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TEACHER AS NOMAD, TEACHER AS EMISSARY: PERIPATETICALLY NEGOTIATING TEMPORALITY, LOCALITY, AND CULTURE ACROSS TRANSNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE SPHERES

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Abstract:
The international teacher—one who is teaching in a foreign land or teaching foreign students in his own country—is at a nexus of cultures, subject-specific knowledge, geopolitics, and economics. Globalisation of the higher education employment market, increases in overseas study rates, the advent of English as a dominant language of education and research, and the expansion of remote/distance learning have expanded opportunities for the sharing of information and ideas by educators and students. At the same time, these trends pose challenges that cannot be ignored by the physically, pedagogically, or virtually peripatetic teacher. This paper will consider the balancing act undertaken by teachers of Western origin (or educational provenance) who teach primarily or exclusively in English and who provide instruction to non-Western students either in Western or non-Western institutions, in-person or online. It will eschew contemporary neo-colonialist and neoliberal assumptions of knowledge transmission and development, reframing these experiences, obstacles, and opportunities within the historical narrative of the Indo-European knowledge exchange; the ancient tradition of itinerant preachers, mendicants, scholars, and schoolmasters; and the multi-polarisation of world power. Finally, teachers will be presented with a means of developing historically and culturally informed, robust, expedient, and sensitive didactic and discoursive techniques.

Keywords: global English, bicultural education, educational history, neo-colonialism

1. Introduction: Teacher as Nomad, Teacher as Emissary

Since at least several centuries before the Common Era, when the Gautama Buddha began his teaching and traveling over what is now north-eastern India, the wandering educator has been a fact of life (Brown, 2003). India has produced more than one such wanderer,

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with Kalanos—the famed ascetic and philosopher who accompanied Alexander the Great for several years—being another (Halkias, 2015). Further west was Paul the Apostle, who journeyed an estimated 10,000 miles in his lifetime, with his travels taking him from as far southeast as Jerusalem, north to Turkey, west to Rome, and to many points in between (Picirilli, 1986).

In more recent times, ministerial work has led to travels no less remote. Francis Asbury, assistant to John Wesley and the founding bishop of the first Methodist Episcopal Church established in the United States, both preached along a circuit and demanded ministers under his command do the same. Arguably even more ambitious in his designs to spread the Word than was Paul, Asbury is estimated to have trekked more than 270,000 miles over 45 years and given around 16,400 sermons (Carroll, 1979). Asbury established a tradition in the United States of itinerant ministers, who achieved storied enough reputations to warrant a novel about their ordeals—*The Circuit Rider*, published in 1874 and written by Edward Eggleston, author of several popular books of the era (Eggleston, 1874).

Other professions, such as judge, doctor, and teacher, have all periodically entailed working along a circuit. In certain parts of the Appalachian region of the United States, such *circuit teaching* and *circuit doctoring* continued until well into the 20th century (Kendrick, 1974). And as late as sometime in the last 12 years (and possibly to the present, depending upon source), magistrates rode circuits throughout rural China, resolving family and misdemeanour disputes as they went (Al Jazeera English, 2011).

Professional distinctions made by title historically have proven less substantial than someone born into the present age of endless specialisation might think. In more remote communities, a doctor could have been called upon to hear and adjudicate small disputes, and depending upon the culture and values of a people, the line between minister and educator could have easily been non-existent (Kendrick, 1974). The boundary between minister and doctor was equally thin, with *faith healers*—once common fixtures in the mountainous regions of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia and who were as likely to prescribe prayer as herbal remedies—blurring it to invisibility (Green, 1978). Stated another way, the *circuit rider* sometimes served as more than mere skilled mechanic of medicine or law or professional promoter of philosophy or faith. The rider stood to be seen as an *educated and respected person* in the general sense, esteemed as much for wisdom, trustworthiness, and mental sophistication as for expertise in a single domain. As emissaries, these riders represented not just themselves or any category or any one profession. They stood as agents for a larger (and often more technically and systematically categorised) extrinsic reality.

And in all of these cases, the teacher, preacher, judge, philosopher, or doctor is a nomadic change agent for a culture and values systems removed from the entrenched equivalents of those under his care. The cleric or philosopher works to transform the spiritual or thinking practices of individuals and communities. The teacher propagates the values of literacy and communicative competence *in a dialect or language formalised and*

accepted by the systems of power. And the judge promulgates both the statutes of relevant authorities and the mechanisms of due process.

Each of these is disruptive and displacive. Traditional beliefs, cosmologies, and faiths are supplanted by (or syncretised with) the imported faith and way of knowing. Regional dialects, narratives, and literacies are relegated to an inferior status by new, increasingly formalised knowledge. Unconventional medical practices and traditional care providers become obsolete or are rebranded as *alternative*. Informal dispute resolution systems and vigilantism become moot or criminal.

Yet the emissary rarely has completely free reign to annihilate what existed before his incursions. And the teacher/emissary dominion is more limited by the day. As the presumption that non-Western cultural norms and practices should be subordinated to their Western counterparts fades, the nomad educators, enforcers of laws, and philosophers—all teachers, *proselytisers*, and emissaries of sorts—must adjust their objectives so that they facilitate their informational model functioning *alongside* endemic ones. To borrow a horticultural term, the nomad teacher/emissary must now become an expert in *companion planting*, finding well-rooted traditions in the community that can grow and mature symbiotically (if not always synergistically) with the imported hermeneutics of a profoundly different worldview.

