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Languaging interdisciplinarily: English at the intercultural interface

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... in collaboration with

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AHRC-funded research project:

Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law
and the State (AH/L006936/1]

(over-ambitious?) **Plan**

- **Conceptual matters** - languaging; interdisciplinary challenges; privileged voices and knowledge flows; epistemic injustice
- **Example 1** - mindfulness; and an intercultural ethic in knowledge-work
- **Example 2** – exploratory practice; and methodological ‘appropriation’
- **Implications** – for TESOL; for researcher education; for practitioner education
- → critical IC ethic

‘Languaging’

‘Languaging’ - definition extended

- Swain (1985) ... cognitive process of negotiating and producing meaningful, comprehensible output as part of language learning.
- ... the languaging of distress (and well-being);
- ... the languaging of everyday life;
- ... the languaging of experience (e.g. through narration)

AHRC ‘Researching Multilingually at Borders’ Project:

“What does it mean to language and (to) be languaged?”

[what does it mean to be gendered]

- ... the languaging of research
- ... the languaging of praxis
- → languaging interdisciplinarily

... from my abstract (a)

- Interdisciplinary collaboration is notoriously difficult {2}, and knowledge flows between disciplines have been critiqued for privileging certain voices from certain contexts (geographic and disciplinary) in certain languages (e.g. English) {3}, thereby raising the possibility of epistemic injustice. {4}

interdisciplinary research/practice

... Interdisciplinary collaboration

- is **notoriously difficult**

Challenges (and clashes) regarding:

- **communication and language issues** (Bracken and Oughton, 2006; O'Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl, 2008: 1575);
- **differing value systems and frames of reference** (Irvine et al., 2002: 204; Lingard et al., 2007)
- **differing worldviews** (Austin, Park and Goble, 2008: 558; Massey et al., 2006)

2nd example (exploratory practice)

knowledge flows & privileged voices

... knowledge flows / privileged voices

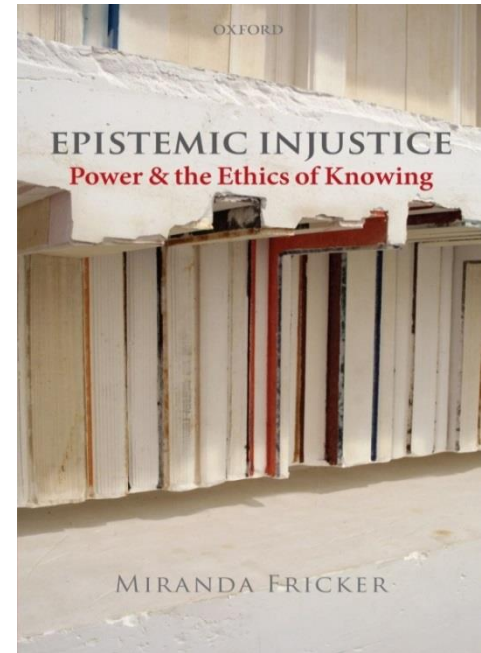
- **privileged voices** Global North etc
→ challenged by e.g. **Southern Theory** (Connell, 2007) and **Decolonizing Methodology** (Tuhiwai Smith 1999/2012)
- **privileged languages** English as THE global language of ...
→ problematized role of language in research publication
(e.g. Curry and Lillis, 2018, 2013)
- **dominant flow (+ counter flows) common flows**

1st example (mindfulness)

epistemic injustice

Epistemic Injustice (Fricker, 2009)

- 'The ethical is political, ... and the political depends on the ethical'.
- 'consisting, most fundamentally, in a wrong done to someone specifically in their **capability as a knower**'
- Testimonial Injustice:
... 'being wronged in the capacity as a giver of knowledge' i.e. prejudice in **the economy of credibility**
- Hermeneutical Injustice:
... 'a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an **unfair disadvantage** when it comes to making sense of their social experience', i.e. structural prejudice in **the economy of collective hermeneutical resources**



1st example (mindfulness)

... from my abstract (b)

English, as THE global language of our time, is ...

... at the interface of such concerns.

... a major medium for intercultural encounters of both an interpersonal and inter-knowledging character.

What happens when ideas from one discipline are brought - through the medium of English - into another?

And what are the implications — for English language specialists (and especially teachers and researchers) — of the role of English in such encounters?

