Gifts of Indigeneity:

Contributions to ELT/TESOL from Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in Honduras

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Abstract

The intersection of Indigeneity and English Language Teaching (ELT) remains critically underexplored in ELT/TESOL. This article examines how two Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in Honduras draw upon their Indigeneity to inform their professional identities and pedagogical practices. Grounded in *turi aisa ya*, an Indigenous Miskitu methodology rooted in dialogical storytelling and relational accountability, the study reveals how multilingualism, cultural sustaining practices, and relationality inform their teaching praxis. Findings show that Indigeneity operates as an anchor for professional motivation, a framework for reciprocal and student-centered pedagogy, and a transformative force in reimagining ELT beyond monolingual, hierarchical, and Eurocentric models. The teachers normalize translanguaging and affirm students' linguistic and cultural identities as central to learning. Their praxis reflects Indigenous values of care, reciprocity, and sovereignty, offering critical insights for decolonizing ELT/TESOL and reorienting teacher education toward culturally sustaining approaches. This work contributes to broader calls for linguistic justice during the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), highlighting the urgency of centering Indigenous educators as knowledge holders, change agents, and creators of more equitable and relational models of language education.

Keywords: Indigeneity, English Language Teaching (ELT), TESOL, applied linguistics, Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous research, multilingualism, Miskitu, Honduras

Introduction

Despite its significance, the intersection of Indigeneity and English Language Teaching (ELT) remains an understudied area within ELT/TESOL, a fact applicable to the fields of applied linguistics and language education which also investigate the teaching, learning, and use of languages. While research on multilingualism and global Englishes has gained prominence, little attention has been given to the experiences of multilingual Indigenous teachers of English and how their Indigeneity informs their teaching praxis. This article explores the role of Indigeneity in ELT through the lived experiences of Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in Honduras, responding to calls for research that acknowledges diverse epistemologies and real-world language learning contexts (Norton & Tohey, 2011; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020; Sterling & De Costa, 2018).

To contextualize the communities this study engages with, it is important to recall the widely cited working definition of Indigenous Peoples proposed by Martinez Cobo (1986):

[Indigenous Peoples] have a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves as distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories ...and are determined to preserve and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (Martinez Cobo, 1986, p. 29).

In countries where English is a de-facto language, Indigenous communities have a complex history with English, often associated with colonial imposition and linguistic displacement and erasure. However, Indigenous teachers, especially where English is considered a global language, actively navigate this tension, reinterpreting English as a tool for personal, professional, and community advancement. Informed by an Indigenous research paradigm (Absolon, 2011; Smith, 2021), this study highlights how Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in Honduras integrate Indigenous knowledge, practices, and values, as well as relational ways of knowing—core elements of their Indigeneity—into their teaching praxis.

Guided by an Indigenous research paradigm and the principles of *turi aisa ya*, an Indigenous Miskitu methodology rooted in dialogical storytelling and relational accountability, this study explored the role of Indigeneity in shaping ELT through the lived experiences of two Indigenous Miskitu language educators in Honduras. The following research questions framed the inquiry:
1. What can the experiences and stories of two Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English from Honduras teach us about the role and importance of their Indigeneity in becoming teachers of English?
2. In what way does their Indigeneity manifest in their teaching praxis as Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in the public education system of Honduras?
3. What curricular innovations can be proposed to ELT teacher education in Honduras that are informed by the experiences and stories of two Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English and their Indigeneity?

By foregrounding the voices of Indigenous Miskitu teachers, this article sheds light on how Indigeneity informs their teaching praxis in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Honduras. It addresses critical gaps in ELT/TESOL research by amplifying the lived experiences and pedagogical perspectives of Indigenous educators—voices seldom represented in the literature—and by applying insights from Indigenous language education to inform pedagogical approaches that honor Indigenous worldviews, multilingualism, and community-based teaching practices.

In doing so, this article also contributes to interdisciplinary efforts to decolonize and advance equity in applied linguistics and language education (Kubota, 2021; Meighan, 2025) and broadens the scope of applied linguistics research to include Indigenous epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogies (Zheng et al., 2025).

Literature Review

Indigeneity and Multilingualism in ELT/TESOL

Traditional ELT frameworks have largely been shaped by Western and/or Global North linguistic theories that privilege monolingual, English-dominant perspectives (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020). These frameworks often idealize the native speaker as the ultimate model of

proficiency, reinforcing standard language ideologies rooted in colonial and Eurocentric norms. As a result, learners are typically positioned as deficient users of English who must approximate native-like norms, while their multilingual resources are overlooked or treated as interference (Garcia, 2019). Moreover, these frameworks tend to conceptualize language as a decontextualized system of grammatical rules, abstracted from the sociocultural, socioecological, and multilingual realities in which language use actually occurs. This orientation has led to the global export of Western/Global North pedagogical models, curricula, and assessments that may fail to align with local epistemologies, linguistic ecologies, and educational needs—especially in Indigenous and postcolonial contexts (Norton & Tohey, 2011). In response, scholars have called for a fundamental shift toward pedagogical and research approaches that recognize multilingualism, translanguaging, and Indigenous knowledge systems as central to language learning and teaching (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020).

Indigenous communities worldwide have long engaged in multilingual practices, demonstrating linguistic resilience in the face of colonial language policies (McCarty et al., 2018). Multilingualism refers to the ability to use and navigate between multiple languages in diverse social and cultural contexts. It is not only a cognitive and communicative skill but also a lived experience that reflects linguistic fluidity, identity negotiation, and cultural hybridity. For Indigenous communities, multilingualism is often shaped by colonial histories, language shift, and efforts toward linguistic reclamation and maintenance (Leonard, 2017).

Multilingual Indigenous teachers often operate within complex sociolinguistic realities where English functions as an additional language, often acquired in formal educational settings while Indigenous languages remain the primary mode of communication in home and community domains (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Despite their linguistic repertoires, Indigenous teachers of English are frequently trained in ELT methodologies that fail to account for their unique cultural and linguistic assets (López-Gopar et al., 2021). This study contributes to filling this gap by centering Indigenous Miskitu teachers' perspectives on English language learning and teaching. Furthermore, research on Indigenous language education has highlighted the importance of integrating Indigenous languages and worldviews into pedagogical practices (Hornberger & Swinehart, 2012). This article attempts to adequately apply these insights into ELT.

Indigenous Teachers' Identities and Pedagogical Practices

Research on teacher identity has established that language educators' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds significantly influence their teaching approaches (Kayi-Aydar, 2018). According to Barkhuizen (2017), language teacher identities (LTIs) are

cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical—they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material, and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying. They are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged, and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded (p. 4).