2. Deracinated Expertise, Nationalism, and Linguae Francae, Past, Present, and Future

To teach *all there is to know* about a subject, be it language, science, healthcare, religion, or art, would be impossible. No single person, nomad scholar or otherwise, can completely understand any given field of knowledge. One either knows a little about a lot, a lot about a little, or nothing about anything at all. And even if one were to achieve perfect mastery of an entire field, teaching as much would take an impractically long time. What the nomad teacher/emissary teaches *and learns* (both while serving as an educator and before) is subject to *selection*. This process of selection begins well before the nomad teacher/emissary enters the classroom, in the process of teacher training and preparation.

Next, one must consider the issue of *perspective*. Perspective can be a matter of circumstances beyond one's control—nationality, race, age, temperament, and early family life—but it can just as easily be one of choice. The *ends* to which the nomad teacher/emissary works can lead said teacher to see a body of knowledge from a certain viewpoint, and the perspective in which the teacher/emissary finds himself or herself is equally likely to affect the choice of ends the teacher perceives to be available. Like the blind men and the elephant, nomad teachers/emissaries *grasp* that which is *real*, but their understanding and interpretation of that reality are influenced by where they begin their sensory experience, the path they trace—down to the tail or up the trunk—and their preconceived notions and biases.

Thus, perfectly deracinated experts and expertise are unobtainable. The expert neither knows all nor has an understanding free of bias. The trajectory of a field is itself subject to pressures of culture, context, and perspective. And the experts (or the

organisation upon whose behalf the experts work) have an end in mind that shapes both how knowledge is applied and the manner (and extent to which) it is disseminated.

As it goes with experts of any form, so it does with the nomad teacher/emissary. An emissary's brief is to not convey (or gather) *all* information, but to act as an agent for an organisation or authority. And no matter how scrupulously honest a given emissary may be, resources and circumstances limit what the emissary conveys and what the emissary can observe.

But to what degree can a subject be isolated from its culture and constructs of origin? Science is inexorably bound to empiricism. Mathematics is bound to an understanding of the abstract. Philosophy, be it that of Aristotle, Nietzsche, Singer, or Comte, can rarely be interpreted as it was intended by the author if one has no understanding of the culture from which it emerged. And religion, however consistent the understanding of its core spiritual beliefs may be across nations and denominations, will vary in practice from one country and people to the next, if only because religious practice cannot deviate too widely from the accepted norms of the society around it if it is to be tolerated. Computer programming and information technology are indivisible from complex infrastructure and (more broadly) the technosphere, with the latter being both the mass of manufactured goods and the systems, including the people therein, that create and use them (Zalasiewicz, 2018).

A language is harder still to separate from its culture. Implicit in the organisation of any language are values. The gender of words (or not), the use of narrow (or less so) types of pronouns, and the expected forms of address to those in differing social and familial positions all reflect the judgements and priorities of a people. Consider this: In modern American English, the number of terms for family members is limited. *Mother*, *father*, *brother*, *sister*, *aunt*, *uncle*, *cousin*, *grandmother*, and *grandfather*—these all convey something of the relationship between the addressee and addressor. Yet these lack the specificity of their Chinese counterparts. For comparison, review the table below, which is a partial list of terms for various family members in Standard Chinese as written using simplified characters.

Table 1: Examples of Chinese Terms for Relatives

Meaning	Characters	Romanization	Meaning	Characters	Romanization
Elder brother	哥哥	gēge	Mat. grandfather	外祖父	wàizǔfù
Elder sister	姐姐	jiějie	Mat. grandmother	外祖母	wàizǔmǔ
Younger brother	弟弟	dìdi	Pat. grandfather	祖父	zǔfù
Younger sister	妹妹	mèimei	Pat. grandmother	祖母	zǔmǔ

The list above is very much incomplete. There are additional terms for *father's elder brother* (伯父, bófù), *father's younger brother* (叔叔, shūshu), and many other kinships not treated as worthy of distinction in the English language. That one language has more precise terminology for a certain information category may seem irrelevant. After all, any of the relationships expressed by these Chinese titles can easily be expressed in English, albeit

using a few more words. The last assertion is correct; however, the effect of language on conditioning and organising human thought should not be dismissed.

Kuuk Thaayorre, a language native to Northern Australia, uses only compass directions to describe location. Something is said to be to the *north*, *south*, *east*, *west*, *northwest*, *southeast*, et cetera. There are no relative positional terms (*left, right, front,* or *behind*). Even the passage of time is described as going from east to west, rather than in the context of one's person. A Kuuk Thaayorre speaker always gives directions accordingly (*turn northwest, walk to the next intersection, then turn southwest*) (Johnson, 2021). Thus, translating directions from Kuuk Thaayorre to English is easier than translating them from English to Kuuk Thaayorre, with the latter requiring an understanding of the specific path to be taken and compass directions of the various waypoints.

One could easily give purely compass directions in English, but doing so without confusion would be a challenge. The mental capacity to track compass directions in both real and imagined space is underdeveloped in the anglophone mind. Yet speakers of Kuuk Thaayorre demonstrate a profound ability to retain and process directional information with little conscious effort.

With those examples considered, one can argue with confidence that language, even more than other subjects, is bound to culture. What this does *not* establish is that language cannot be adapted to a novel time, place, and people.

2.2 Language Teaching, Nations, and the Rise and Fall (and Rise) of Lingua Francae

The history of language teaching (at least in the West and for Western languages) is one of a transition from the classical tongues of Greek and Latin to the vernacular languages, including French and English. With this transition were attendant changes in educational objectives. Training in classical languages emphasised literacy above all else, and early instruction in modern languages imitated this method. Later ways of teaching modern languages placed progressively more emphasis on generative abilities (Howatt & Smith, 2014).

