

## **English (in)competent: language ideology and identity in Japan and the Netherlands**

*Alison Edwards (Leiden University Centre for Linguistics) & Philip Seargeant (Open University, UK)*

In this talk we explore the ways in which English forms an integral part of local language practices in Japan and the Netherlands, two countries in which English has limited official status, or, in the case of Japan, no significant role in transactional communication at all. English in these contexts has typically been constructed as a 'foreign' or 'international' language, thereby precluding consideration of the increasingly complex and multifarious ways in which it is mobilised for local interpersonal functions and in producing and performing identity. We present two specific analytic examples from the mediascapes of the two countries – the Karakuri Funniest English segment of a Japanese comedy show and a post from the satirical online Dutch magazine *De Speld*. Analysing these ludic transcultural media products from a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic perspective, we show how English is tied up with the construction of the self and the other in different, profound and sometimes unexpected ways. Although the prevailing English-language ideologies in these two countries are almost polar opposites – the Japanese are typically constructed in the Japanese national imagination as 'English-incompetent', in contrast with the broad 'English-knowing' identity in the Netherlands – in both contexts the use of English as a global linguistic resource creates new semiotic opportunities for social actors to negotiate and revise their identities and strategically construct the local.