TWO EXAMPLES + IMPLICATIONS

Example 1

***Intercultural knowledge-work and
the transcultural development of ideas:
念(niàn)/mindfulness, intercultural communication,
and psychotherapy***

Zhuomin Huang, Richard Fay &
Ross White (2015) (2016, 2017a, 2017b)

Mindfulness

East

空 舍 禪

Emptiness De-attachment Chan/Zen

禪
心之道
佛光山開山
宗師



The practice of 'HEART'

念

niàn

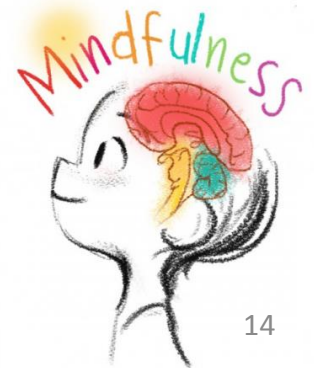
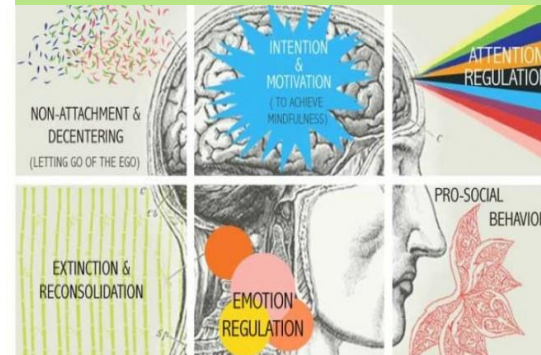


Stillness and Observation

West

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn



Mindfulness in the Orient and Occident

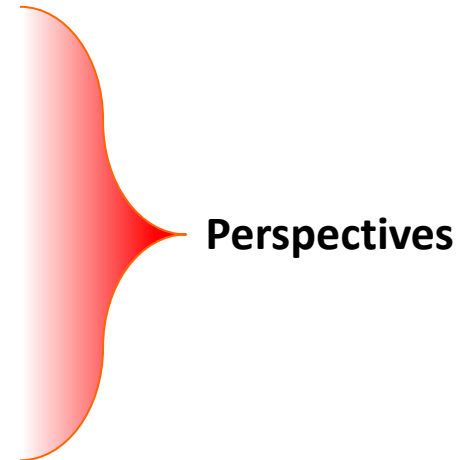
- Origins in Indian Buddhism
- spread (1st Century through SE Asia) incl. China: 念 (niàn)
- merged with Chinese traditional philosophies
- Gradually fading in C20th

