for a group activity, she, alongside fellow Japanese students Yanagihara and Iwasaki, noticed that everyone barring me—a still uncertain quantity—were Japanese speakers. Both Yanagihara and Ishida also knew that Iwasaki, despite his heartfelt enthusiasm, had been somewhat struggling to engage in English due to low proficiency. Attempting to realize a more linguistically inclusive space, Yanagihara moved swiftly to inquire if my Japanese was "[Japanese] totally sound?" (Field note, January 2021). My verbal affirmation and nod was met with reactions of relief and joy, as well as a visibly content smile etched on Ishida's face. Indeed, mere moments before initiating this groupwork, Hilda had prudently stressed to handle these engagements in English, having realized by this stage of the program that certain members were failing to do so.

Back in our interview, Ishida sarcastically repeated select lines made by both Hilda and Bridget on advocations for English, before exclaiming: "[English] of course I understand that! Sorry, my English proficiency is not, high enough to do the research [to the degree I am able to] do in Japanese. So, I choose Japanese of course" (Interview, April 2021). She was adamant in ensuring that students possessed choice in deciding which language to conduct presentations in. Of course, officially they did, and most Japanese students ultimately selected Japanese. Ishida's words therefore, are not to infer the absence of agency in students' choice. Rather, they are to show that the decision to present in Japanese was interpreted to be judged as narrowminded by this pair. That electing for this path ignored the tragic, but irrefutable authority of English as global language.

## Promoting and resisting "global English"

But what of Bridget's perspective? From her viewpoint, promoting English was anchored around a desire to foster a more cohesive sense of community across the group, finding choice in language to achieve little more than a needless rift between Japanese and non-Japanese students. She expressed passionate disappointment at the former group's seeming decision to shun engagement with a broader, global community, as conveyed through the following reflections during interview:

> Bridget: [English] There are several of us that cannot speak Japanese. And it's a waste of our hour right (laughs), to read your [English-written] handout, and then sit through your Japanese presentation, and understand maybe 10%, whereas if you did it in English we would understand at least 50%, like it becomes like a numbers game to me, right? […] Of course that's your right [to present in Japanese]. Like, we are a multilingual community. That's fine. I understand that, and I really appreciate that you create English translations for your slides. But, when you are purposefully deciding not to speak English, you're saying to [Hilda] and to other people who don't speak Japanese, I don't care about your opinion… and that's really cutting yourself off in terms of the international English community. You know, it's cutting yourself off from having that global conversation.
>
> (Interview, June 2021)

Bridget was not alone is expressing disappointment over Japanese students' choice to mediate in Japanese. Javeria, one of the remaining two non-Japanese speaking students, was also critical of this decision. However, crucially, her viewpoint was markedly complex. Committing to the degree precisely because Rindo had advertised it as English taught,

Javeria was left with highly conflictive emotions over the joint-seminar. On one hand, decisions to present in Japanese found her asking "[English] what's the point? What am I learning from my class fellows?" (Interview, June 2021). She felt it imperative that, as a formally English-mediated program, Japanese speakers "should not be allowed to participate in Japanese at all. They should be able to present in English and they should be doing the research in English, however broken that is" (Interview, June 2021). And yet, this self-interpretation of such a request being broken also caused her to feel "bad for the Japanese people" (Interview, June 2021). She highlighted how their choice triggered extra work with needing to create English handouts and crafting Japanese slides. As she explained, mandating English translations produced scenarios where, if the Japanese student's proficiency was insufficient, they would rely entirely on Google Translate, leading to instances where grammatical mistakes were singled out. "They don't know English that well, it's not their fault," Javeria summarized, "they have to do everything twice" (Interview, June 2021).

If positioning Bridget's standpoint on one pole of a scale, with Javeria's located somewhere in the middle, then the final member of this non-Japanese cohort represented its opposing extreme. Lola, an American national of Mexican ethnicity, is a Spanish and English bilingual. Speaking on the same matter, she chose to reflect on how her own upbringing with non-English speaking parents in the US fostered "[English] a lot of sympathy and empathy towards people who can't speak English" in general (Interview, June 2021). These life stories involved experiences of linguistic discrimination and intolerance against both herself and family. Tales that emphasized the comparative "privilege" of the English language in the world, and how it consequently functions to devalue others (Interview, June 2021). It was through this lens that Lola stated how she had "signed up for a Japanese education [by enrolling in] a Japanese university program with a lot of Japanese cohort members that do speak Japanese" (Interview, June 2021). She therefore believed it vital that expression in Japanese be welcomed and respected despite the course's formal listing as English instructed. In other words, she felt it her responsibility to accommodate them *rather* than the reverse.