Instruction in the classical languages was not *deracinated* any more than it was authentically bound to classical cultures—the life and times of the ancient Greeks and Romans. While myths and stories of ancient times and peoples featured in the curricula of prestigious schools, the purpose of such education was never to prepare the diligent grammar student to be sucked into a whirlpool and emerge millennia prior in a steaming public bathhouse in the Eternal City. Rather, training in the classics and classical languages was part of a larger acculturation process to enable one to participate in a pan-European community of the elite. It is for this audience that Newton wrote *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in Latin, despite many books—the works of Shakespeare amongst them—having been printed and commercially sold in English since the age of William Caxton. Newton, like his German contemporary Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who also wrote in Latin, was not publishing for a local audience, nor were the works of either author intended to become parts of the then-nascent *national literature* of any country.

Instead, they were contributing to (and enriching) the discourses of *civilised* (European) people, regardless of the sovereign under which they lived.

It is not a coincidence that vernacular literature and language training rose to prominence in near lockstep with nationalism and the construct of *national character*—the personality and behavioural traits assumed to be shared with one's compatriots. These grew together as *companion plants* (to reuse a metaphor from a few pages ago). Benedict Anderson (1983), author of *Imagined Communities*—one of the (if not *the*) most important treatises on nationalism—identified the growth of *print capitalism* as being foundational to the modern construct of the nation-state. The *national construct* differs from its predecessors of kingdom and empire (and the ancient structures of tribe and clan) in that it is both comparatively abstract and removed the emphasis on bonds of blood. Stated another way, one can be either American or not, but one American, regardless of parentage, cannot be said to have a higher concentration of *Americanness* than another. In contrast, Louis XIV might have been able to declare without being singularly hyperbolic, *L'État, c'est moi* ("I am the State"), due to the division between king and kingdom being functionally non-existent for much of his reign, as it was for most of human history (Tucker, 2017). But even as he uttered those words, *the State*, of which the president, prime minister, or potentate, regardless of ambition or force of personality, is a mere agent, was maturing into an integral part of *the nation*—something far greater than any single man or family. Somewhat ironically, Louis XIV, the king-state himself, contributed to the modern *state of the State* by way of reforms that strengthened institutional power while diminishing the role of the sovereign and the nobility.

Nationalism, as defined by Anderson, is the product of painstaking work by many hands. Amongst the many tasks of the nation-builders is the creation of a national language and literature. A body of potential national literature is written into being and those works deemed good representatives of the national character are declared canonical. A national dialect is either organically cultivated by the people or deliberately constructed by linguists, intellectuals, the government, or some combination thereof (as was the case with Standard Chinese), and its adoption lessens the importance of *region* and *class* while increasing that of *nation* (Colville, 2020; Simmons, 2017).

Over the course of decades, the *national language* came to supplant the *lingua franca* of Latin, with the people of a nation bound together by a common narrative and artistic heritage in a way that would have been unimaginable in the era before near-universal literacy. Advancements in transportation infrastructure, namely that of national railroads, further demolished regionalism, replacing it with a greater sense of national unity in the United States, Germany, China, and other nations (Brady, 2013; McNamara, 2023; Segal, 2015; Tuke, 2015).

Live by print capitalism. Die by print capitalism. The same market, political, and technological forces that facilitated the growth of national languages and culture contributed to their undoing. Literature might have proven amenable to national characterisation, with literary developments moving slowly enough to allow for the rise of aesthetic movements and styles in one country and then another (and the eventual

translation of the greatest works of each national language into other vernaculars). But science and commerce have no truck with tardiness.

At the beginning of the 20th century, research was published in English, French, and German at roughly equal rates, making for multiple spheres of innovation. The fate of nation-states—Germany's and Austria's defeat in the First and Second World Wars—furthered linguistic divisions, with French and English dominating the geopolitically victorious Western sphere and German being largely restricted to the vanquished nation's sphere of the east. Those researchers and institutions who did not desire to fall behind, both in staying informed of the inventions and discoveries of others and in broadcasting their own, had an incentive to adopt English as their language of instruction and publication (Porzucki, 2014). And in the era of innovation, commerce both follows and advances science.

An example of this synergistic cycle is the internet. The foundational technologies of the network were engineered in the United States, largely with funding and guidance of the *Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency* (DARPA), with other American research and educational institutions making major contributions (Leiner et al., 1997). This provided English-language speakers with a first-mover advantage—a fact that does a great deal to explain more than 60% of the top 10 million websites being in English (Bhutada, 2021).

English's global lead has been compounded by the opportune timing of the fall of world empires. The British were relatively late to the game of empire-building, only coming to the fore after the Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, and French had already found (and claimed) swathes of territory in Asia, the Americas, and Africa (Alcock, 1998). And just as it was late to rise, the British Empire was late to fall, with the Empire retaining control over India until 1947 and Zimbabwe until 1980 (Mogul, 2022; Ogunnubi, 2019). Many of these former colonies continue to promote the use of English. Nigeria, for instance, has declared English to be its official language, with it serving as a more or less neutral form of communication in a country with more than 500 indigenous languages, many of which are associated with semi-autonomous cultural and ethnic groups (CIA, 2023).

It is the *combination* of these historical, political, and technological factors that has enabled English to both rise to global pre-eminence and retain that position for more than a generation, with it likely to remain so enthroned for decades and more to come.

But English is not Latin. The rise of the common language of English has followed a different trajectory from that of its toga-clad forebear. Its grammar, literature, and vocabulary are neither crystallised nor forgotten in the place of their birth. English is dynamic, part of the native anglosphere's heritage, but no longer the product or property of any one people.

