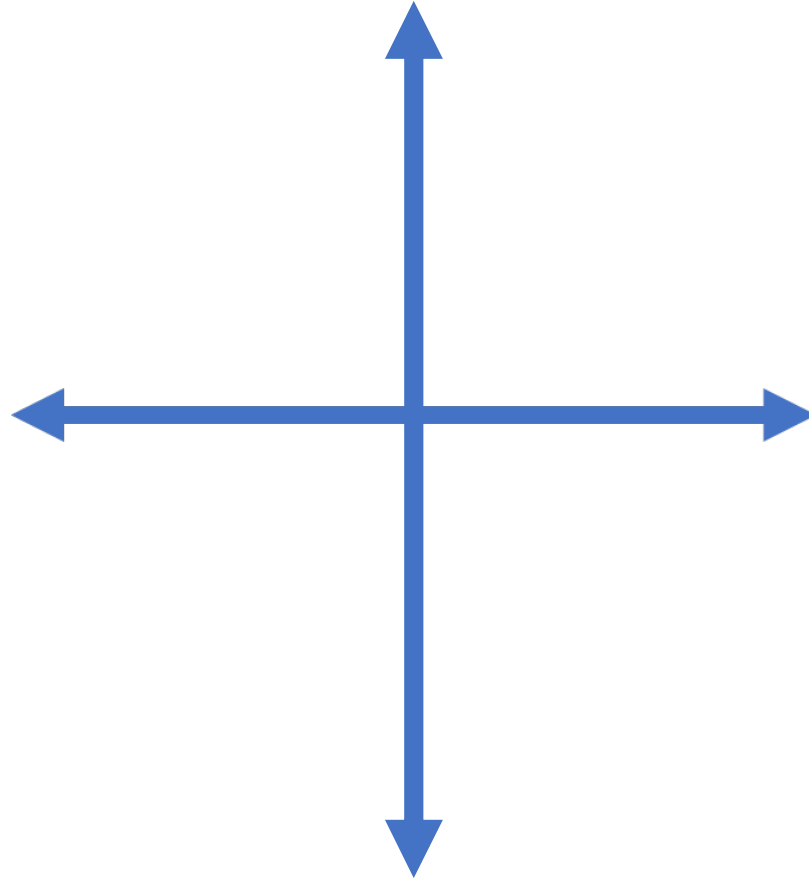# Twisting the Screw the Other Way: Legitimising EAP Differently

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A thought experiment – positions in the field

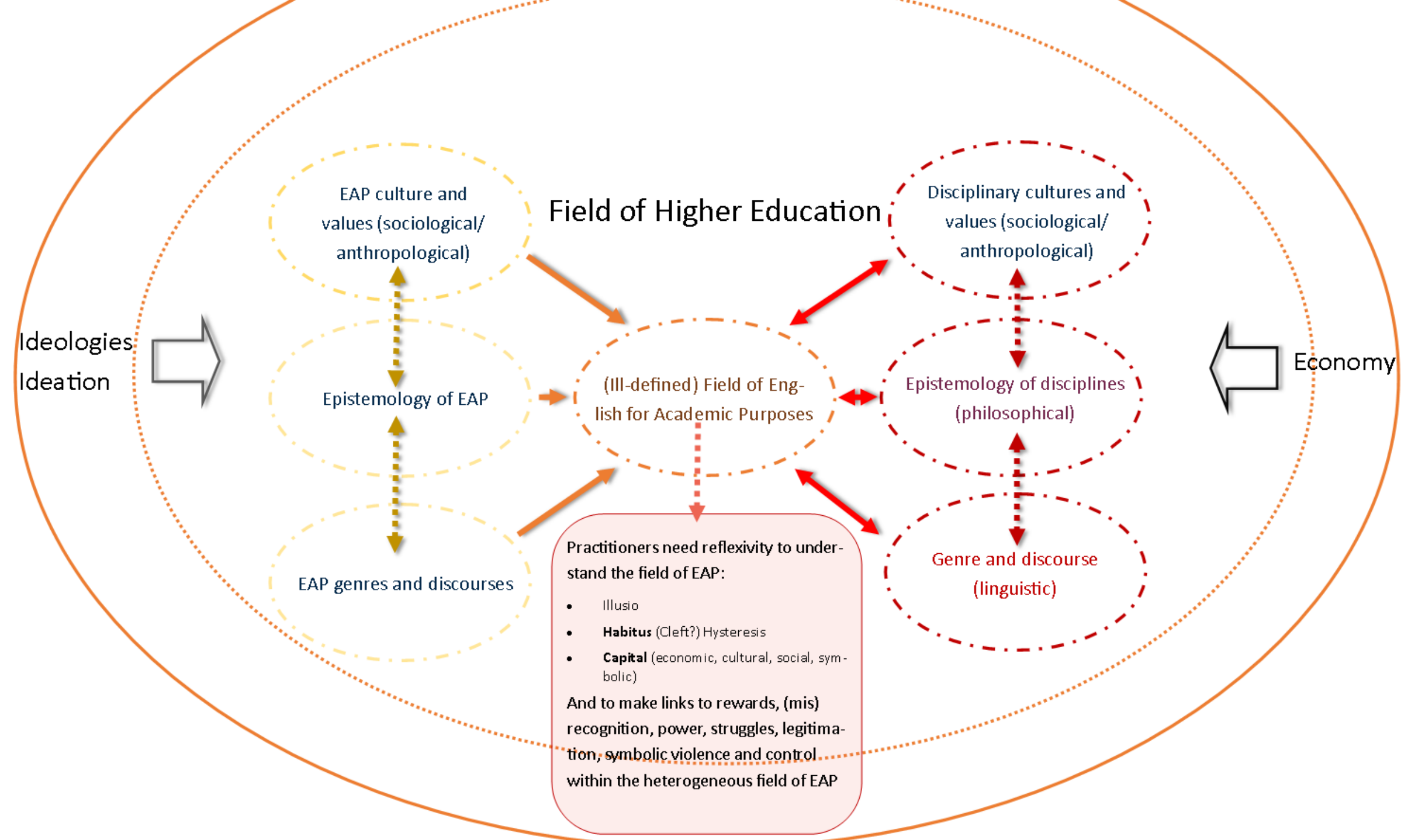# Twisting the screw – a socio-analysis of the field - *metanoia*