Finally, what of the remaining Japanese students? As interviews with the rest of this group progressed, it became immediately apparent that no one shared Hilda's or Bridget's perspective. What instead emerged were two schools of thought, both seeking to justify why it was pivotal Japanese be tolerated. The first, as previously alluded to by Ishida, concerned academic quality. In Iwasaki's words, that presenting in English produced "[Japanese] half-baked content, and that because our true intentions don't get across, we would rather convey what we want in Japanese, and receive responses from those who understand that" (Interview, May 2021). Then there was the second school: linguistic identity. Yanagihara spoke on this theme with feeling, associating pressures to express in English with acts of suppression. Self-quoting Hilda's comments made over the realities of English-mediated research being more impactful than Japanese equivalents, she responded with the below reflection:

> Yanagihara: [Japanese] But, while I of course think there is some truth to that, can't you also say there is tremendous meaning to doing research in your own mother-tongue? Naturally, when it comes to research you have to delve into all the fine print, but if you do this in your second language, you won't be able to look at the details in the same way no matter what. So, for those who want to use their mother-tongue, who I think there are many, well, the joint-seminar is not an environment that really tolerates that.
>
> (Interview, May 2021)

## English as Anglo-American whiteness

My comparatively short time with this IBEC community at Rindo unearthed a striking pair of antagonistic agendas. First was the unwitting edification of whiteness, in this instance advanced by a facilitator and student of "White" Anglo-American ethnicities through the vehicle of English (see Kubota, 2023). A regretful, but nonetheless urgent compulsion to elevate English as open-minded globality, while consequently relegating Japanese to ignorant locality. In other words, the lamentable, but ultimately self-surrendered willingness to practice linguistic imperialism. Efforts that ultimately build on historical legacies, and present neoliberalist realities that colletively work to amplify English's dominion. Endeavors that complement the IBO's own growing implicitness with this very supremacy, accentuating how "English as a *lingua franca* medium of instruction is encouraged and recognized as important for success in the 21st century," within its own documents on multilingualist principles (Castro et al., 2015). Second was explicit attempts at deconstructing this Anglicization via sentiments of linguistic egalitarianism, in this case by those of "non-White" ethnicities. Here it is Japanese that seeks emancipation, rejecting English's status as Earth's lingua franca, and restoring an integrity threatened by actors equating English with the international and global.

The above case illustrates how Japanese higher education is no exception to facing rising imperialistic pressures of Anglicization (Galloway et al., 2020), owing to its ever-imposing status in the world (Müller, 2021). Yet, it doubles as a showcase of the Japanese language's still robust autonomy in comparison to numerous other societies, for who "refusing to engage with English" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 177) is often not a realistic option. An independence chiefly attributed to an ironic imperial legacy, alongside the country's still-immense levels of economic containment (e.g., profound quantities of independently sourced literature, popular media, consumer products, material infrastructure, cultural artifacts). This is, as others have similarly pointed out, permitting it to endure as one of the most resistant to English in Asia (Tsuneyoshi & Kitamura, 2018, pp. 9–10) and further afield. The result is an ongoing reality that, for the average Japanese national, the acquisition of English, and by extension life in the English-speaking world, is not the jackpot to socio-economic prosperity it typically persists on being for those in lower resource territories.

Only in more recent times has English, as a product of whiteness, witnessed a greater unraveling within educational research (e.g., Madriaga & McCaig, 2022; Tanner, 2019), let alone within Japanese contexts (e.g., Koshino, 2019) where whiteness' concealment is still maintained by a notably extreme nescience (Russell, 2017). It is for this reason that accumulation of appropriate evidence concerning its encroachment remains a vital task. Events at Rindo serve as an effective demonstration of Japanese society's everyday resistance to whiteness' linguistic intrusions on the ground. The same, however, cannot be convincingly asserted for the following vestige of focus, one where its connection to whiteness is yet to be significantly disentangled: the pedagogy of constructivism.