Rather than focusing on language teacher identities, this article centers Indigeneity as a key influence on the teaching practices of Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English. Indigeneity is the quality of being Indigenous encompassing:
- embracing Indigenous worldviews, paradigms, and ways of being, doing, knowing, and

    thinking (Garroutte, 2006; Huaman, 2022; Peltier, 2021);

- self-identification as Indigenous (Martinez Cobo, 1986);
- awareness and interest in one's spirituality and well-being (Cajete, 1994; Simpson, 2011);
- the use of, interest in, and passion for one's Indigenous language and culture (Huaman, 2022; Peltier, 2021); and
- connection to Indigenous people by blood, kinship, or ancestry (Garroutte, 2006; Simpson, 2011), as well as to one's Indigenous land, place, and community (Absolon, 2011; Sarivaara et al., 2013).

Indigenous teachers, in particular, embody complex positionalities and subjectivities as both language learners and instructors, negotiating between their Indigenous identities and the expectations of dominant linguistic and educational structures (Sayer, 2012). Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English, as examined in this study, enact their Indigeneity through pedagogical strategies that emphasize well-being, relational accountability, and culturally sustaining teaching practices. Their praxis aligns with asset-based frameworks that recognize multilingual and translingual competencies as strengths in language learning (García & Wei, 2014). Additionally, they adopt student-centered approaches that resist top-down, standardized ELT methodologies, instead fostering learning environments grounded in Indigenous values of care, reciprocity, and community engagement—principles that are central to how Indigenous youth, such as the Hopi, enact identity and belonging beyond linguistic proficiency (Nicholas, 2009).

Decolonizing ELT/TESOL: Expanding its Methodological Scope

The field of ELT/TESOL has been critiqued for reinforcing linguistic and knowledge hierarchies that marginalize non-Western epistemologies (Canagarajah, 1999; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kubota, 2021). Global Englishes and critical applied linguistics scholars have challenged traditional notions of linguistic standardization (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020), yet Indigenous perspectives in language use and language education remain largely absent from ELT/TESOL discussions. Indigenous and decolonial scholars have emphasized the need to recognize Indigenous relational paradigms, which center holistic, land-based, and reciprocal learning processes (Huaman, 2022; Meighan & Lin, 2025).

Relationality, a core principle of Indigenous epistemologies, reflects the fundamental understanding that knowledge is shared among all beings—human and more-than-human—in a web of interconnected relationships. As Wilson (2001) explains, relationality is not just about human-to-human interactions but extends to relationships with the land, the cosmos, the spiritual realm, and all living and more-than-human entities. In contrast to Western paradigms that often conceptualize knowledge as objective and individualized, relationality situates knowledge within an ethical, communal, and reciprocal framework, reinforcing the importance of responsibility and accountability to one's relations.

Wilson (2001) articulates this paradigm of relational knowledge in the following way:

An Indigenous [relational] paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships…, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (Wilson, 2001, pp. 176-177)

Indigenous epistemologies that are informed by principles of relationality and reciprocity translate to Indigenous methodologies that privilege relational and reciprocal knowledge sharing (Absolon, 2011). With this foundation, this study employed *turi aisa ya*, an Indigenous Miskitu methodology, to create space for exploring alternative frameworks for conceptualizing ELT in ways that honor Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning (Smith, 2021). The Indigenous Miskitu methodology of *turi aisa ya* requires sitting down and listening with intention as it holds space for the sharing and exchanging of information and experiences. It includes laughing, thinking together, crying, worrying, and coming up with solutions as well as imagining, experiencing vicariously, and feeling together. *Turi aisa ya* is a "language as cultural practice" of the Miskitu people (Nicholas, 2018).

The following reflection, shared by an Indigenous Miskitu teacher, who decided to remain anonymous, illustrates the depth of *turi aisa ya* as a communicative and emotional practice:

baha ba wihaya wansa turi kum yawan uplabaku aisaya wansba upla walananiwal, an baha turkaba wall yawan diara lukiba aisisa

hablar nos permite comunicarnos con otras personas por medio de palabras, es la forma de manifestar nuestros sentimientos o intercambiar puntos de vista con otras.
(personal communication, November 2020)

turi aisa ya allows us to communicate with others through words, it is the way of manifesting our sentiments or exchanging our points of view with others.
(translation by the main author)

In Indigenous knowledge systems, methodologies, and pedagogies, knowledge is relational rather than transactional, emphasizing community engagement and oral traditions (Archibald, 2008). As such, *turi aisa ya* is not only a culturally sustaining method but also a decolonial pedagogical space, offering an Indigenous framework for reimagining ELT/TESOL practice and research.

The reviewed literature underscores the urgent need to reimagine English Language Teaching through frameworks that center Indigenous epistemologies and multilingual realities. While critical applied linguistics and Global Englishes scholarship have advanced important critiques in these areas, the voices and methodologies of multilingual Indigenous educators—especially those working in non-dominant language contexts—remain markedly underrepresented. This study responds to that gap by foregrounding the experiences and pedagogical insights of two Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in Honduras. Grounded in Indigenous paradigms and the Miskitu methodology of *turi aisa ya*, the study explored how Indigeneity informs their professional journeys and classroom practices, with implications for ELT/TESOL teacher education curricula as well as in research and practice in applied linguistics and language education.

Method

Indigenous Research

This study was grounded in an Indigenous research paradigm that privileges relationality, reciprocity, and community-centered knowledge creation (Absolon, 2011; Smith, 2021). Within this paradigm, research is not an extractive process but rather a relational and ethical engagement where knowledge is co-constructed with and for Indigenous communities. As Brayboy et al. (2012)

assert, Indigenous research is "unapologetically rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems" (p. 424), while Absolon (2011) emphasizes that it "reflect[s] the strengths of the community, culture, and traditions of Indigenous peoples" (p. 97).

Aligned with these principles, this study adopted *turi aisa ya*—an Indigenous Miskitu methodology of dialogical storytelling and knowledge sharing—as its primary method. *Turi aisa ya* is a culturally sustaining Miskitu practice of gathering to share stories, listen with intention, and engage in reflective dialogue. It embodies an Indigenous relational paradigm in which knowledge is understood as interdependent and co-constructed rather than individually possessed (Wilson, 2008). Similar to sharing circles in other Indigenous traditions, *turi aisa ya* fosters spaces for collective meaning-making, where participants are invited to reflect, laugh, cry, imagine, and problem-solve together (Lavallée, 2009; Nicholas, 2014). As in sharing circles, in *turi aisa ya*:

all participants (including the facilitator) are viewed as equal and information, spirituality, and emotionality are shared … [they engage in] acts of sharing all aspects of the individual—heart, mind, body, and spirit—and permission is given to the facilitator to report on the discussions (Lavallée, 2009, p. 29).

