

# Expanding Horizons for Modern Language Education in Schools

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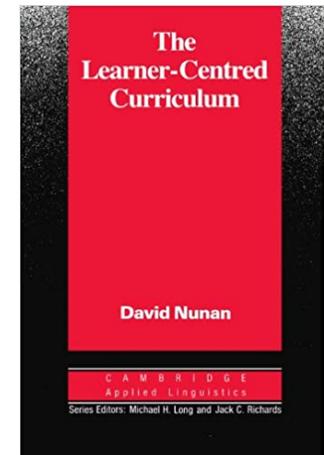
# My background in language teaching

- Cultural Revolution in Beijing, China – no formal schools
- Started learning English at 15, and became an English teacher at 18 before going to university
- Taught Chinese for 2 years at Newcastle university; worked as a bilingual teaching assistant; taught Chinese A-level at a complementary school
- Also taught English to adult ESL learner; and history tutor

# Confucius philosophy about teaching

- 因人而异 *yin ren er yi*
  - 因材施教 *yin cai shi jiao*
  - 因地制宜 *yin di zhi yi*
- 
- Vary the way you teach according to the person you teach
  - Teach in a way that best suits the ability of the learner
  - Teach in a way that makes the best use of the circumstance/context/material available

- Stop looking for the ‘right method’ because there isn't one. The best method is the one that suits the learner’s needs and improves the learner’s learning.
- As teachers, we have to know the learners, understand the context and then plan using a principled and evidence-based approach.
- Try things out, and share stories of success with others.
- Local grassroots initiatives are the way forward rather than centralised directives – there is no one-size-fits-all.



# Trusting the teachers

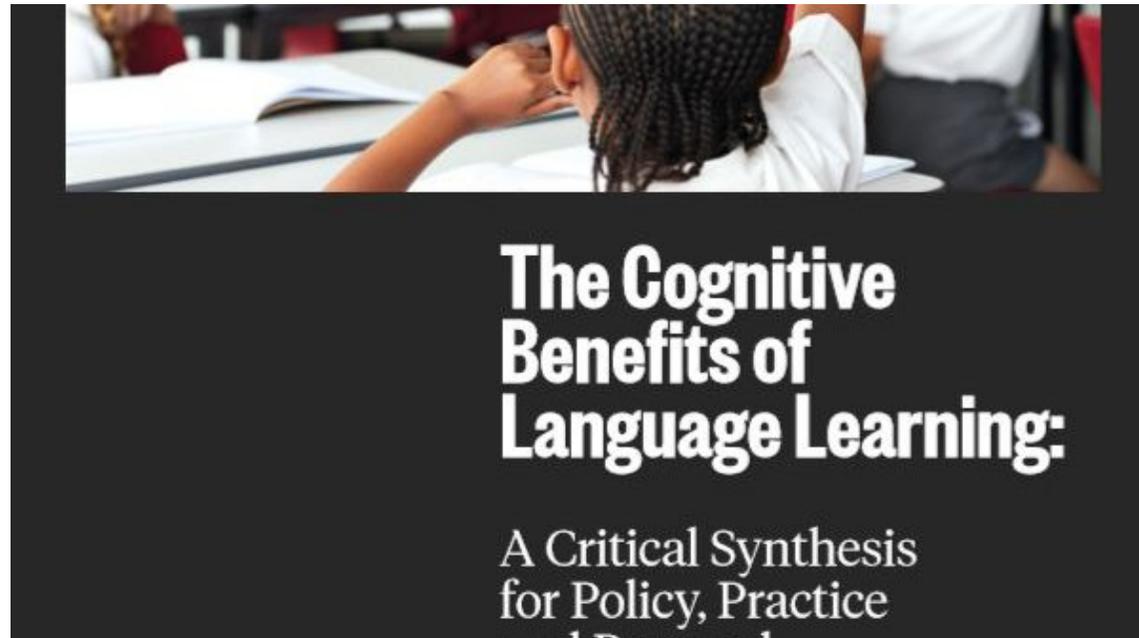
- Teachers know their pupils best
- Teacher-led and learner-centred curriculum innovation and pedagogical innovation are what we need, not policy-directed review after review; and no quick-fix
- No place for ideological, theoretical and methodological dogma
- ITE has a duty to ensure that our outgoing teachers have been exposed to a range of theoretical perspectives that they can evaluate critically and apply accordingly and have on-going access to their providers once they begin their careers to continue to experiment and grow in confidence.
- University-based ITE crucial! Teachers are thinkers and innovators.