# CONSTRUCTIVISM'S SILENT CREDULITY

Silence. It was what greeted the early hours of the night as I prepared to descend into digital life once more. And, like several nights preceding it, it doubled as a descriptor for failure. The ping of a LINE notification on a student-organized group chat was the initiator. Sato, an IBEC student at Asagi, had posted a Teams invite, seeking to express confusion over an assignment. Three students soon confirmed availability, and I later followed. A beverage in hand, I eventually found myself seated at my desk, ready to engage with Sato, Ishibashi, Miyazaki, and Yamakawa.

## Cultural hurdles

Thanking those able to join on short notice, Sato delved straight into his conundrum: collaborative unit planners. More specifically, how to realize a coherent approach to lesson planning where all subjects revolve around a collectively agreed upon concept. Informed by key pedagogies developed by several "White" Euro-American educationalists (Erickson et al., 2017; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), this is currently a process of tantamount importance to multiple IB programs. Befuddled with the method's advanced challenges, Sato teased a trying example to the group. Selecting the subjects of mathematics, visual art, history, and chemistry, he exclaimed "[Japanese] how in the world do we agree on a universal concept for these subjects?" (Field note, January 2021). A keen smile widened on Ishibashi's face. "[Japanese] This is puzzling indeed!" (Field note, January 2021). His eagerness to take on the apparent enigma was palpable. Rather oddly though, his energy stood in marked contrast to Yamakawa and Miyazaki, both of who instead exhibited polite reticence in response.

Screensharing a blank document to draft notes, the group began recording contributions. Only, this "group," I soon observed, appeared solely comprised of three people: Sato, Ishibashi, and occasionally me. Then there was the nature of the contributions themselves, revealing another peculiar trend. All were predominately grounded in either Sato's or Ishibashi's background as school educators. Sentences comprised of openers like "in my classroom" and "when I discussed this matter with a colleague," actions neither Yamakawa or Miyazaki could replicate (Field note, January 2021). It was only natural of course. They had yet to embark on professional careers, undertaking their course at Asagi immediately after their undergraduate degrees. The others were perfectly aware of this, although, *critically*, they needed not be.

Asagi's graduate school is home to a significant organizational practice, one where postgraduate students are sifted into two categories on admission. It is a process accomplished through exercising a prescribed set of criteria found in its admissions policy. Those with either none or little professional working experience are placed in the first group: *gakusotsu insei*. Semantically translated, a "straight-masters student." This was the label Miyazaki and Yamakawa had been tasked with. Sato and Ishibashi, meanwhile, were assigned to the second division: *genshoku insei*, or an "in-practice student." The differentiation is typically made to distinguish those holding five or more years of educator experience, and (or) those currently employed at schools. These two brands play instrumental roles in shaping life at Asagi, ranging from differing approaches to assessment, differing freedoms in module selection, and even differing timespans for satisfying degree completion (e.g., a choice to finish in one year instead of two for in-practice students).

For IBEC, the categorical differences are symbolic in theory, with no substantive variations in formal assessment procedures or expectations. Yet one would have been forgiven for thinking otherwise in these digital spaces, with all 34 supplying these descriptions beside their names and degree specializations on Zoom. Of course, even without this online custom the contrast was often plain. Sato and Ishibashi were visibly older than Miyazaki and Yamakawa, the former pair approaching their 40s compared to early 20s (see Figure 1). Organizational culture, then, played a definitive role in boosting the stature of Ishibashi, Sato, and other in-practice students. But as an institution permeated by a larger Japanese society, broader cultural forces were also at play, reinforcing this bolstered status. For in the eyes of Miyazaki and Yamakawa, the latter two were also, at the very least, *senpai*.

As has long been the case, today's mainstream Japanese identity generally places itself within a fluid, yet disciplined scale of intimacy and formality with others. This scale, in-turn, impacts the extent to which genuine or private selves are revealed. It is a deep-seated approach to relationality practiced from as early as preschool (see Hayashi & Tobin, 2015,

pp. 83–84), and is evidenced by a plethora of examples inside the Japanese language itself. As other anthropologists have argued, far from acting as "mere taxonomic categories," the existence of many paired concepts constructing these scales illustrate some of Japanese society's commonplace "organizational coordinates" for language and sociality (Bachnik, 1992, p. 153). One popular saying showcasing this consciousness is that of *kūki wo yomu*, literally translating to "reading the air," and better semantically defined as correctly adjusting one's behavior to a given context.