Furthermore, and in accordance with the epistemological and methodological principles of Indigenous research, collaborators in this study were regarded as co-researchers, not participants or subjects, as is common in dominant paradigms. This approach—often described as research *with* and *for* Indigenous Peoples—foregrounds relationships, reciprocity, and shared authority throughout the research process (Absolon, 2011; Smith, 2021).

Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) critiques extractive research practices that have historically harmed Indigenous communities, establishing the need for ethically engaging in research *with* and *for* Indigenous Peoples. She writes:

Research has never really demonstrated that it can benefit [Indigenous] communities—because the benefits never reach Indigenous peoples or are used as a ploy or tactic to coerce Indigenous communities into sacrificing their cultural values, leaving their homes, giving up their languages and surrendering control over basic decision making in their own lives (Smith, 2021, p. 282).

Co-Researchers and Ethical Considerations

The co-researchers in this study were Zoila Maribel Goff Fonseca and Wesley Gerardo Miller Gostas, two Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English in Honduras. Both individuals self-identify as Indigenous Miskitu and are multilingual speakers of Miskitu, Spanish, and English. They graduated from a public ELT teacher education program in Honduras and were teaching English in the public school system of Honduras at the time of the study.

Zoila and Wesley were invited to participate based on pre-existing relationships of trust and mutual respect, ensuring that the research remained grounded in ethical commitments to relational accountability (Kovach, 2009). They both provided informed consent to engage in this collaborative endeavor and chose to be named in the study, asserting their agency, presence, and identity.

Ethical protocols were followed, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval with attention to working respectfully with Indigenous populations. In addition, this study upheld the

First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) (First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.). Co-researchers maintained full control over their narratives, had continuous access to the research process, and co-constructed the findings. Their participation was guided by principles of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity, and the results were collaboratively reviewed to ensure that interpretations aligned with their perspectives and intentions.

Data Collection: Engaging in *turi aisa ya*

Table 1
Guiding Questions/Prompts for Turi Aisa Ya Sessions

Session	Theme	Research Question	Guiding Questions/Prompts
Session 1	A personal story: Who I am.	RQ1	Share your life story.
Session 2	Conversations on Indigeneity	RQ1	What is Indigeneity for you? How do you define it? In what ways do you think it is expressed in your daily life as an individual and as English teacher?
Session 3	Becoming a teacher of English: Studying in an ELT program.	RQ1	How was your experience as a student of an ELT program? How did your multilingual abilities impact and/or inform your experience as a student of the program? How did studying to become a teacher of English intersect with your Indigeneity as a Miskitu person?
Session 4	Becoming a teacher of English: Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English.	RQ1	How has your experience been as a teacher of English? What events have you treasured in relation to your decision of becoming a teacher of English (good or bad)? What is it like to be a Miskitu teacher of English?
Session 5	Being a teacher of English: Working in the public education system of Honduras.	RQ2	Tell your story about work or working as a teacher of English in the public school system of Honduras. How have your students reacted to your teaching praxis? How does being a teacher in the public school system intersect with your Indigeneity as a Miskitu person?
Session 6	Being a teacher of English: Working in the public education system of Honduras.	RQ2	How is it to work as a teacher of English in the public education system of Honduras? How does being a teacher in the public school system intersect with your Indigeneity as a Miskitu person?
Session 7	Contributions to ELT teacher education in Honduras.	RQ3	What could be some contributions to the ELT teacher education program that could be based and informed by your experiences as former students of the program and as current teachers of English in the public education system? What can pre-service and in-service learn from the actions you do as an Indigenous Miskitu teacher of English?

Data were collected through a series of seven *turi aisa ya* sessions conducted over two months. These sessions took place both in person and virtually via Zoom, allowing for flexibility in participation. The *turi aisa ya* methodology fostered an organic and dialogical data collection process, where co-researchers shared their experiences, reflections, and insights about their Indigeneity, multilingualism, and ELT praxis.

Each session was guided by broad thematic questions that encouraged storytelling and open-ended reflection. Table 1 shares some of the questions asked during the *turi aisa ya* sessions and how these questions aligned with each of the research questions.

Discussions were conducted in a mix of English, Spanish, and Miskitu, reflecting the multilingual realities of the participants. The sessions were audio- and video-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed. Given the iterative and relational nature of *turi aisa ya*, data collection was dynamic, allowing co-researchers to revisit and refine their contributions as needed. Table 2 illustrates dates and time duration and participant(s) per each *turi aisa ya* session.

Table 2
Time Duration and Participants of Recorded Turi Aisa Ya Sessions

Recorded Session	Time (Min.)	Theme	Participants
Session 1	28	• A personal story: Who I am.	Wesley Jaime
Session 2	43	• Conversations on Indigeneity	Wesley Jaime
Session 3	46	• Becoming a teacher of English: Studying in an ELT program.	Wesley Jaime
Session 4	80	• A personal story: Who I am. • Conversations on Indigeneity	Zoila Jaime
Session 5	39	• Becoming a teacher of English: Studying in an ELT program.	Zoila Jaime
Session 6	70	• Becoming a teacher of English: Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English. • Being a teacher of English: Working in the public education system of Honduras.	Zoila Wesley Jaime
Session 7	72	• Being a teacher of English: Working in the public education system of Honduras. • Contributions to ELT teacher education in Honduras.	Zoila Wesley Jaime

Data Analysis: Storywork and Thematic Interpretation

The analysis of the data followed a storywork approach (Archibald, 2008), which honors Indigenous storytelling as a method of knowledge transmission and meaning-making. Storywork refers to ways of making or gaining insights from stories, whether they are traditional or from lived experience, and it emphasizes the responsibility of the researcher to listen deeply, engage ethically, and represent findings in ways that uphold the cultural and spiritual significance of what is shared (McCarty et al., 2014, 2022).

I compiled 36 pages of multilingual transcripts and notes, which I analyzed through iterative readings to identify emerging themes aligned with the study's research questions. Visual representations and analogies supported this process. The analysis drew on data in Spanish, English, and, to a lesser extent, Miskitu. Translations were provided to enhance accessibility while preserving the integrity of the co-researchers' voices.