- The importance of keeping the content, and the pedagogy, of MFL teaching fresh, by
- making them more interesting and enjoyable,
- connecting them to the real life experiences of the students,
- having more varieties of the contents, and
- making cultural learning central to the language curriculum.

- Great to see the teaching community's reactions to the GCSE review.
- <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/secondary-old/features-secondary-2/>
- Empower the teachers to play a central role in curriculum and pedagogy innovation – a collective message to DfE.
- Broadcast the success stories in MFLs in schools in some of the most socio-economically challenged areas to reinforce the notion that languages really are for all.
- Highlight cross-curriculum benefits and convince our colleagues in other subject areas too.

# Cross-curriculum benefits

- <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/projects/cognitive-benefits-language-learning/>



# Changing demography of school pupils

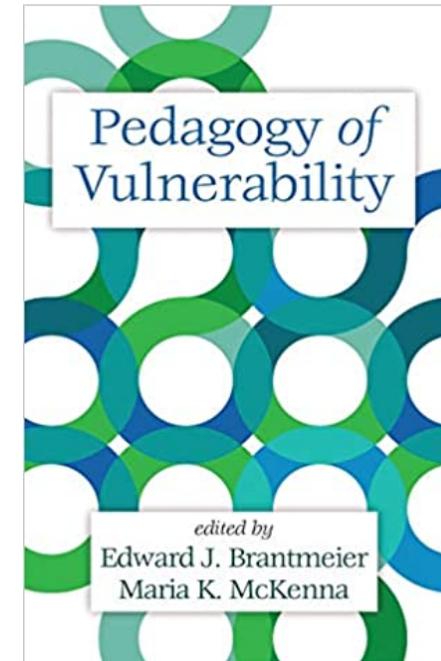
- Learners come to us as literate language users with many transferable skills
- We need to move away from models that fail to capitalise on the skills, interests and experiences of our learners
- We need to find ways to foster their capacity for autonomy
- Nurturing curiosity to help them learn more about themselves and the wider world is key