Together with its antonym, *kōhai* ("junior"), *senpai* represents one such pair demonstrating this "air reading," in this instance through realizing sentiments of social verticality. They are by no means unique to Japan, with Korean and Chinese societies, for example, sharing similar counterparts (Qie et al., 2019). That being said, they remain pronouncedly widespread in Japan, especially during middle and high school (Ono & Shoji, 2015), where those recognized as *kōhai* may use *senpai* as a titular suffix, or even by replacing one's surname altogether in more casual exchanges. The distinction is rigidly structured during schooling, organized through a clinical hierarchy of year groups, while reinforced by a strictly sequential approach to "traditional" Japanese pedagogy: the notion that approaches to learning are accomplished through unalterable stages (DeCoker, 1998, p. 69). These structures also persist into adult life, where they diffuse across a myriad of sectors. However, the nature of these protocols post-schooling often turn more implicit and negotiable. Gaps in age become a less reliable predicator, as "experience" is more flexibly reconstituted. One might, for instance, recognize someone as *senpai* due to their senior positioning at work, yet also be simultaneously recognized by them as one too, owing to their knowledge of larger social responsibilities (i.e., "*jinsei no senpai*" or a "*senpai* in life").

Sato noticed Yamakawa's and Miyazaki's seeming reluctance to contribute to the conversation, surmising the reason—disclosed during private reflection—to partly reside in his senior status. He also knew it imperative to overturn this outcome if they were to successfully practice what had been requested by their course facilitators.

## Failing constructivism

As interminably forwarded by Asagi's IBEC staff, IB demands a pedagogy locally known as *kōseishugi*, the official translation for *constructivism*. Other educationalists write of it as a "radical" approach to epistemology, one that treats all reality subjective, and all knowledge the result of procedural construction (von Glasersfeld, 1998, p. 23). Within educational contexts

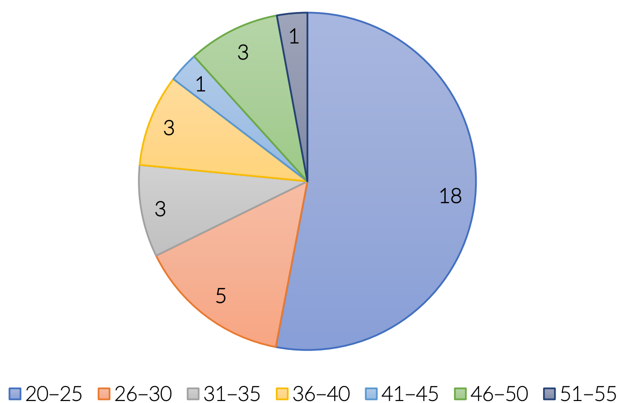


**FIGURE 1** Age demographic in years for IBEC students at Asagi (2020/21).

the theory can, at the very least, be traced back to the 1910 notion of “constructive thinking” (Dewey, 1997, p. 236), while its formalized roots are attributed to a handful of developmental psychologists (e.g., Bruner, 1990) from exclusively “White” Euro-American backgrounds, most frequently Jean Piaget (Piaget, 1974). A second variant of constructivism to the one Piaget encouraged (i.e., cognitive constructivism) later emerged in the early 20th century: *socio-constructivism* (hereon “constructivism”). Analyzed to have surfaced from interactions between George Mead and John Dewey (Garrison, 1998), it was later substantially developed on by the work of Lev Vygotsky (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 19–30). The principal difference lies in the latter's relative emphasis on active participation between learners—including “teachers”—in the process of (re)constructing knowledge. It underscores the art of teaching as a transactional and creative activity, one that, if successful, liberates new perspectives “with those who tell different stories in a different vocabulary from ourselves” (Garrison, 1998, p. 60).

Constructivism has since transformed into *the* “preferred pedagogy” by transnationally authoritative bodies, like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD (Robertson & Sorensen, 2018, p. 471). The IBO, as another example, has similarly placed longstanding weight on realizing constructivist classroom environments (e.g., IBO, 2023, pp. 10, 22, 73). Add to this the Japanese Government's ambition to cultivate greater “active learning” inside its own article-1 regulations, and the fact Asagi highlighted constructivism as a core aspect of its IBEC program was anything but perplexing.