This paper has established that knowledge and expertise can never be totally deracinated. They retain something of the people who established them. But this is not to say they cannot be *transformed*, much as Latin metamorphosed from the language of the ordinary Roman people to that of a pan-European educated class. English is assuming a

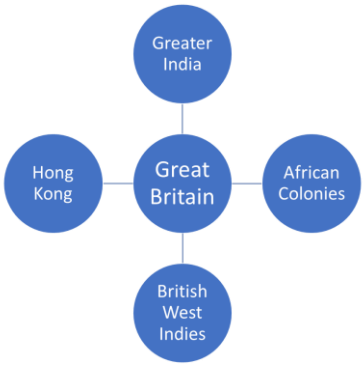
similar role and has become as much the language of the Indian, Pakistani, and Nigerian peoples as it is of the American, British, or Canadian ones. Even countries never colonised by the British are free to grow the language as they see fit, hence *China English*—a topic to be discussed shortly. Yet these many forms of English differ in their written conventions, pronunciation, and scope of application. With that in mind, it is better to consider the many *Englishes* of the world and the cultural weight they carry—with these constituting closely related *linguae francae*, not a single *lingua franca*.

2.3 Understanding and Adapting to the Plurality of Englishes

To what end is English taught and learned? In a previous era, one in which the British Empire and former members thereof (namely the United States) were the globally dominant force in trade, science, and culture, English learning took place within the context of assimilation into the native anglosphere. Culture, traditions, and even cuisine (assuming one dares to argue the British have as much) were all transmitted to language learners along with their education in grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and punctuation. This aggressive *cultural exportation* explains how certain stereotypically British goods and customs have made their way far afield.

Pakistan, for instance, is second only to Scotland in bagpipe production. The instrument is not infrequently played at Pakistani weddings, and both the Indian and Pakistani armies have bagpipe players (Hornak, 2014). On a related note, former Ugandan President Idi Amin, trained by the British during their time ruling his country, professed his sympathy for the Scots, famously declaring himself their king (with an eye towards liberating them from the English) and was seen publicly sporting a kilt on at least one occasion (Grimes, 2020). The extent to which Amin (for whom *King of Scotland* was one of his lesser self-granted titles) genuinely appreciated or sympathised with any part of the culture of the Western world is impossible to determine. And much of his carefully cultivated brand of terrifying buffoonery was likely meant to obfuscate his true intent and abilities. Nevertheless, British culture, language, and thinking were influential in the man's life and critical to shaping the history of his people, regardless of the rightfulness of Amin's claims of being the spiritual heir to William Wallace.

Figure 1: The Hub-and-Spoke Economic/Cultural Interaction Model Under British Rule

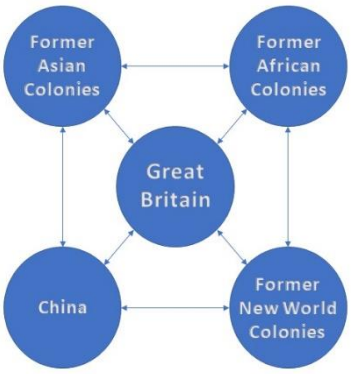


The illustration above demonstrates a simplified model of the relationship between the major colonies of the British Empire and the mother country herself. It is necessarily imperfect, with authentic cultural and economic exchanges between the colonies—such as the flow of people and culture from the East to the West Indies—being ignored (Kumar & Kumari, 1999). Nevertheless, it provides a generally accurate representation of the centrality of Britain in the cultural and economic exchanges throughout the Empire.

As money and power go, so does language. As Britain relinquished (or had wrested from her) control of the territories, her flavour of English diminished in importance. The first and most obvious example of this can be found in the rise of American English, which is a coequal of the mother dialect, and may well be the *more popular* of the two everywhere outside of Great Britain (Gonçalves et al., 2017). Other varieties of English that are growing in importance include Indian English, China English, and the Englishes of the West Indies and Africa. Several of these—China English and Indian English most of all—are backed by considerable political might and gross domestic products larger than that of the former colonial superpower (Myers, 2020).

This has altered global modes of commerce and shifted the role of English as a means of communication from one in which Britain is the centre of a global network to one in which she is merely one node amongst many.

Figure 2: The Economic/Cultural Interaction Model in the Post-Empire Era



Great Britain and British English are still critical to the shape and direction of the Englishes of the world, but the former colonies and China are all influential in their own right, both on each other and Great Britain. For instance, some of the more diverse parts of London are seeing the arrival of *Multicultural London English*, a dialect of English increasingly spoken by young people throughout the inner city and that is strongly influenced by non-British Englishes (BBC, 2018). And to the probable horror of at least a few Englishmen, Englishwomen, and anglophiles, *Americanisms—apartment*, *cookies*, *movie*—are infiltrating the King's speech at a steady clip (Anderson, 2017).

What defines the non-British Englishes? Excluding the dialects of former colonies where English supplanted or annihilated the local languages (Australia, Canada, the United States, et cetera), these diverse Englishes function as auxiliary languages or

languages for interaction with the outside world. Nigerian English (previously mentioned) serves as a lingua franca in a nation of tremendous linguistic diversity. Indian English does as well, despite a perennially unimplemented constitutional mandate to transition governance in the country from English to Hindi (Indian Const. Part XVII).

China English is a standout from its peers in that it lacks a colonial origin. Whereas India, Nigeria, the West Indies, and many of the native peoples of the Americas had English thrust upon them at gunpoint, China adopted English without (very much) violent coercion. China English is also a relatively late invention, having its origins in 1982, when Deng Xiaoping instituted economic and government reforms to engage mainland China in global markets and declared English to be the foreign language taught in Chinese secondary schools (Wright & Zheng, 2017). And the exceptional circumstances under which China English came into being have done much to shape it. At the time of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, China had few native speakers of English living within its borders and not many more citizens who had studied overseas. The nation had been almost entirely closed to the outside world for decades, and the level of development did not allow for the importation of large numbers of qualified instructors. An additional factor that undoubtedly formed (and continues to form) China English is the emphasis on high-stakes standardised testing in the country's educational system (Li, 2019).