# Pedagogy of vulnerability (Edward Brantmeier)

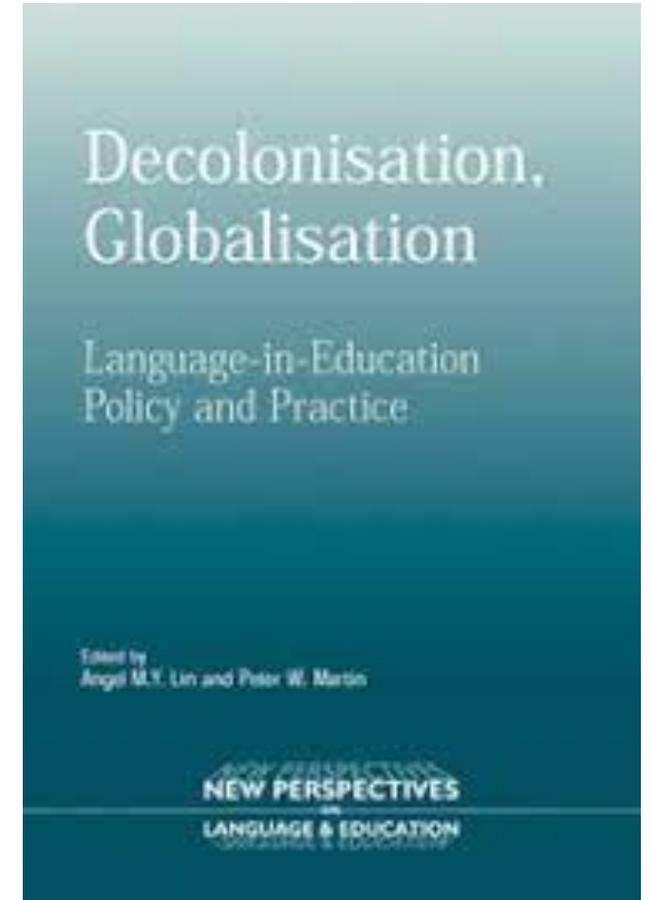
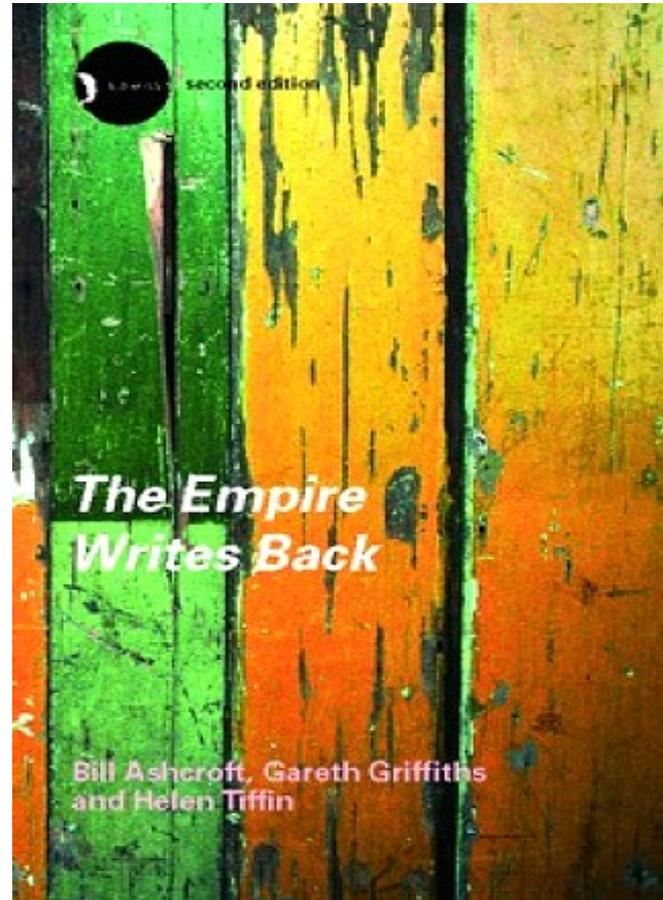
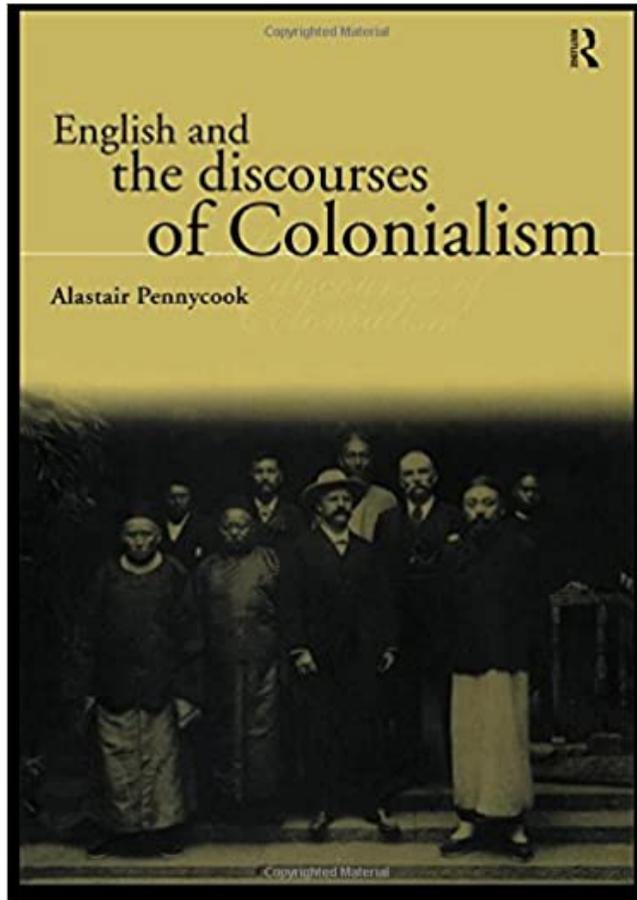
- Open yourself and contextualize that self in societal constructs and systems
- Co-learn, admit you don't know and be human
- Take risks: risks of self-disclosure, of change, of not knowing, of failing
- Value the knowledge, values, and insights of all involved
- Unlearn cultural conditioning, and dismantle asymmetrical power relationships