Frequently stressed by facilitators throughout the year, most in this group were attempting to practice the pedagogy by doing. But it was those like Sato and Ishibashi, grounded in a wealth of knowledge from professional teaching, who were generally the most enthusiastic at actualizing it. I observed several in-practice students—and occasionally straight-masters counterparts—employ tactical lures during activities in a hope to draw out participation with those more reserved. Some cues were explicit (e.g., “I am intrigued about what you think”), while others shrewdly veiled (e.g., “sometimes I feel my teaching experience makes me think too pragmatically. I want to get better at delving into theory”). Sato later divulged these actions as strategies to provoke contribution from those like Miyazaki and Yamakawa. To deliver a confidence that any absence of working experience need not curtail aspiring educators from making meaningful contributions. Nonetheless, during this privately arranged session, Sato's bold pursuits had unequivocally failed. Yamakawa weighed in their thoughts once during the remaining 30 min, while Miyazaki sat resolutely mute.

## Relational disconnect

The above scenario proved one of dozens throughout the academic year where I observed prolonged junctures of awkward silence. Junctures meant to showcase lively spaces of constructivist practice, and a silence, more often than not, ended by those bracketed as in-practice students. Intriguing, then, that these dissonances were never explicitly acknowledged, nor confronted by any individual in this community. It would not be until extensive interviews with the cohort that tangible reasons explaining this behavior arose. Through them I discovered many in the straight-masters category to either feel a positive responsibility, or personally unwanted, but social expectation to allow in-practice others to assume more participatory roles. Miyazaki's reflection on this dynamic with in-practice others provides a balanced snapshot of both sentiments. Asked if he felt conscious of any divide between the two categories during activities, his lengthy reflection included:

> Miyazaki: [Japanese] Obviously there is a gap in experience [between the two groups]… on one hand there were times when our opinions would clash, and

> sure enough, there was an element where I felt I had to kind of concede mine. Whereas with the straight-masters students we could kind of test our opinions off each other more […] Of course there are way more merits for having in-practice student involvement than not. There was much I learnt from them, and there were naturally also occasions when they provided me with very supportive advice.
> (Interview, March 2021)

Miyazaki's reflection also mentioned how part of this deference to the viewpoints of in-practice peers was explained by "ending up seeing them as *senpai*" (Interview, March 2021). Meanwhile, the in-practice group similarly felt either a positive, or an undesired departmental expectation to don more vertical personas. Sato, who represented this latter stance, expressed disappointment over these very disparities when asked for a reflection on his general IBEC experience. Enthusiastic to delve into the topic, Sato suggested that greater facilitator intervention might have better mitigated these events of non-engagement, but that ultimate blame lay with select straight-masters members. Asking if he thought this was related to their respect of his seniority, Sato was originally inclined to agree, before nuancing his opinion with:

> Sato: [Japanese] Akira, I've been thinking about this recently and, there are times when the straight-masters lot act in that way, seeking to listen to my various views out of respect, but I also think there are guys who are just not thinking at all [(laughs)] […] If you say what you're honestly thinking, there should be nothing embarrassing about not knowing what you don't know.
> (Interview, March 2021)

Sato's viewpoint requires caution. No other in-practice student criticized the behavior of their counterparts to the extent he had. On the contrary, several others in this bracket expressed more empathetic views toward the straight-masters cohort. But his stance was consistent with a general outlook among the in-practice group, that saw straight-masters individuals as less contributive during activities.

Searching for remedial solutions, Sato was also one of several attempting to abolish consciousness of the divide altogether. Another was Matsushima, who demonstrated a tremendous drive to achieve this. In front of more than half the community during an online social pub event, she not only asserted a wish for the group to replace her titular suffix of *sensei* ("teacher") with *san* (a horizontal suffix loosely translating to Ms/Mr/Mx etc. in English), but to even be addressed by her personal name. Both these tactics aimed to construct greater horizontal ties inside the group. Like the idea of *senpai*, *sensei*—in education used to address teaching faculty in schooling, and often academic faculty in higher education—also affirms a sense of relational verticality, but is of a pronouncedly higher status to the former term, thereby realizing further social distance. All students deployed this suffix to address IBEC facilitators, but some additionally used it for certain members *inside* their student group. Nevertheless, it was Matsushima's second action that proved decidedly eye-catching. Indeed, being referred to by one's personal name in Japanese typically occurs only in the most intimate of relationships in Japanese society (e.g., one's partner, parent, childhood friend), particularly for older generations that Matsushima represents.