Table 3

Data Analysis Procedures: A Relational and Thematic Approach Grounded in Indigenous Methodologies

Stage of Analysis	Description
Ceremonial Preparation	Engaged in ceremony (burning sage, palo santo, and copal) before interacting with recordings, grounding the process in Indigenous relational protocols (Wilson, 2008). This affirmed the sacredness of knowledge exchange and respected the spiritual dimension of research.
Data Immersion	Watched and listened to the multilingual *turi aisa ya* recordings multiple times, approaching them with relational accountability and emotional presence.
Transcription and Note-taking	Transcribed meaningful excerpts verbatim from Spanish, English, and Miskitu; compiled over 36 pages of multilingual data, with supplemental notes capturing context and tone.
Iterative Reading and Theme Identification	Reviewed transcripts and notes in iterative cycles to identify patterns and emergent themes, guided by the research questions and Indigenous principles of meaning-making (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2010; Lavallée, 2009).
Language Considerations	Made interpretive and translation decisions mindfully, providing English translations where needed while preserving the integrity of Spanish and Miskitu expressions.
Analytical Framing	Used visual analogies and reflective strategies to support theme development, ensuring analysis was grounded in relational and contextual understandings.
Co-Analysis and Member Checking	Shared themes and interpretations with co-researchers for validation, revision, and consensus-building, ensuring alignment with their lived experiences and perspectives.

Thematic analysis in this study was embedded in Indigenous research paradigms that position research as a relational, spiritual, and ceremonial act (Kovach, 2021; Lavallée, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Before engaging with the data, I participated in ceremony—burning sage, palo santo, and copal—as a way to center myself and to honor the sacredness of the knowledge exchange. This ceremonial grounding affirmed that research is not simply analytical, but spiritual and communal.

The subsequent stages of analysis included immersive engagement with *turi aisa ya* recordings, multilingual transcription and note-taking, and iterative reading to identify patterns and themes. These themes were interpreted through a relational lens, with attention to the sociocultural and linguistic realities of the co-researchers. Visual metaphors and reflective strategies supported this meaning-making process, which was co-constructed through member-checking to ensure alignment with the co-researchers' perspectives and intentions.

As summarized in Table 3, the analysis was conducted through a sequence of interrelated, culturally grounded steps that reflect a thematic analysis approach situated within an Indigenous methodological framework.

Multilingual Considerations and Relational Accountability

Given that the *turi aisa ya* sessions were conducted in three languages—Miskitu, Spanish, and English—language choice was an essential and relational component of both data collection and analysis. Recognizing language as a reflection of identity and epistemology, translations and interpretations were collaboratively reviewed with the co-researchers to ensure fidelity to their intended meanings. This multilingual engagement aligns with principles of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), emphasizing that meaning is co-constructed through respectful dialogue and shared linguistic resources. The multilingual nature of the data highlights not only the linguistic fluidity and multilingual prowess inherent in Indigenous identity, but also the pedagogical practices of Indigenous educators who navigate and integrate multiple languages in culturally sustaining ways (García & Wei, 2014; Hornberger & Swinehart, 2012). Such practices are not merely communicative strategies but acts of resistance and affirmation that challenge dominant monolingual ideologies in ELT.

Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

My positionality as the principal researcher was integral to the study. I identify as a Honduran mestizo/mixed-race and am currently engaged in the process of reclaiming my Indigeneity as Indigenous Chorotega—an identity journey that deeply informs my research approach and ethical commitments. Additionally, like the co-researchers, I was trained under the same ELT teacher education curriculum in Honduras. These shared educational and cultural experiences became key points of connection and relationality. As fellow educators and Honduran citizens, my relationship with the co-researchers was grounded in mutual respect, shared professional trajectories, and a commitment to collaborative knowledge-making.

In keeping with Indigenous research ethics, I understand that this study was not about "giving voice" to Indigenous educators. Rather, it was about creating space where their voices are centered, affirmed, and honored on their own terms (Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008). By acknowledging my positionality and engaging reflexively throughout the research process, I

sought to uphold relational accountability and remain responsive to the co-researchers' leadership and perspectives (Kovach, 2010).

The following section presents the findings that emerged from the collaborative, story-based, and iterative thematic analysis described above. These findings reflect the shared experiences, insights, and pedagogical reflections of the two Indigenous Miskitu co-researchers, whose voices are central to this study. Each theme is grounded in their lived realities and was shaped through a process of relational analysis, multilingual interpretation, and ongoing dialogue. In alignment with Indigenous research principles, the findings are presented not as objective truths but as meaning-making moments co-constructed through *turi aisa ya*. The themes illuminate how Indigeneity informs professional identity, pedagogical praxis, and the transformative potential of ELT from the perspectives of Miskitu educators in Honduras.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal how Indigeneity manifests in the professional trajectories and teaching praxis of Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English. Through the thematic analysis of *turi aisa ya* sessions, three overarching themes emerged: (1) Indigeneity as an anchor for professional identity and motivation, (2) Indigenous relationality in ELT praxis, and (3) Indigeneity as a transformative force in language education. These themes highlight the ways in which Indigenous teachers integrate their cultural knowledge, values, and multilingualism into ELT, challenging dominant narratives in language education.

Indigeneity as an Anchor for Professional Identity and Motivation

Indigeneity plays a central role in shaping the professional identities of Miskitu teachers of English. Co-researchers described their decision to become teachers as deeply intertwined with their relationships to family, community, and intergenerational knowledge. Zoila emphasized that her Indigeneity is not separate from her profession but rather a foundational aspect of who she is:

> *"All the actions and experiences that we have constructed and are still constructing here, right now… but not only me, my ancestors… all the experiences and things that they lived in their lives… I am the result of that… and I am constructing right now for my kids, my grandchildren…"*
> *—Zoila. Turi aisa ya session # 4 with Zoila. Jan, 13, 2023.*

Zoila's words powerfully illustrate how she understands her professional identity as a teacher not in isolation, but as a continuation of the experiences, struggles, and wisdom of her ancestors. Her statement—"All the experiences and things that they lived in their lives … I am the result of that…"—reflects an understanding of self that is grounded in intergenerational continuity and relational responsibility. Rather than viewing her role as a teacher merely through the lens of career development, Zoila sees her profession as part of a collective journey, where teaching becomes an act of honoring the past and preparing the way for future generations. Her mention of "constructing right now for my kids, my grandchildren" signals a forward-looking commitment to community well-being and cultural preservation. In this way, Indigeneity is not just a background identity—it is a guiding force that shapes her motivations, her pedagogical values, and her vision for the future. Her teaching is therefore an extension of her relational obligations, where her classroom becomes a space of cultural affirmation, legacy, and hope.