The English that grew in the rich (if most unusual) soil of China's modernisation efforts is most notable for being strongly rooted in formal grammar and listening and reading rather than informal communication, speaking, or writing (Li & Deocampo, 2021). It is further distinguished by the ambivalent opinion its speakers have of it, with many of them both acknowledging China English as a valid form of the language deserving of study while maintaining that the British and American varieties are *more authentic* (Lu & Buripakdi, 2020).

Yet the limited esteem in which the Chinese hold their English does not negate its utility. If anything, the Chinese *our-English-may-not-be-great-but-it-works* mentality reflects the values and ethics that underpin Chinese behaviour and decision-making on both the macro- and micro-scale. The Indian and Pakistani peoples have a complicated cultural and historical relationship with their former coloniser. They may appreciate the dead-awakening power of a troupe of bagpipers. But they are unlikely to soon forget Britain's theft of more than 45 trillion dollars of resources from the subcontinent (Hickel, 2018).

China, however, can regard English as a matter of *pragmatics*. And this aligns with the philosophical heritage and geopolitical conduct of China and her people. From international relations to beliefs on the acceptability of gift-giving to physicians and educators, pragmatism is the order of the day in the Middle Kingdom (Asma, 2014). That *pragmatism* as a formal philosopher is the product of American minds (John Dewey amongst them) is worth noting. That it has been almost singularly abandoned by U.S. academic institutions and is now more widely studied in China than in its homeland is no less so. The uncontradicted nature of these truths should not be entirely unexpected. Dewey is neither the first nor the last philosopher to be more appreciated in a foreign nation than in his own. It is a near given that "*A prophet is not without honour, except in his*

own country, and among his kindred, and in his own house," (Young's Literal Translation, 1898, Mark 6:4).

The ascendance of singularly *pragmatic English* is evidence of global reordering—one in which English is evolving from the language of a dominant ethnolinguistic group to that of an educated, prosperity-oriented transnational class—and suggests that the nomad educator/emissary needs to evaluate widely held explicit and implicit assumptions and objectives. Explicit (and sometimes neo-colonialist) goals, such as the propagation of Western concepts of humanism and good governance, and implicit assumptions, such as one that the neo-liberal economic order is inevitable (if not consistently desirable), stand to interfere with effective lesson design, instruction, and conformation to student needs. The call herein for heightened self- and mission-awareness should not be taken to suggest that the nomad teacher should be a mere marionette of students or employers. Instead, the teacher should fabricate a more robust and mature pedagogical and ethical framework that allows him/her to retain his/her core values while artfully and tactfully serving as a conduit for knowledge across transnational/transcultural knowledge spheres.

2.4 Beyond Language: The Nomad as Intentional Emissary

Thus far, this paper has given considerable attention to language teaching and learning. Such is both inevitable and necessary. Shifts in language usage and instruction are indicative of larger ones in the hierarchy of world cultures and ways of knowing. As a single *English* becomes a plethora of *Englishes*, this cluster of closely related *linguae francae* absorbs both the culture and values of their specific circumstances and those of an amorphous (yet extensive) *world culture of modern knowledge*.

Language and technical content are not (and *should not*) be assumed to be all that the nomad teacher has to offer, any more than one should have assumed that the circuit riders of old were mere doctors, preachers, and teachers. The modern post-colonial nomad teacher has the unique privilege of intentionality—of choosing with a reasonable degree of freedom the culture and traditions for which will serve as emissary.

It is this opportunity to become an *intentional emissary* that separates the nomad teacher of today from the circuit rider of the past. Teachers, those far removed from direct oversight more than most, have long had some autonomy in practice, if not in theory. Yet one cannot have true intentionality without introspection. In the era of Western hegemony, in which a people were seen as either conforming to European *civilised norms* or not, the nomad teacher or the circuit rider had a limited frame of reference. The re-emergence of prosperous, technologically sophisticated non-Western nations, many of which are in possession of an English *readily understood by the nomad teacher,* affords the nomad teacher unparalleled access to alien ways of thinking. It is from this opportunity that the nomad teacher may glean a better understanding of the world, himself/herself, and the teaching mission.

As the nomad teacher transits one cultural sphere after another, the nomad both leaves something behind any space enters and takes something in the process of

departure. Such a transaction is not specific to teaching—it is, in fact, a restatement and adaptation of *Locard's Exchange Principle*, a key theory in forensic science (Mistek et al., 2019). But unlike the criminal fleeing the scene of a murder, robbery, or act of arson, the nomad teacher can choose most (if not all) of what is gained or given away.

The intentional emissary must consider *what s/he has to offer*, *what s/he should share (or not share) with students and colleagues*, and *what s/he both hopes to and is able to gain from the teaching and learning experience*. No one can make *be introspective* for another. But thoughts can be guided with careful questioning. Here are a few of the questions a dedicated nomad teacher should ask in the process of determining what culture and mission s/he will serve and the message s/he will carry:

1. What culture, way of thinking, or system of values do I represent, and to what extent do I have a say in my role as an emissary?
2. What can I offer my students that local educators cannot?
3. What do I need to learn about my students and their environment before I begin to teach?
4. Are all of my core values compatible with those of the people I will be teaching and the environment in which I will be teaching? If not, how should I resolve this mismatch?
5. What do I hope to learn from my experience as a nomad teacher?
6. What will I leave behind with my students and in my host culture?