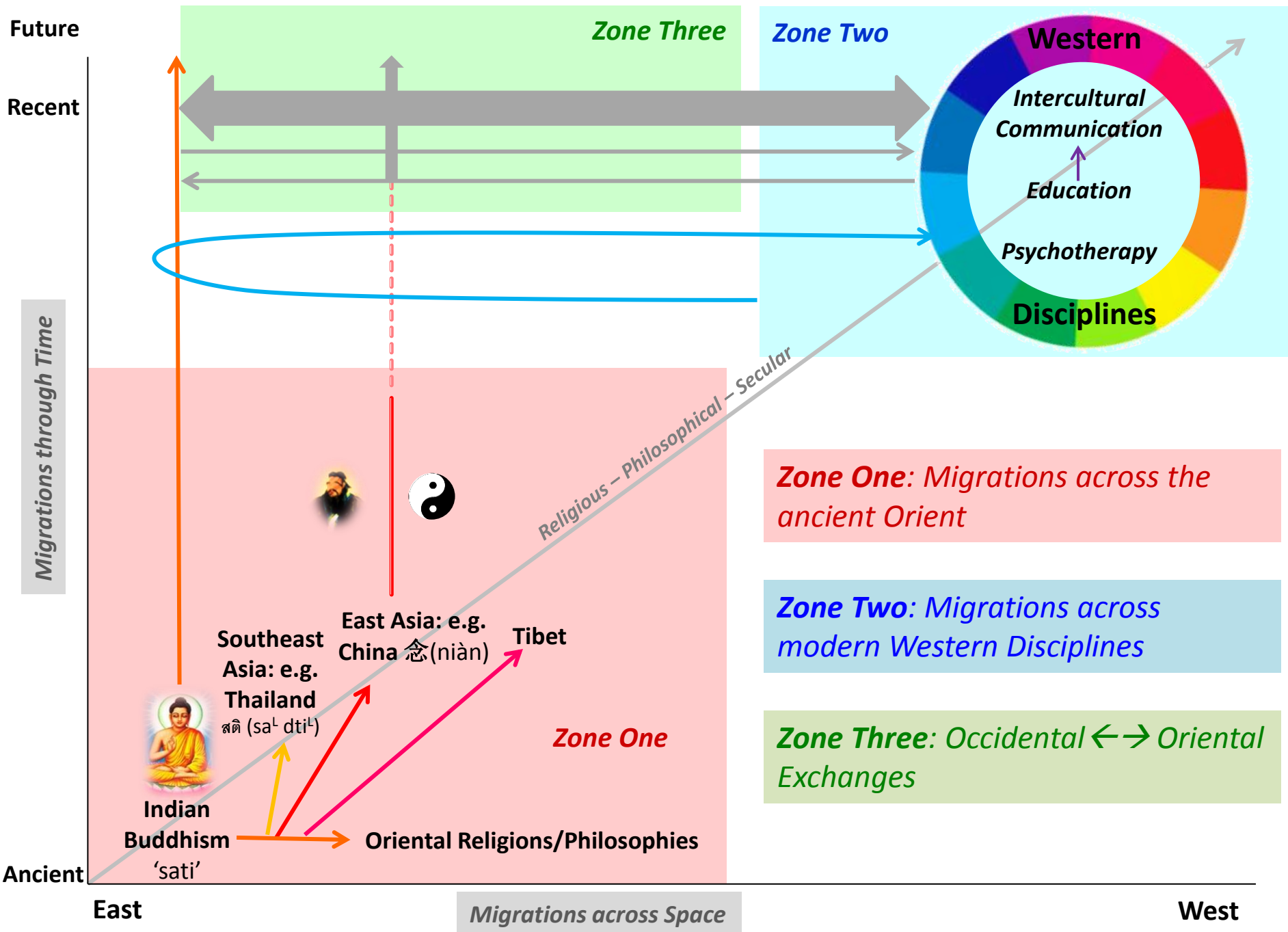
- Late C19th and C20th ‘third wave’ of refashioning traditions
- Mindfulness taken up in Psychology (John Zabat-Zinn, 1982)
- ... in Education (Langer, 1993): **a flexible state of mind** in which new information and new contexts are actively engaged
- ... in Intercultural Communication (Ting-Toomey, 1988; 2007): a means of rethinking one’s assumptions about oneself and the world by being attentive and attuned to **‘I-identity’**, **‘they-identity’** and **‘we identity’**

The Conceptual Migration of Mindfulness

Mapping the migratory complexity:

- *Multi-lingual*
- *Multi-disciplinary*
- *Multi-directional*
- *Multi-ideological*
- *Multi-cultural*
- *Multi-chronemic*