For Wesley, teaching English is both an individual aspiration and a communal responsibility. He shared the following when narrating his decision to relocating outside his community for pursuing more educational opportunities:

> *"I want to go out of my town not because I want, it is because I want to grow professionally, personally. And when I become a really really independent person, I can go back to La Moskitia and help somehow, with my job, with something, do something. So what I do is try to do my best, being honest, working hard"*
> *—Wesley. Turi aisa ya session # 2 with Wesley. Dec. 6, 2022.*

Wesley's reflection reveals a dual motivation that blends personal growth with a deep sense of communal responsibility. His aspiration to "grow professionally and personally" reflects a desire for self-empowerment through education and professional advancement. However, this goal is not framed in individualistic or competitive terms. Instead, Wesley's ultimate aim is to return to La Moskitia and contribute meaningfully to his community—"to help somehow—with my job, with something, do something." This phrasing underscores both humility and determination. He does not position himself as a savior or expert, but as someone who belongs to the community and seeks to serve it in whatever way he can. His statement also reflects an Indigenous epistemological stance in which learning and teaching are not separate from community life, but integral to sustaining and uplifting it. Teaching English, for Wesley, becomes a means of building capacity, expanding access, and participating in the intergenerational work of community strengthening and cultural survival. His words reflect an understanding of professional identity rooted in relational accountability, where personal development is deeply intertwined with the well-being of others.

These reflections illustrate how Indigeneity functions not merely as a cultural identity but as an ethical and motivational anchor for teaching. For Zoila and Wesley, becoming English language teachers is a relational commitment—a way to honor their ancestors, serve their communities, and support the educational journeys of future generations. Their motivations are deeply embedded in a sense of responsibility and reciprocity, values that stand in contrast to the dominant paradigms of ELT teacher education, which often emphasize individual career advancement, credential acquisition, and standardized professional trajectories (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Rather than viewing their work through the lens of personal success, the co-researchers understand teaching as a collective endeavor, where their professional growth is intrinsically linked to the empowerment and well-being of their communities. This re-centering of purpose underscores the transformative potential of Indigeneity in shaping an alternative vision for ELT/TESOL—one grounded in care, relationality, and communal uplift.

Additionally, multilingualism emerged as a key factor in their motivation to teach English. Both teachers expressed an awareness of the historical and contemporary roles of English in La Muskitia, viewing it not as a language of colonial dominance but as a practical tool for Indigenous self-determination.

> *"Some of my classmates asked me: Wesley, how do you feel? How do you do to learn that other language because it's difficult. Two things that helped me, really helped me, was, one, that I really love the language and that encouraged me to learn. The second is that I am Miskitu, and Miskitu, our language, has some relation with English. There is some story that there is a relation between Miskitu and England many many years ago. I think that helped me a lot. For example, there are words like beans that in Miskitu is bins. Exactly the same. And there are some words that change a little bit but help you in the meaning.*

The pronunciation doesn't matter because you know the meaning… it helps you to learn a little bit easier.
—Wesley. Turi aisa ya session # 3 with Wesley. Dec. 8, 2022.

Historically, the Miskitu people came into contact with English during the period when parts of the Muskitia region were under British influence as part of British Honduras, and this contact has continued through the presence of missionaries, international organizations, and tourism. For Wesley, learning English was not about assimilation into a dominant linguistic framework, but about expanding opportunities for himself and for his community.

"I remember many people tell me: what are you studying? Because you know La Moskitia is small and we know each other in our communities. I felt great when people asked me what are you studying and I said I'm studying to become an English teacher. They were like wow that's excellent. Learning a new language and we need that in here, in La Mosquitia, so I felt really proud"
—Wesley. Turi aisa ya session # 3 with Wesley. Dec. 8, 2022

His reflection reframes English not as a threat to Indigenous identity and sovereignty, but as a meaningful addition to his community's communicative repertoire. This orientation reflects what Ruiz (1984) termed language as a resource, which reframes linguistic diversity and multilingualism not as barriers to overcome, but as valuable assets that can empower communities. For Wesley and Zoila, English is not positioned as a replacement for Miskitu or Spanish but as an additional language that supports their pedagogical goals and community advancement. Their multilingual competencies are thus part of their professional identities and motivations—an enactment of Indigeneity that embraces the strategic and empowering use of languages for both individual and collective transformation.

Indigenous Relationality in ELT Praxis

The findings demonstrate that the co-researchers' teaching praxis is grounded in Indigenous relationality, which centers reciprocity, student well-being, and culturally responsive teaching as fundamental to education. While conventional ELT/TESOL models tend to emphasize standardized curricula, grammar-focused instruction, and hierarchical teacher-student dynamics, Zoila and Wesley approach teaching as an ethic of care—a perspective rooted in Indigenous values of interconnectedness, respect, and community responsibility. This ethic offers a powerful counter-narrative to mainstream ELT/TESOL methodologies and presents an opportunity to reimagine language teaching through relational, student-centered pedagogies.

Zoila described how her pedagogical philosophy is shaped by her cultural upbringing and relational worldview:

"...about education, it is important to learn math and to learn science, but what is really important is how you treat people, the values that you have… if you are kind, if you have values, you can go, you can be a success person… my culture me ha dado eso, yo he crecido en medio de eso, y es lo que utilizo cuando enseño, entonces yo por eso no me baso bastante en the grammar and I know that is important, yeah, because I have to teach it, but the most important thing for me is that they know there is a person in front of them that loves them, that is there for any question, that they can come to me…"
—Zoila, Turi aisa ya session #4, January 13, 2023

For Zoila, teaching is not simply a profession but a relational commitment to the holistic development of her students. Her statements reflect an Indigenous epistemology in which knowledge is never separated from emotion, ethics, or community context. As Cajete (1994) explains, Indigenous education nurtures the whole person—intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially—within a web of relationships that connect individuals to others, the land, and the cosmos. In this light, care is not only an affective stance but a pedagogical orientation that acknowledges and supports students as full human beings.

This ethic of care also manifests in how Zoila and Wesley challenge conventional notions of authority in the classroom. Rather than positioning themselves as unidirectional knowledge-givers, they cultivate reciprocal teaching-learning relationships. As Wesley shared, the Miskitu language itself offers a linguistic representation of this reciprocity:

lan<u>ta</u>kaya (to learn) and lan<u>dau</u>kaya (to teach).

These terms differ by just one syllable, signaling that teaching and learning are mutually constitutive rather than hierarchically distinct processes as shown through this linguistic description. This understanding aligns with Wilson's (2008) notion of relational accountability, which calls on researchers and educators to uphold knowledge creation as an act of mutual respect and responsibility.