The nomad teacher who thoughtfully answers these questions and who rigorously maintains self-accountability will have an inestimably deep wellspring of purposefulness unavailable to those who live and teach without such meticulous mental preparation. Those considered, this paper next addresses complex issues of temporality, locality, adaptation, and the responsibilities of the nomad teacher in educational environments bounded by at least one of the many linguae francae of Englishes and overlapping and interconnecting cultures of the emerging global elite.

3. Negotiating Time, Space, and Interpersonal Interaction as Nomad and Mentor

Perceptions of time and space can vary from one nation and culture to the next. Depending upon the sophistication of infrastructure (and how acclimated a people are to using it) a hundred kilometres can be either a drive of less than an hour or a journey of days. And a metre of personal space can seem either miserably distant from one's conversation partner or painfully, awkwardly cramped. The manner in which the passage of time is perceived and how much a people see themselves as obligated to strict adherence to a schedule can differ every bit as much from one nation to the next.

The competent nomad teacher must be aware of these variations and adapt accordingly. Without an understanding of these differences and the incremental (yet very much incomplete) convergence of time and space perception and management, the nomad teacher is unlikely to engage students and participate in endemic knowledge communities beyond the most superficial level.

3.1 Monochronic Thinking, Polychronic Thinking, and People/Schedule Prioritisation

In Western Europe and the United States, time is treated as more or less linear. Activities should be completed in sequence and by their deadline (Bluedorn, 1998). This is *monochronic thinking*. Within a monochronic culture, five beliefs about time and scheduling are widespread. They are:

1. *Time is money.* To be wasteful of work time is a form of theft.
2. *Managers and leaders must strive to meet deadlines*. They are expected to sacrifice their personal lives to this end if necessary.
3. *To be late is to be bad*. A lack of punctuality is more than a quirk. It is a display of disrespect and reflects poorly on those who do not arrive on time and achieve goals by their deadline.
4. *Events happen according to schedule*. Deviating from a schedule should only be done when absolutely necessary.
5. One must struggle to stay apace with his work and colleagues. Those who drop out or fall behind professionally are bound to lose. (Kras, 1995).

Monochronic culture values the abstract—the schedule—over the individual relationship, which reflects the generally higher level of industrialisation of monochronic countries relative to their polychronic peers. Stated another way, systemised, industrial life *must* be time-regulated. Slowdowns in labor and production can result in compounding errors. This is even more true with the advent of just-in-time production systems, in which work and the movement of people and supplies must be tightly choreographed, and which has been widely adopted by manufacturers for its ability to reduce warehousing costs and inefficiencies (Cheng & Podolsky, 1996).

Polychronic culture reflects a non-linear (and somewhat less hierarchical) approach to scheduling and life activities. A summary of polychronic beliefs makes for an interesting contrast to the monochronic values system. The most pertinent beliefs are:

1. *Time exists along more than one track*. There are personal timelines and business timelines. Which is to take precedence over the other varies according to circumstances.
2. *Managers and leaders need not always put deadlines first*. They may sometimes sacrifice their personal lives for their work lives, but they may also do the opposite, and assign their personal lives a higher priority than work.
3. *Lateness is not ideal, but it is not inherently unacceptable*. Even in a polychronic culture, it is better to not keep people waiting. However, a lack of punctuality is neither uniformly taken as an insult to those who wait nor as a sign of incompetence or unprofessionalism on the delaying party.
4. *Events happen when they happen*. That which does not get done today may well get done tomorrow.
5. *Appointments and assignments are tasks to be completed eventually*. A guarantee to be seen or to complete work is not a guarantee of *when* such will occur (Burgar, 1999).

A culture need not be *purely* monochronic or purely polychronic. And certain circumstances and professions may demand more than one type of thinking than others.

One may well be able to tolerate a delayed meeting at a bank. But a firefighter who arrives six hours after being called is not of much use.

Technology further complicates this distinction. Smartphones make reaching others easier than it was before the introduction of the technology. They make for more efficient scheduling and rescheduling of events and interactions, tracking the location of workers and subordinates. And teleconferencing (often done by a smartphone with an installed communications app) allows the elimination of allowances being made for travel time and delays. The effects of this technology have been felt in both the personal and professional realms, with considerable research done on the interaction of the two. At best, smartphones give employees greater flexibility in working when doing so better suits other aspects of their lives and allow for greater engagement in their professional tasks. At worst, they become *work-extending technologies* (WET) that allow employers to make ever greater demands on employee time without a commensurate increase in compensation (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Derks et al., 2016; MacCormick et al., 2012).

For the nomad teacher, education *is work*. For the student, education *is work-like*. And just as technology has affected work, it has done much the same in the academic and interpersonal spheres. As an employee/contractor, the nomad teacher needs to be aware of the time expectations of those around him. The new world of time might best be described as one of a *negotiated monochronic culture*. In such a culture, timeliness and deadlines exist—they are indispensable to the industrialised and industrialising economy—but technology provides a communications-intensive and extremely rapid means of adjusting them to dynamic circumstances. This is likely the mode of operation most familiar to younger students and co-workers. The nomad teacher, as much a traveller across time as space, should be adept at working therein. But the teacher must also be able to function within the confines of pre-existing monochronic and polychronic cultural elements, most of all when interacting with older learners and more established or traditional colleagues. Regardless of which time perceptions are dominant in a culture and culture space, the nomad teacher *must* be aware of them. Understanding and abiding by the people/schedule balance of the culture of the nomad teacher's students, institution, and environment is essential to building good rapport. At the same time, the nomad teacher should be willing to respectfully explore differences in time perception and management with students and peers so that they may better understand the sometimes competing and contradictory values of the many English-language spheres of the world.