# Co-learning: from vulnerability confidence

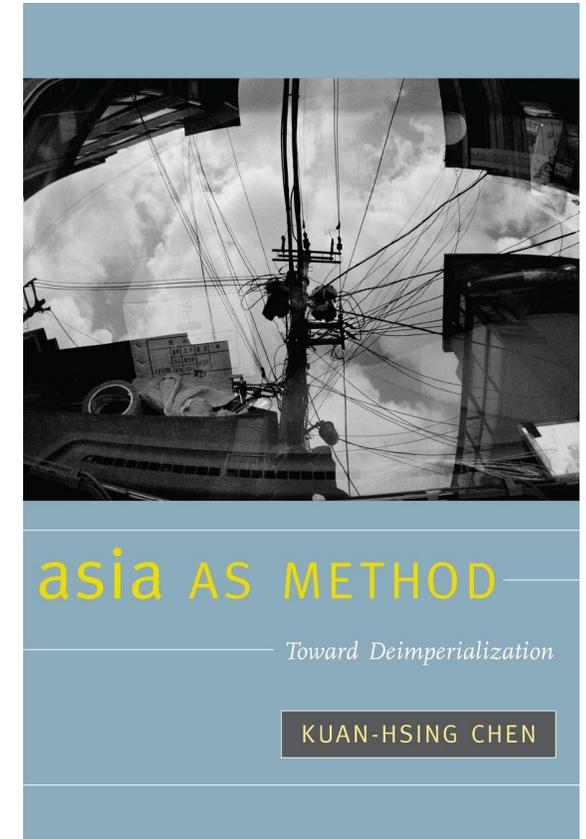
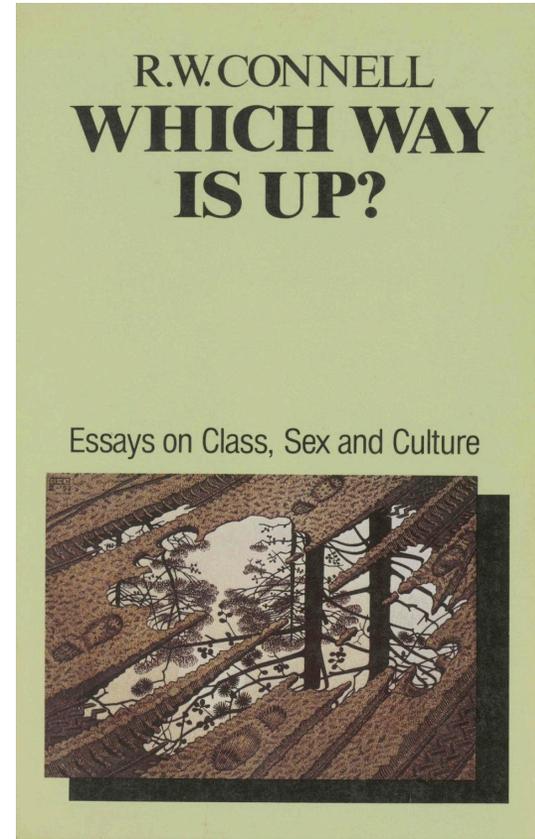
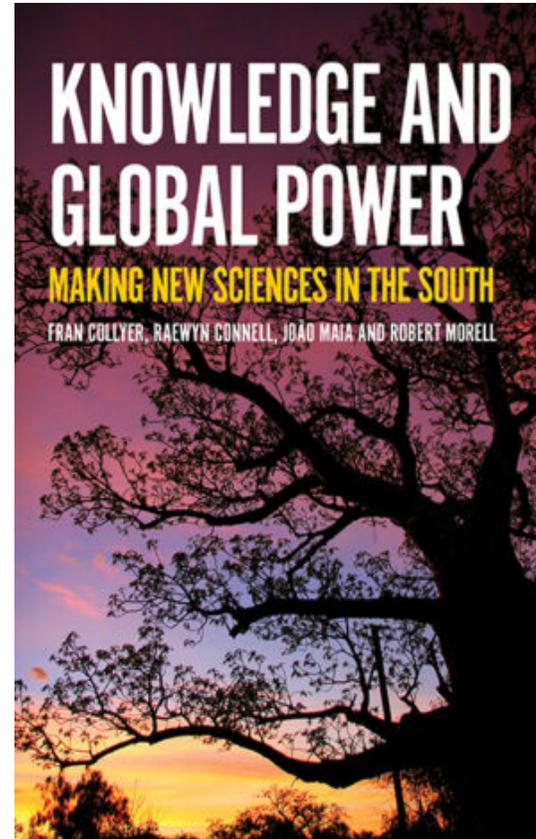
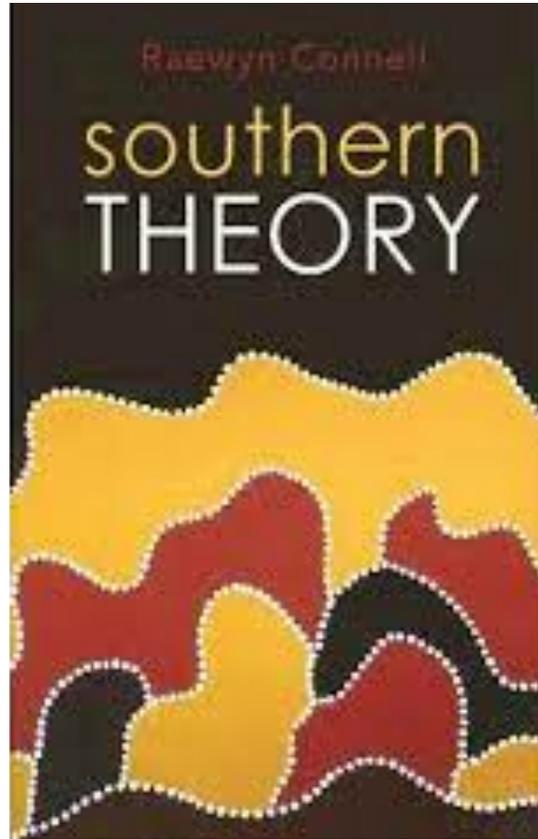
- All knowledge (in all languages) is valued
- Reciprocal value of knowledge sharers
- Care for each other as people and co-learners
- Trust
- Learning from one another