Ultimately, however, despite ambitious forays to realize the contrary, these private frictions between both straight-masters and in-practice cohorts persisted throughout my year. The product of two fundamental forces. First, the organizational culture of a specific department, one permeated by broader codes of Japanese relationality. The majority found these resulting labels familiar, accustomed to how modes of respect and responsibility are channeled through them. Some, conversely, preferred to deconstruct these categorizations altogether, if only for

the purpose of acquiring impressionable, “progressive” pedagogy. Lurking inside this veil of progressiveness, meanwhile, resides the second force: epistemic whiteness.

### Constructivism as Euro-American whiteness

Whiteness surfaced at Asagi by virtue of a pedagogy failing to accommodate Japanese modes of relationality: “White” Euro-American constructivism. That originally conceptualized by “White” Euro-American theoreticians, and chiefly informed by “White” Euro-American spaces. A pedagogy then unwittingly rendered humanly universal by transnationally impressionable bodies, before being hurtled across numerous contexts that may or—as Japan represents—may not encourage the same interpersonal approaches that it promotes. Indigenous pathways to knowledge production to be resultingly construed as “backward-looking,” versus a “modern” (Robertson & Sorensen, 2018, p. 481), naïvely “White” Euro-American education.

Troubling, then, that despite most feeling something amiss, none of these dissonances were publicly articulated by facilitator or student. The issue, in other words, had been concealed. Shrouded in a disquieting fog that facets of whiteness are all too familiar with. Any potential strategies to reconcile these frictions in Asagi's teacher training spaces had been unknowingly suppressed. No one, it appeared, was prepared to ask how these obvious instances of lumbering suspension could be addressed. Of course, no one was able to inquire how constructivism, a pedagogy conceived in the credulity of its own “White” history, could be, if at all desired, effectively *glocalized* (Anderson-Levitt, 2003) to accommodate Japanese practices of identity. Why? One pivotal explanator lies with the fact that, unlike English, constructivism has yet to be suitably extricated from whiteness.

## IMPLICATIONS

Whiteness, here identified through linguistically Anglo-American, and pedagogically Euro-American forces of often-unwitting imperialism, persists in effacing the languages and pedagogies of societies formed outside its cultural webs. Demonstrated through the context of IBEC in Japanese higher education, key principles underpinning the universalized tropes of “international” and “global education” remain steeped in those of whiteness. So profound is its scale today, that the phenomenon's diffusion occurs in thick camouflage. Concealed inside fashionable, generously funded “international” and “global” jargon. Parlance to be uncritically forwarded by privileged transnational institutions, who all too often remain ignorant of their own embodiment of the concept. Those who in-turn encourage actors—via, for instance, the language of “global competence” (Tan, 2024)—to either obliviously advocate for, or otherwise obliviously surrender to its uptake.

The pressing matter of unearthing forces of whiteness, as analyzed here through participants' engagement with English and constructivism, is a scholarly process still in its infancy. This is particularly true for non-Euro-American geopolitical spheres, as is evidenced by still scarce literatures on the theory itself. But, as I now move to consider, this bleak status is further threatened by the nature of recent disputes over its influence and relevance.

### Decloaking whiteness

The last decade has witnessed a noteworthy rise in the research of “White” migratory populations within Asian contexts, enveloping both education (e.g., Stanley, 2013) and broader society (e.g., Debnár, 2016). On one hand, this stream of scholarship is contributing welcome

nuance to our understandings of various populations benefiting from whiteness' repertoire in everyday life. One frequently emerging aspect from Japan-related literatures is anchored around caution. A warning in overlooking legitimate evidence of discrimination and exclusionary disadvantages—regularly driven by stubborn cultural nationalisms (Befu, 2001)—that “White” migrants also encounter (Miladinović, 2020). Yet, on the other hand, as several of us engaged in this work have also stressed (e.g., Shah, 2024), it is imperative to recognize the privileged resources such migrants, often unintentionally, also draw on and (or) are bestowed with through worlding structures of whiteness that no other equivalent “peoples” can match. In short, to appreciate how “White” migration remains a comparatively voluntary and privileged action relative to other “non-White” equivalents (e.g., Onuki, 2023). And by extension, to acknowledge how a myriad of local contexts around the world, including across Asia (Kubota, 2023), more often feel compelled to invest and (or) reluctantly submit to its dominion. World higher education itself remains implicit in maintaining this status quo (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2022), as can be discerned from academic journals' own complicitness in exacerbating geopolitical and linguistic inequities (Asubiaro et al., 2024).