3.2 Space, Prosperity, Economic/Personal Independence, and Interpersonal Interaction

Concepts of geographical proximity and generational interdependence reflect the technological, economic, and traditional circumstances of a nation and its people. The nomad teacher must be aware of these sometimes-subtle rules of autonomy and interaction and that cultural differences in these domains are still very real. The structural, thematic, and communicative similarities of the many Englishes stand to lull the nomad teacher into a false sense of security against which s/he should be vigilant.

Consider geography and its effects. Life in the largest anglophone nations—Australia, Canada, and the United States—is defined by sprawling communities, considerable transportation infrastructure, and widespread private car ownership. These countries are effectively *suburban*, with all the economic and social elements that entails (Cox, 2016). Greater amounts of space and prosperity both enable and encourage independence and individualism. Such can be contrasted to China, which has one of the largest and most enthusiastic populations of English learners. With between 200 and 350 million Chinese—everyone from law enforcement officers to secondary school students—studying the language, the geographical conditions of their country are worthy of comparison (Coonan, 2009; Wei & Su, 2012).

In contrast to the major native English-speaking countries, China is urbanising at a rapid clip. In 1950, more than 85% of Chinese lived in rural areas. By 2021, less than 40% did, with the urbanisation rate consistently beating predictions made less than a decade ago (Li, 2022). And Chinese cities have radically dissimilar (and denser) layouts from those of their more suburbanised American and Canadian peers. The majority of what the Chinese call *homes* are closer to what Americans would call *individually owned apartments*. (*Condominium* might be a better term, although some finer points of the Chinese ownership or maintenance agreements may differ from what is expected for an American condominium.) These are often quite expensive—no less so than American freestanding homes, and can be *more expensive* on a square-metre basis, with many apartments/homes costing more than 300,000 USD in the larger cities. This is particularly noteworthy given that the average worker in these areas makes no more than 1,000 USD per month, with higher-income workers earning between 1,200 USD and 5,000 USD (Shepard, 2016).

Such a tremendous expense cannot be covered by the salaries and savings of one or two people. Yet 90% of Chinese families own a home. This is made possible by collaboration across generations. Far more so than in the United States, Chinese parents help their children buy homes, loaning or gifting them non-negligible sums of money. This is not entirely an act of generosity on the part of the elders. Rather, they expect their children to care for them rather than deposit them in nursing homes (Shepard, 2016). The nuclear family housing model (two parents and their shared children) is a comparatively recent invention of the West, one that was enabled by a rise of post-WWII prosperity and the expansion of the suburbs. This model of housing/family structure has yet to take hold in China and may never be as popular there as it is in the United States (Guro, 2018).

The multi-generational household allows for greater sharing of expenses and resources. And it would be inaccurate to assume that elders living in such arrangements have no utility beyond the financial. Depending upon country and custom, they can provide childcare and assistance with household tasks (Schröder-Butterfill, 2004). Benefits aside, the prevalence of multi-generational households introduces some unique restrictions on lifestyle that those in the wealthy anglophone West might not find familiar or comfortable. Amongst these are expectations for intergenerational interaction and the role older people play in determining the direction of the lives of young adults.

These two elements, combined with the high population density of much of the world, contribute to realities of family relationships and interaction quite divergent from Western norms.

To an American, Australian, or Canadian, living a great distance from family members is neither unusual nor is it or surprising. Moving away from one's parents and rarely seeing them in adulthood is no more likely to be considered immature, irresponsible, or inhumane. One can contrast this to Chinese custom now *enforced by law*. Under decade-old mainland Chinese legislation, failure to visit one's ageing parents can result in fines or incarceration (Hatton, 2013). That this legislation was introduced supports the hypothesis that at least *some* children are not complying with an entrenched expectation, but that does not negate generalisations about Chinese family dynamics.

The other point worth noting is the comparatively high degree of parental involvement in the life choices of young Chinese adults. Just as an abundance of space and prosperity was noted to enable and encourage independence and individualism in the West (the United States in particular), a shortage of these two does the opposite—making interdependence and collective decision-making the order of the day. Given that the parents of adult children subsidise home purchases, one would reasonably expect the elders to demand some say. But the engagement (or *interference*, depending upon perspective) of parents does not end there. Parents often influence, if not outright dictate, their children's choice of college and college major. And if not to the same extent, they are instrumental in career and employer selection for their adult children. This position of authority is both a product of entrenched Confucian thinking and the oftentimes extraordinary sacrifices parents make for their children's success (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Bradsher, 2013; Bulsuk, 2016; Deutsch, 2004).

The nomad teacher must be aware of the circumstances in which those around him/her make their decisions. And although much of this section focused on comparing and contrasting the relevant factors in the rich anglophone nations to those in China, the interdependent/independent division is not limited to a few countries. Students outside the wealthy anglosphere may have reasons for choosing their course of study that are difficult for the uninformed nomad teacher to understand. But cultural understanding is not impossible to develop. Agreeing to study what one's parents wish him/her to study may be no sign of an intestine without fortitude, a back without a spine, or a head without brains. Accepting their career guidance may not be either, depending upon cultural context. The dedicated and competent nomad teacher will take the time to consider *what* those around him/her do, *why* they have chosen to act thusly, and *how* they concluded that their course of action was the appropriate one.

This paper now turns to the process of knowledge application—of taking the information presented herein to build a better nomad teacher.

4. Didactics, Discourses, and Finding the Way

The nomad teacher (like the aforementioned speakers of Kuuk Thaayorre) must have a sense of direction and place. *Where am I? Where am I trying to go? Whom do I hope to meet there? What do I wish to achieve when I get there? What can I learn along the way?* These questions are critical to the nomad teacher's journey. How to answer them is a matter that should be determined with some care.