# Decolonising education/curriculum/pedagogy



# Open up to Eastern philosophies; pedagogies of the Global South; Asia as Method



- Ask ourselves:
- What can we learn from modern foreign language education in other countries, including ELT (the biggest 'foreign language' in the world) in Europe, Asia and elsewhere?

# Practice – Theory - Practice

- Don't let any 'theoreticians' tell us practitioners that we can't do theory!
- Mao (1937) '*On Practice*' - dialectical-materialist approach to knowledge acquisition: knowledge is wrought through practice.
- Theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice.
- The process of theorization, or knowledge construction, involves a perpetual cycle of practice-theory-practice.

# A 'Practical' Theory

- A practical theory goes for a holistic account of the practice.
- The theory should provide a principled choice between competing, alternative interpretations that inform and enhance future practice.
- **'Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language'**
- Li Wei, *Applied Linguistics*, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039> Open Access

- An important assessment of the value of a practical theory is the extent to which it can ask new and different questions on both the practice under investigation and other existing theories about the practice.
- It is also useful to recognize that practices can be of very diverse natures; for instance, the academic practices of knowledge production which include the purposes of the research articulated in specific socio-historical settings, language practices by the language users being studied, and professional practices such as language teaching in different social contexts.

# Working together

- Collaboration is key; the pandemic forces us to think *why* collaborate and *how* we collaborate
- Working across ITE, teaching community, and university and teacher training agencies, research community
- Working across disciplines and subject areas

# Thank you

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