By integrating emotional support, mutual respect, and cultural affirmation into their classrooms, Zoila and Wesley enact Indigenous relationality in practice. Their approaches foster student engagement, well-being, and belonging while also challenging dominant ELT/TESOL paradigms that prioritize academic detachment, rigid standards, and top-down control. Instead, they affirm that meaningful learning arises through connection, care, and shared responsibility.

This finding affirms that relationality is not an abstract or symbolic concept but a living pedagogical principle that can—and should—reshape ELT/TESOL practices. Integrating such frameworks into ELT/TESOL teacher education can help the field move toward more humanizing, culturally sustaining, and community-rooted approaches to language teaching and learning.

The emphasis on relational teaching also manifests in specific pedagogical practices that reflect the co-researchers' cultural and linguistic values, such as storytelling as a pedagogical tool and multilingual integration as relational praxis.

Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool

Both Zoila and Wesley regularly integrate personal and community stories into their lessons—not merely as illustrative examples but as central components of their teaching philosophy. Through storytelling, they foster student engagement, affirm identity, and create spaces for meaning-making that transcend textbook content. Wesley explained:

"Something that I really like to do is to talk with my students when I have free time… for example, after four weeks or when I finish a lesson or something, and we have some moments, I stop the class and I start talking. And I love to do something—I like to tell stories that they think are just stories, but they are real life that somehow help them learn something. I feel that I'm not just giving information, teaching grammar, teaching a language. I'm trying to do something else as a person, as a father, as a teacher, as a Christian… I tell stories, give advice, try to give them confidence so they can ask for help

if they need. And most of my students love that. Sometimes, when we have free time, they say, 'Can you tell us a story?' and they love that because they learn something."
—Wesley, Turi aisa ya session #2, December 6, 2022

Wesley's approach exemplifies how storytelling becomes a relational bridge between teacher and student, content and context, language and life. This practice is not supplemental—it is central. Through storytelling, he enacts care, mentorship, and cultural transmission. This aligns with Archibald's (2008) concept of Indigenous storywork, in which stories are understood as pedagogical acts that simultaneously teach, heal, and build relationships. By embedding life lessons, emotional support, and identity work into his stories, Wesley creates a classroom environment that reflects Indigenous educational values—relational, reciprocal, and holistic.

Multilingual Integration as Relational Praxis

Rather than enforcing a rigid English-only policy—a traditional ELT/TESOL practice in some settings—both teachers validate and encourage the use of Miskitu, Spanish, and Garifuna, the languages most commonly spoken by their students. In doing so, they normalize translanguaging as a natural way of being and learning, rather than treating it as a pedagogical innovation or strategy. Their classrooms become linguistically fluid spaces where students' full communicative repertoires are acknowledged and honored.

In privileging multilingual expression, Zoila and Wesley enact an Indigenous understanding of language as a relational and living force. Their classrooms reflect a sociolinguistic ecology where languages coexist, overlap, and support the cultivation of cultural knowledge and collective identity. This multilingual approach is not only practical—it is political and relational. It affirms students' identities, fosters emotional safety, and resists linguistic hierarchies that have historically marginalized Indigenous and local languages in educational systems. Rather than asking students to leave their languages—and by extension, their cultural selves—at the classroom door, Zoila and Wesley's praxis says: you and your languages belong here.

Their relational pedagogy embraces what García and Wei (2014) call a "translanguaging stance", which views language use as dynamic and socially situated, particularly for multilingual and Indigenous students. It also aligns with Indigenous concepts of language as a living relationship, where language carries history, identity, and ancestral wisdom. In this context, multilingual integration is not only a pedagogical choice—it is an ethical commitment to relational accountability and educational justice.

Through these approaches, Zoila and Wesley's ELT praxis exemplifies a pedagogical model that integrates language instruction with cultural identity, relational accountability, and holistic student development. Rather than treating language teaching as a neutral or purely academic task, they foreground the interconnectedness of language, identity, and community. Their work affirms that learning is inherently relational, and that students' linguistic, cultural, and emotional identities must be recognized, nurtured, and valued within the classroom.

Indigeneity as a Transformative Force in Language Education

The co-researchers' reflections demonstrate that Indigeneity is not simply an element of their teaching—it is a transformative force that reshapes the aims, methods, and values of ELT. Rather than viewing students through a deficit lens that assumes linguistic or cultural lack,

Zoila and Wesley embrace an asset-based perspective that celebrates multilingualism and affirms Indigenous and local languages as foundational resources for language learning and academic success. Their approach challenges dominant ELT/TESOL paradigms that privilege monolingual English norms and often marginalize culturally embedded ways of knowing.

Zoila and Wesley advocate for reimagining ELT/TESOL through an Indigenous lens, proposing a paradigm that is inclusive, relational, and rooted in community. They emphasize the need to:

- **Recognize English as an additional—not superior—language**: English is framed not as a replacement for Miskitu, Spanish, or Garifuna, but as a complementary tool that can support personal growth and community development. This orientation encourages multilingualism and resists linguistic hierarchies that have historically silenced Indigenous voices.

- **Integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into ELT pedagogy**: Rather than relying on decontextualized grammar drills or rigid curricula, the co-researchers incorporate storytelling, cultural values, relational accountability, and holistic approaches into their teaching. These practices create more meaningful, student-centered learning environments that connect language to lived experience and communal identity.

- **Ensure representation of Indigenous educators in ELT/TESOL spaces**: Their presence as Indigenous English teachers offers an important counter-narrative to the dominant assumption that English must be taught by Global North "native speakers." As Indigenous educators, they model pedagogical practices that affirm cultural identity and reframe English not as a colonial imposition but as a resource that can be mobilized for community uplift.

Through these commitments, Zoila and Wesley enact a decolonial praxis that disrupts traditional ELT/TESOL models and expands the field to include Indigenous epistemologies, values, and pedagogies. Their work underscores that Indigenous educators are not merely participants in ELT/TESOL—they are knowledge-holders and changemakers who actively shape the present and future of language education in their communities. Their praxis calls for an urgent reevaluation of what counts as legitimate knowledge, language, and pedagogy in ELT/TESOL, reminding the field that transformation begins with honoring the cultural wealth, linguistic resources, and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples.

The insights shared by Zoila and Wesley illuminate the profound ways Indigeneity shapes not only why and how they teach, but also how they imagine the possibilities of language education. Their stories challenge us to see ELT/TESOL not as a neutral or standardized practice, but as a space where relationships, culture, and identity must be centered. Their voices remind us that Indigenous knowledge systems offer vital contributions to language pedagogy—contributions rooted in relational accountability, care, and a deep commitment to community well-being. These findings serve as an invitation to reimagine ELT/TESOL as a site of transformation and healing.

