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Breaking Colonization in Teaching English as an International Language: The Native Speaker and Deleuze’s Becoming

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This session explores how one of the principles of mainstream linguistics, as critiqued by Deleuze and Guattari, has complicated (and even countered) work in international language teacher education. I do this first by briefly reviewing how some of the major figures in Western philosophy have debated the nature of language. Then Deleuze & Guattari’s (1993) critique of some of the tenants of modern linguistic theory is outlined. My discussion then turns to applied linguistics and the notion of the “native speaker”. This is concretized through a discussion of how this notion affected the design of a multi-year professional development project for English-as-a-Second/Foreign-Language (ESL / EFL) teachers from rural and remote areas in Western Chinese provinces. I conclude with reflections on how Deleuze’s use of the concept of “becoming” helps us understand the language teacher’s role as a “sorcerer” in this context. The taboos I seek to challenge in this presentation have to do with how notions long dominant within applied linguistics have been conceptualized, such as the native speaker, fluency, language transfer, second language, and ESL/EFL. Challenging these antiquated concepts help us work towards international language teaching that breaks with patterns of colonization