It is for the above reasons and more that doubts over whiteness' “actionable capital” (Hof, 2021, p. 2125), as others have raised, requires vigilance. Some go as far as to propose how its impact should be distinguished as one of either “passive” or “actionable value,” while synonymizing this distinction with whiteness “as a factor of difference *and* benefit,” versus one “that ceases to benefit its bearers” (Hof, 2021, p. 2114). Not only could such conclusions be argued as hazardous (e.g., largely eschewing “non-White” positionalities within its theorization), but more pertinently, a premature avenue of inquiry. This is because, as I have sought to underscore in this article, the most outstanding issue with whiteness lingers in its invisibility. English, as a branch of this phenomenon, is only more recently attracting a long overdue spotlight. But as the case of constructivism in Japanese teacher training spaces helps attest to, plentiful more artifacts of whiteness, all too often hidden behind resource-rich, objective rationalisms, await similar unmasking within and away from educational settings.

This daunting task, if engaged with seriously, will require painstaking effort by scholars of a diversity of stripes in the social sciences to achieve. Even then, it will inevitably require profound endurance to sustain. Yet, surely, it is only by decloaking whiteness' many components first, that we can more comprehensively, and therefore more fruitfully attend to assessing the extent of its influences, intersectionalities, and limitations.

## Moving forward

I conclude this piece by offering just a few examples for how this decloaking, and subsequent deconstructing, of linguistic and pedagogical whiteness inside IB initiatives might be achieved. The greatest role arguably begins with the IBO itself, who, through a more humanly representative body, could provide resolute contributions that inspire its facilitators—IBEC and otherwise—to recognize the overly saturated existence of whiteness within its educational offerings where identified. More pertinently, concerning language, the organization could back up its supposed multilingualist ideology by ensuring English is not sold by its related affiliates as uniformly imperative across all territories in question. This includes refraining from conceptually problematic, universalist slogans like “global language.” These actions require a broader weariness over the complexity of English's role in different geopolitical spheres, as well as a drive to incentivize education through indigenous modes of communication. Furthermore, where languages are generously resourced in their own right—like Japanese—emphasis on English should be appropriately dialed back, while expectations for local language/s should be elevated. At the very least, in cases such as Rindo, sentiments of choice between English and local counterparts need to be respectively upheld in practice.

As for phenomena like constructivism, the IBO could seek to develop better pedagogical inclusiveness by welcoming hyphenizations based on otherwise excluded, indigenous alternatives. Alongside the innumerable ways relevant schooling and professional development communities could contribute, those involved with IBEC could be galvanized to routinely experiment with alternatives, especially when given its attention to teacher education for a diverse range of societies. Universities like Asagi, meanwhile, where generous educational research is being steadily conducted, could play pioneering roles at helping innovate new pedagogies that incorporate local practices of teaching and learning. Regardless, at this still elementary stage, inspiring efforts to openly discuss, propose, and resource alternative practices to boost pedagogical equity—both inside transnational and more local bodies—needs to be urgently prioritized.

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## ENDNOTES

[1] The original language/s of direct quotes from participants are signposted throughout all corresponding sections. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[2] All people solely introduced by a personal or family name are pseudonyms.

[3] Javeria's nationality has been anonymized in accordance with her wishes.

[4] My use of inverted quotes for the racial category of White is later explained. I steer clear of the term Caucasian due to its etymological coining as part of an erroneous and fundamentally prejudiced racial classification system (Moses, 2017).

[5] The MEXT-IBO Consortium currently refers to the DLDP as the *nihongo* DP (“Japanese DP”) in Japanese, while it continues to call it the Dual-Language DP in English. Contrary to what its Japanese naming suggests, compulsory elements of English instruction and assessment remain part of this initiative.

[6] The pseudonymized names of all Japanese nationals in this article are family names.

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