Taken together, the findings highlight the multifaceted ways in which Indigeneity informs, enriches, and redefines ELT. From professional motivations anchored in relational responsibility to classroom practices grounded in care and multilingualism, Zoila and Wesley exemplify a pedagogy that challenges dominant ELT/TESOL frameworks. Their work foregrounds Indigenous values as central to effective teaching, offering a compelling vision for how language education

can be reoriented toward equity, cultural affirmation, and community empowerment. The following discussion situates these findings within broader conversations in applied linguistics, decolonial pedagogy, and Indigenous education.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Indigeneity is not merely an aspect of identity for Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English; rather, it actively informs and transforms their pedagogical approaches, professional trajectories, and conceptualizations of English language teaching. These teachers enact their Indigeneity through relationality, reciprocity, multilingualism, and culturally sustaining pedagogies, offering insights that challenge dominant ELT/TESOL frameworks. This discussion also situates these findings within broader debates in applied linguistics, language education, and Indigenous education, emphasizing the need for ELT/TESOL research and practice to recognize and integrate Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning.

Indigeneity and Multilingualism as Strengths in ELT/TESOL

Multilingualism must continue to be framed within asset-based perspectives in ELT/TESOL, particularly when applied to Indigenous communities. Historical language teaching paradigms frequently position language learners—particularly multilingual and Indigenous students—as underperforming with English due to interference from their first languages (Cook, 1999). This "interference" framing, rooted in contrastive analysis and deficit-based ideologies, continues to influence how learners' linguistic resources are perceived in many ELT/TESOL settings (Flores & Rosa, 2015). However, this study contributes to a growing body of research (García & Wei, 2014; López-Gopar et al., 2021) that challenges such perspectives by highlighting the linguistic agility and cognitive flexibility of multilingual and Indigenous individuals.

The co-researchers' experiences demonstrate that Indigeneity and multilingualism function as pedagogical assets. Their ability to navigate between Miskitu, Spanish, and English enriches their teaching, enabling translanguaging practices that affirm students' linguistic identities while fostering deeper engagement with English. This aligns with Hornberger and Swinehart's (2012) argument that Indigenous bilingualism/multilingualism is not a transitional phase toward monolingualism, but a dynamic, sustainable linguistic reality.

As Nicholas (2009) contends, Indigenous language users and educators are "language warriors" whose multilingual practices serve as acts of cultural affirmation, continuity, and resistance. This framing affirms the co-researchers' approach to English not as a colonizing imposition but as a relational tool within their broader linguistic repertoire. Their engagement with English is rooted in community responsibility and empowerment—what McCarty (2013) describes as linguistic self-determination, ensuring that Indigenous language practices continue to evolve and thrive alongside global ones.

The recognition of English as an additional language signals a necessary shift in ELT/TESOL and language education discourse (Garcia, 2019). Global Englishes research (Galloway & Rose, 2015) has emphasized moving beyond native-speaker norms, yet Indigenous perspectives remain largely absent from this conversation. The co-researchers' framing of English as a practical tool for self-determination rather than colonial assimilation aligns with decolonial language education efforts that acknowledge how communities repurpose English in culturally

meaningful ways (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020).

This orientation also resonates with Wang's (2022) call to recognize translanguaging as a decolonial practice. In their classrooms, Zoila and Wesley normalize linguistic fluidity and Indigenous epistemologies—not as pedagogical innovations borrowed from external frameworks, but as ways of being rooted in their cultural worldview. Their multilingualism is not simply accommodated but centered as a legitimate expression of identity, relationship, and pedagogical strength.

Together, these perspectives expand prevailing understandings of multilingualism in ELT/TESOL by foregrounding Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching. They challenge the assumption that English language development must come at the expense of other languages, offering instead a model of relational, additive, and culturally sustaining language education.

Relationality and Reciprocity as Pedagogical Frameworks

This study underscores the relational nature of Indigenous teaching—a pedagogical stance that views learning as an interconnected and reciprocal process rather than a transactional exchange of knowledge (Cajete, 1994; Wilson, 2008). For the co-researchers, teaching is not an isolated professional act but a form of relational accountability—a responsibility rooted in relationships with students, ancestors, community, and the land (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). This epistemological stance challenges individualistic and outcomes-driven models in mainstream ELT/TESOL and instead advances a pedagogy based on mutual care, ethical engagement, and cultural responsiveness.

McCarty et al. (2022) emphasize that relational accountability in Indigenous language education is grounded in knowing and honoring "the name of the wind where you live"—a metaphor that calls educators and researchers to develop deep, place-based, and ethical relationships with the linguistic and cultural ecologies they engage. Zoila and Wesley enact this form of accountability through their teaching, drawing on local knowledge systems, intergenerational wisdom, and reciprocal engagement with students as whole beings.

Their practices exemplify core principles of Indigenous relationality, including:

- **Reciprocal learning**: Rather than asserting unilateral authority, the co-researchers engage in co-learning with their students. Wesley asserted, "I am always learning from my students". His assert reflects a commitment to humility and dialogue, consistent with the Indigenous methodology of *turi aisa ya*, where meaning emerges through collective interpretation and shared experience. This directly counters hierarchical classroom models often emphasized in ELT/TESOL, particularly those shaped by Western epistemologies of control, discipline, and transmission.

- **Holistic student engagement**: Zoila and Wesley affirm that language teaching must address students' emotional, spiritual, and cultural well-being—not just their academic development. Their approach echoes Cajete's (1994) assertion that Indigenous education engages the "whole person," and reinforces recent calls in ELT/TESOL for trauma-informed, affective, and humanizing pedagogies (Hawkins & Norton, 2009).

- **Indigenous storytelling as pedagogy**: Both educators embed storytelling into their classrooms—not only to teach language, but to transmit values, cultivate critical reflection,

and affirm identity. This aligns with Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008) and with McCarty et al.'s (2022) assertion that stories are "relational acts" that serve as pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual interventions.

These relational practices embody what Kuokkanen (2007) calls the "logic of the gift"—a decolonial ethic of reciprocity and responsibility that redefines educational engagement. In centering relationality as pedagogy, the co-researchers offer a compelling model for transforming ELT classrooms into a space of connection, healing, and collective growth.

