Languaging interdisciplinarily: English at the intercultural interface

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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 ....
Interdisciplinary collaboration is notoriously difficult \cite{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) \cite{3}, thereby raising the possibility of epistemic injustice. \cite{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)

2\(^{nd}\) 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**

  1\textsuperscript{st} 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)
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*

Mindfulness

East

Emptiness  De-attachment  Chan/Zen

The practice of ‘HEART’

West

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

Jon Kabat-Zinn

niàn  Stillness and Observation
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

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- 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**
Zone One: Migrations across the ancient Orient

Zone Two: Migrations across modern Western Disciplines

Zone Three: Occidental ↔ Oriental Exchanges

East

Indian Buddhism ‘sati’

Southeast Asia: e.g. Thailand

East Asia: e.g. China

Oriental Religions/Philosophies

Tibet

Western Disciplines

Intercultural Communication

Education

Psychotherapy

Modern Western Disciplines

Future

Recent

Zone Three

Migrations through Time

Zone Two

Zone One

Migrations across Space

Ancient

East

West
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).
Migrations through Time

East

West

Indian Buddhism
‘sati’

Oriental Religions/Philosophies

Tibet

East Asia: e.g. China

Southeast Asia: e.g. Thailand

①: Flows from the Originating Orient to the Appropriating Occident

②: Dominant Flows from the Occident to the Orient

③: Counter Flows from the Orient to the Occident

④: Opportunities of conversations and the promise of common-flows

Migrations across Space

Future

Recent

Ancient

Zone One

Zone Two

Zone Three

Western

Intercultural Communication

Education

Psychotherapy

Disciplines

Religious – Philosophical – Secular

Flows from the Originating Orient to the Appropriating Occident

Dominant Flows from the Occident to the Orient

Counter Flows from the Orient to the Occident

Opportunities of conversations and the promise of common-flows
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

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 & Ntavaliagkou, 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

- 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
References


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• Fay, R., Sifakis, N. and Lytra, V. (2016). Interculturalities of English as a lingua franca: international communication and multicultural awareness in the Greek context. In P. Holmes and F. Dervin (Eds.), The cultural and intercultural dimensions of English as a lingua franca (pp.50-69). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.


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• Fay, R.,
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Researching Multilingually / Role of Language in Research(er Education) / Intentionality

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’
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.
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)