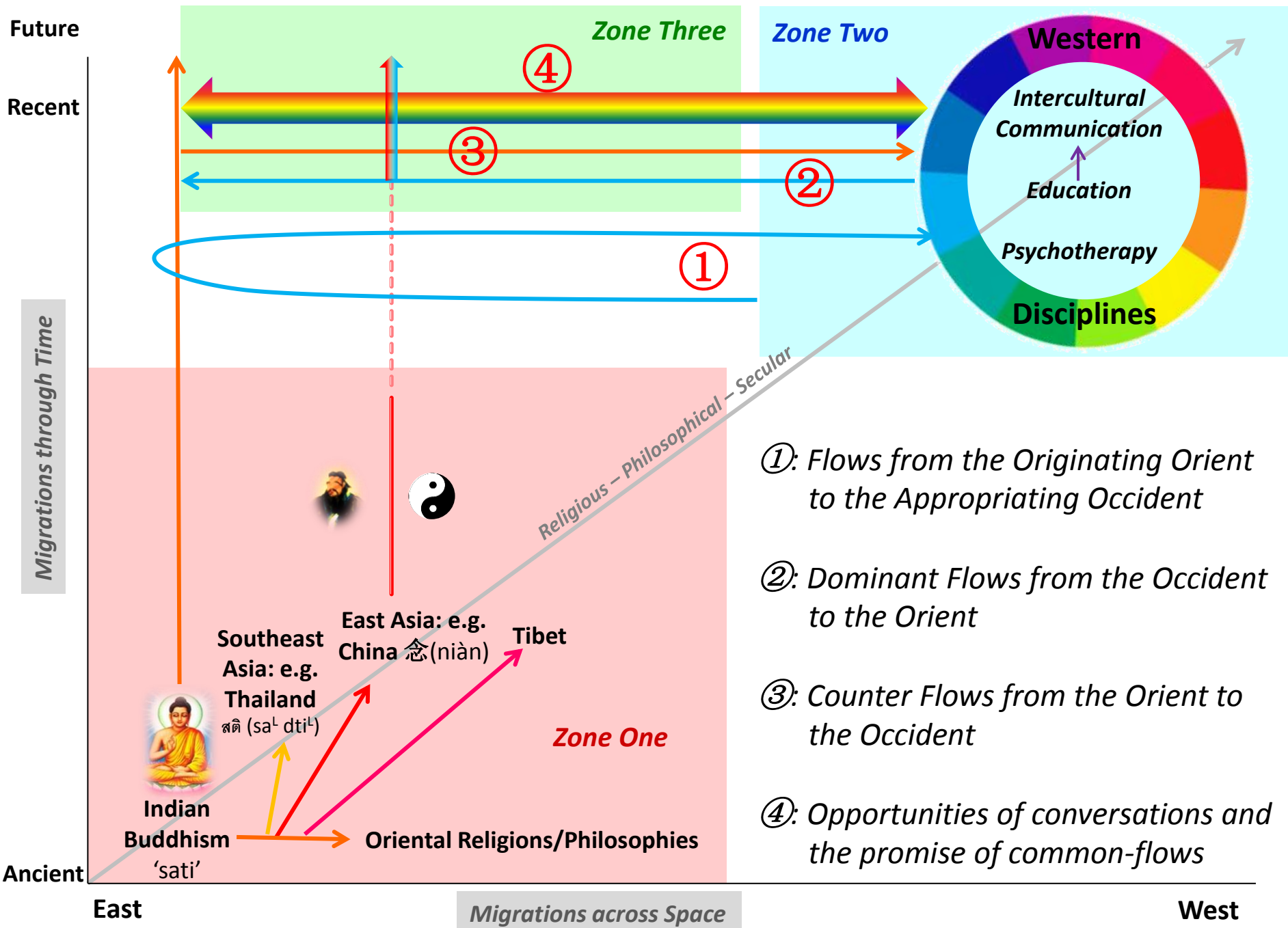




Originating Orient → Appropriating Occident

Appropriation flow: Western scholars **adopted**, **appropriated** even, those 'mechanics' of mindfulness which they could make **knowable**, **operationalisable**, and **measurable** for the **evidence-based culture** of Western sciences and related professional practices (e.g. Psychotherapy) (White & Sashidharan, 2014)

e.g. practitioners from the powerful North/HIC have **lifted** the concept from its **traditional root** (in the South/LMIC), and **transplanted** it to a **secularised** context, **bent** on **pragmatic purposes** in which the (often English-medium) academic and psychotherapeutic discourses of **Western approaches** are **privileged** (Bodhi, 2011: 35).



Intercultural Ethics

An Intercultural Ethic

- Scholars and practitioners engaged in knowledge-work need to be **accepting of the co-existence** of other ways of seeing and understanding things; and be open to the **mutually enriching interconnections** between these different ways of thinking (Holliday, 2013; Phipps, 2013)
- Working towards: a **collective wisdom** of discipline(s) (e.g. Asante, Miike & Yin, 2013)
- Revisited/critiqued: Although driven by a well-intended aspiration, the article was not grounded in an overt political and philosophical stance, and thus, lacked **a critical foundation**.

Critical intercultural ethic

**Example 2:
Exploratory Practice
& methodological transplant**

The principles of Exploratory Practice

- 1 Put “quality of life” first
- 2 Work primarily to understand language classroom life
- 3 Involve everybody
- 4 Work to bring people together
- 5 Work also for mutual development
- 6 Make the work a continuous enterprise

Collegiality

Sustainability

Suggestions

- 1 Minimise the extra effort of all sorts for all concerned*
- 2 Integrate the “work for understanding” into the existing working life of the classroom.*

(Allwright, 2005: 360)

Exploratory Practice (within the RM @ Borders project)

- EP is a form of practitioner research in language education
(Allwright, 2005; Hanks, 2017)
 - RM@Borders: EP as a way of working in multidisciplinary
(with ambitions to become interdisciplinary) research project
 - ‘It’s as if you are speaking Martian’ -- response of one project member to our proposed use of Exploratory Practice (EP)
- “Notoriously difficult” interdisciplinary working

What is being 'extended?'