By embracing relationality and reciprocity, the co-researchers illuminate alternative pedagogical pathways that foreground dignity, trust, and co-construction of knowledge. Their praxis invites ELT/TESOL scholars and practitioners, as well as applied linguists and language educators and reseachers, to reconsider the ethical foundations of language teaching, asking not just what is taught and how, but with whom, for whom, and in relationship to what communities and histories (Meighan, 2025). This relational reorientation holds the potential to decolonize ELT/TESOL not only in content but in method, relationships, and purpose.

Implications for future research and practice in ELT/TESOL and beyond

The findings of this study generate significant implications for research and pedagogical practice in ELT/TESOL and beyond, such as in applied linguistics and language education, particularly for those committed to Indigenous language sovereignty, multilingual equity, and relational forms of teaching and learning. In centering the experiences of Indigenous Miskitu educators, the study surfaces the epistemological tensions and transformative possibilities that emerge when Indigenous pedagogies and perspectives are meaningfully engaged. Several key implications arise:

- **Integrating Indigenous Pedagogies into ELT/TESOL Frameworks**: This study demonstrates that Indigenous methodologies—such as *turi aisa ya*, relational accountability, and storywork—can serve as powerful pedagogical frameworks in ELT/TESOL. These approaches challenge the transactional and decontextualized nature of conventional language instruction by foregrounding relationality, emotion, identity, and community connection. ELT/TESOL teacher education programs should engage with these paradigms not as cultural add-ons, but as legitimate and generative ways of knowing and teaching that offer new pathways for student engagement, curriculum design, and classroom assessment. Doing so affirms the contributions of Indigenous knowledge systems to global conversations in language education and repositions Indigenous educators as epistemic authorities.

- **Recognizing Multilingualism as the Norm, Not the Exception**: Indigenous and local languages are essential assets to English language learning/development, and this study affirms multilingualism as a pedagogical strength. The co-researchers' use of translanguaging practices supports a more fluid, inclusive, and culturally sustaining approach to language teaching. Their praxis aligns with scholarship that advocates for moving beyond monolingual ideologies (García & Wei, 2014; Hornberger & Swinehart, 2012). ELT/TESOL teacher education curricula and teacher training should reflect the linguistic realities of multilingual learners and educators by embracing additive models of language learning that support identity affirmation, academic success, and sociolinguistic equity.

- **Expanding the Conversation on Global Englishes**: While the field of Global Englishes has increasingly challenged the dominance of Global North native-speakerism in ELT/TESOL (Galloway & Rose, 2015), Indigenous Englishes and the lived experiences of Indigenous English users and teachers remain largely absent from these discourses. The co-researchers' framing of English as a tool for self-determination rather than assimilation offers a unique and powerful contribution. Their lived experiences and perspectives challenge the binary of English as either a colonizing force or a liberating global lingua franca, instead positioning it within Indigenous frameworks of sovereignty, relationality, and linguistic stewardship. ELT/TESOL research must expand its scope to account for the ways in which Indigenous communities appropriate, reshape, and teach English in culturally sustaining and politically strategic ways.

- **Decolonizing ELT/TESOL teacher education**: The co-researchers' experiences and insights illuminate the urgent need to decolonize ELT/TESOL teacher education by carving space to center and privilege Indigenous knowledge and multilingualism. Zoila and Wesley navigated programs that favored linguistic hegemony and Western-centric paradigms — reflecting broader critiques of monolingual norms in ELT/TESOL (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). García (2019) similarly argues that dominant language education paradigms erase the fluidity of multilingual practices and calls for a decolonial shift grounded in translanguaging. Zoila and Wesley's praxis models this shift: they normalize Indigenous multilingualism, challenge native-speakerism (Mahboob, 2010), and position English learning as an act of agency and relational responsibility. Their classrooms exemplify a culturally sustaining pedagogy that centers Indigenous epistemologies and affirms students' full linguistic repertoires. ELT/TESOL teacher education, as well as teacher education and training for language education professionals, must follow their lead—engaging Indigenous educators as co-creators of knowledge and embedding culturally responsive, community-rooted frameworks into curriculum and practice.

- **Embracing Relational Accountability in ELT/TESOL Pedagogy and Research**: This study underscores the need for ELT/TESOL pedagogy and research to embrace Indigenous frameworks of relational accountability, further aligning with calls based in critical anti-racism that invite epistemic justice in the field (Kubota, 2021). As McCarty et al. (2022) suggest, meaningful language education must be rooted in reciprocal, place-based relationships—what they call "knowing the name of the wind where you live." Zoila and Wesley's teaching enacts this ethic by centering care and well-being, cultural affirmation, and community connection. Their work exemplifies pedagogies that nurture belonging, intergenerational continuity, and holistic development. Furthermore, research in ELT/TESOL, as well as in applied linguistics and language education, must follow suit by adopting research methodologies and pedagogies grounded in relational accountability— approaches that prioritize reciprocity, long-term engagement, and ethical collaboration with Indigenous communities, especially as we move through the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) (Galla & Holmes, 2024).

Conclusion

This study has shown that, for Indigenous Miskitu teachers of English, Indigeneity is not

an ancillary aspect of their work and identity as language teachers, but a generative force that actively shapes how they understand, enact, and transform English language teaching and learning. By engaging in turi aisa ya as a Miskitu methodology grounded in relationality, reciprocity, and dialogical knowledge-making, this study has centered the voices and pedagogical insights of two Indigenous Miskitu educators—Zoila and Wesley—whose teaching practices offer a powerful reimagining of what ELT/TESOL practice can be. Their praxis integrates Indigenous knowledge, multilingual repertoires, storytelling, and emotional care—demonstrating that Indigenous ways of knowing are not only compatible with language education but are in fact essential to creating more equitable, humanizing, and culturally sustaining classrooms.

Future research must continue to expand our understanding of how Indigeneity informs the praxis of other Indigenous teachers of English across diverse geographic, cultural, and linguistic contexts. It is especially critical that researchers privilege Indigenous research methodologies, epistemologies, and ontologies—grounded in relational accountability, community engagement, and ceremonial ethics—when collaborating with Indigenous Peoples in language research and language education. As we move through the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), this work takes on heightened urgency. Research and practice in ELT/TESOL, as well as in applied linguistics and language education, must actively support Indigenous language work, which includes the advocacy, maintenance, revitalization, and reclamation of Indigenous languages (Leonard, 2017), recognizing them as vital to educational equity, cultural survival, and linguistic justice.

Ultimately, this work affirms that Indigeneity is a gift to ELT/TESOL. It is a source of insight and transformation that can guide the field toward a more just future, one centered in responsibility and reciprocity.

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Acknowledgements