4.1 Directions, Questions, and Navigating Far from Shore

Navigating in open water, without reference to the shore or landmarks, is a challenging task. It may *seem* easy to us in the era of GPS and automated location assessment, but the necessary applied mathematics and theory are complex, with even small miscalculations leading to unexpected deviations from course. Precise timekeeping, accurate measurements of the angular position of celestial bodies, a computer or book of reduction tables, and an up-to-date reference text that tells where the sun, moon, planets, and stars should be at any given time—all are useful for determining location without the use of satellites. Modern technology eliminates the need for traditional equipment, but it replaces it with a more involved (and somewhat more fragile) infrastructure.

At a minimum, a navigator should know his approximate starting position, where s/he is going, and how s/he can safely and expeditiously get from one location to the next. As is the case for the navigator, so is it for the nomad teacher. So how does s/he determine this essential information? The answer *is by asking the right questions*, which include:

1. *Starting position:* What kind of teacher am I by nature? Am I a natural mentor, a drill instructor or authoritarian, a *sage on the stage* (lecturer), a disembodied head (remote teacher), or some combination thereof? And what do I have to teach/what knowledge do I have to share?
2. *Destination:* What kind of teacher will my students require? Is this role a natural fit for me? And what do my students need to learn?
3. *Travel route:* Taking into account the potential mismatches between what I have to offer students and what they need, how can I provide effective instruction? And what obstacles are there along the way? Do the currents of information or culture flow in a certain direction? Do I need to avoid certain obstacles, lest I run aground?

Being able to answer these questions is a *minimum*, not a maximum. Ideally, the nomad teacher should know *when*: *When must I begin this journey? When should I expect to arrive at my destination?* More time allows for more preparation. Less time necessitates speed. And *how long* the teacher has in transit—to reach the destination of student needs, expectations, and abilities—is a decisive factor in what the nomad teacher can hope to share with students and colleagues and gain from them.

4.2 Didactics and Discourses: The Role of the Nomad Teacher in Context

The role of the teacher varies from one nation, culture, and context to the next. Generally, Confucian cultures will emphasize respect, deference, and accommodation to the teacher.

Western cultures, going back at least to the age of Socrates and his illustrious teaching method, have encouraged higher levels of engagement, interactivity, and student involvement.

These are *generally true*, but such does not establish that they are *universally* the case. The competent nomad teacher must be aware of the extent to which these norms can be transgressed. In more conventional educational environments, Confucian principles generally hold within their cultural context. However, in less academic situations, such as the training or professional preparation of adult learners, the nomad teacher may discover that more collaborative and cooperative approaches to instruction are more effective. The key to successful nomad teaching is *practiced observation*. However much theoretical training and study may be worth, *osmotic adjustment*—establishing a balance between formalised, expected norms and immediate reality is no less critical.

This—osmotic adjustment—should be applied to every part of the teaching and learning experience, be it learning to respect the time perception and monochronic/ polychronic scheduling norms of a people to defining personal boundaries to identifying politically sensitive topics.

Beyond determining the fundamentals of what core-content instruction s/he should provide, the nomad teacher should consider the extent to which s/he serves as a cultural and viewpoint emissary. Being an emissary consists of both sharing the perspective of one's home culture and studying (and later sharing) those of one's host. This is a particularly sensitive matter in that cultures can be *selectively compatible*, meaning that certain parts of one culture may be readily adaptable to the other, others may be adaptable with great care, and many more may be profoundly ill-suited to adaptation. There is no way to provide a perfect decision matrix for determining what elements of disparate worldviews are incompatible; however, as has been the case throughout this paper, a series of carefully worded questions are presented to guide the nomad teacher towards solutions that are optimal to him/her and his environment. They are:

1. What are the *specifics* of my audience? Beyond their culture, what kind of people are they, how open are they to new and different ideas, and how much time and effort are they likely to dedicate to learning to see the world with fresh eyes?
2. What parts of the culture in question (the culture of my hosts or my own culture) stand out to me as being most and least deserving of sharing with the greater world?
3. Am I teaching this given cultural aspect to promote it to my audience, or am I more interested in encouraging understanding, if not acceptance?
4. What am I comfortable teaching? Are certain things I understand and appreciate but am not comfortable addressing for personal, religious, professional, or etiquette reasons? If so, should I avoid them altogether, or should I attempt to address them circuitously or with extreme tact?

After giving due thought to these questions, the nomad teacher should have a better idea of both *how much* and *how* s/he serves as an emissary. This deliberate transmission of knowledge incorporates the nomad teacher into the larger discourse of

cultures in which scholars, intellectuals, travelers, sailors, workmen, adventurers, and circuit riders have participated for generations.

5. Conclusion

The nomad teacher is neither a product of modernity nor is s/he likely to be erased by it. The ancient traveling scholar, the circuit rider, and the professor who sits in front of a computer in Saskatoon while lecturing students in Karachi, Guangzhou, or Incheon all function in different physical, cultural, and technological spaces. Yet they are nomadic insofar as they have journeyed outside the ordinary space of the familiar contexts and understandings. And they all serve as emissaries of a civilization and a way (or *ways*) of knowing.

Circumstances differ. Time, people, and political realities do as well. Yet the importance of observation, deliberation, and tactful implementation of a well-considered teaching plan does not. The nomad teacher who understands and appreciates the importance of negotiating the effective transfer of learning from one transnational knowledge sphere to another can improve both the lives of students and those of anyone who shares in the ever-expanding global information exchange.

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