- *What exactly is being extended?*
- *What maintained? What dropped?*
- *What challenged?*
- *And what liberties have we taken?*
- *And how do we justify these 'changes'?*
- *In what sense is our proposed use of EP for exploring RM-ly practice still recognisably EP?*
- *Is 'extension' the most useful image for this process? Or 'transfer'? Or might 'translation' be more helpful? Or are we perhaps guilty of 'appropriation'?*



Cultural Appropriation, Translation, Migration

- “there is a widespread notion that ethnic music is really ‘owned’ by one group of people and cannot ‘belong’ to others” (Waligorska, 2013: 59).
- Given that “in this revival of Jewish music ... most of the creators and consumers were not Jews and the spaces used for performance were indelibly linked to the Holocaust”, the revival might be seen “not just as *theft* but as a form of *cultural necrophilia*” [Cultural appropriation]
- Klezmer performed by non-Jews today does not have the same form, significance, or function as klezmer played by Jewish musicians in pre-Holocaust Europe. But instead of interpreting this as a misrepresentation of the ‘original’, the klezmer being played today should also be acknowledged as a catalyst of new forms, functions, and meanings, all of which make up the significance of this music in contemporary Polish and German society ... (Waligorska, 2013: 8). [Cultural translation]

The cultural politics of klezmer played by Manchester students in the Manchester Jewish Museum and beyond?

Some implications: TESOL

TESOL: EFL, ELF, or ?

- “teaching the language of the enemy” (Raul, Cuba)
- ‘Multicultural awareness through English’ (MATE) (Fay, Lytra & Ntavalagkou, 2010; Fay, Lytra & Sifakis, 2016)
- EFL + general cultural awareness (Trejo Vences & Fay, 2010)
- From EFL/EAP to ELF-aware, English for Intercultural communication (Tantiniranat & Fay, 2018)
- To EMI and back again (Siti Fitriyah, 2018)
- “Why would I do that?” (Elena Gomez)

Critical stance for TESOL – implications of teaching a language so easily associated with ‘privilege’ and with so much potential to create or challenge epistemic injustice

**Some implications:
researcher education**

Researcher Education

- **Developing a ‘translingual mindset’** (Andrews & Fay, forthcoming, 2019; Andrews, Fay and White, 2018)
- **Foregrounding and problematizing language in research** (Fay et al, for resubmission 2019)
- **Critical action intentionality** (Fay & Stelma, 2016; Stelma & Fay, forthcoming 2019)
- **Developing critical intentionality (about language in research)** (Stelma, Fay and Zhou, 2013)
- **Critical academic literacy** (Bekar & Fay, in process)

Critical stance for researcher education – the value in foregrounding and problematizing the languaging of research – especially in an era of English-dominated research dissemination, of ‘privileged voices’, and of potential for epistemic injustice

Some Implications: practitioner education

Practitioner Education

- Awareness of the languaging of well-being and distress
- Awareness of the role of language in psychotherapeutic encounters (White et al, in process)
- Awareness of translanguaging in global mental health fieldwork (Andrews, Fay and White, 2018b)

Critical stance in other areas of practice – acknowledging how the use of a language (i.e. English) so easily associated with ‘privilege’ and scientific universalism can so easily lead to epistemic injustice in health matters

Concluding Thoughts

Some Final Thoughts

- English has a complicated global presence in this era of increasing interconnectivity
- English, all too easily, privileges certain voices from certain contexts
- and all too easily this can lead to epistemic injustice ...
- and to other kinds of injustice (methodological, cultural etc)
- Educators – in TESOL, academic literacy, researcher education, and practitioner education - can usefully acknowledge and begin to address these dangers through the adoption of a critical intercultural ethic in their knowledge work, practice, and other activities

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Knowledge Landscapes

- A metaphor for the study of the complex intellectual, personal and physical environment in which people work (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995: 673)




- *'a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships'*
- *'understanding professional knowledge as ... a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of ... relationships among people, places, and things, we see it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape'*

Mindfulness and the ethics of intercultural knowledge-work

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The article ...

- ... reviewed the development and use of '*mindfulness*' across **time and space, languages and cultures, disciplines and domains**
- ... reflected on the presence/absence of **dominant- and counter-flows** evident in this development history
- ... argued for more mutually respectful **common-flows**
- ... proposed that scholars and practitioners working in our highly interconnected era, adopt **an intercultural ethic** to regulate and guide their knowledge-work.



Taking Stock

*Will our extended use of EP enable us –
collaboratively, sustainably, and with consideration of
quality of life issues including ethics –
to develop insights into the Researching RM-ly practice
strand of the overall project (and, perhaps other strands
also) and, thereby, make a contribution to the objectives
of the project more generally?*

(Dawson et al, unpublished)