- a transformation of how we see the field of EAP;
- to repudiate past practices and doxas;
- to adopt a new gaze,
- and to break with illusio - 'the enchanted circle of collective denial' (Bourdieu, 2000: 5).
- Our rhetorical strategy is to 'twist the screw the other way' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53)
- in order 'to emphasise the truth very strongly' (Bourdieu, 2000a: 173)
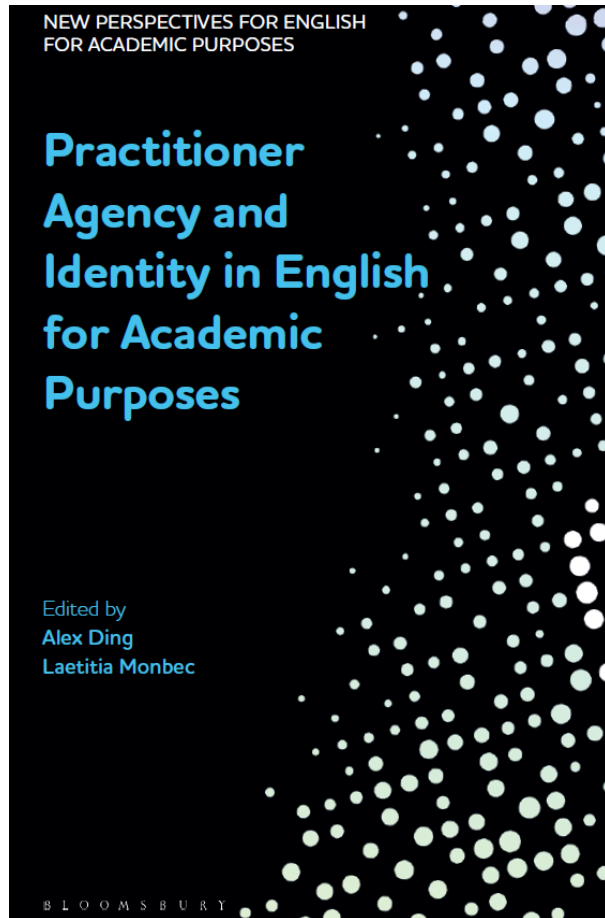
Socio-analysis and the field

In socio-analysis the primary focus is on the field:

the characteristics of a field are: it is a structured social space; it contains agents (people and institutions) who dominate and who are dominated; the field is a permanent relationship of inequality; field agents struggle to transform or preserve the field; all agents harness the powers they have in this struggle; and power defines agents' positions in the field and their strategies.

Ding, 2022: 157.

Ideologies Ideation

Economy

Field of Higher Education

EAP culture and values (sociological/ anthropological)

Disciplinary cultures and values (sociological/ anthropological)

Epistemology of EAP

(Ill-defined) Field of English for Academic Purposes

Epistemology of disciplines (philosophical)

EAP genres and discourses

Genre and discourse (linguistic)

Practitioners need reflexivity to understand the field of EAP:

- Illusio
- **Habitus** (Cleft?) Hysteresis
- **Capital** (economic, cultural, social, symbolic)

And to make links to rewards, (mis) recognition, power, struggles, legitimation, symbolic violence and control within the heterogeneous field of EAP

Work in progress

Monbec, L and A. Ding (forthcoming), *Reconfiguring Language in Higher Education - Social Justice, Ethics and Practices,* Palgrave Macmillan.

EAP as an ill-defined field

Because these posts ill-defined and ill-guaranteed but open and 'full of potential' as the phrase goes, leave their occupants the possibility of defining them by bringing the embodied necessity which is constitutive of their habitus, their future depends on what is made of them by their occupants, or at least those of them who, in the struggles with the 'profession' and in confrontations with neighbouring and rival professions, manage to impose the definition of the profession most favourable to what they are.

Bourdieu, 2000: 158.

Research questions

1. What are the historical, social and cultural determinants which have traditionally been valued, and have shaped different positioning in the field? What is the **narrative of origin** about EAP practitioners?

2. What types, volume and configuration of **capital** characterise EAP practitioners?

3. How do practitioners perceive and understand their positions in the field?

Methodology: operationalising Bourdieu with CDA-SFL

Combination of analytical approaches: Field theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (Systemic Functional Linguistics).

Bourdieu's perspective on language as social action presents similarities with SFL: language is key to the symbolic representation of the social world, a main mediator in social reproduction.

> "*the whole social structure is present in each interaction (and thereby in the discourse uttered*)' (Bourdieu, 1991:67).

SFL Linguistics analysis: Transitivity (Bartlett, 2014; Lukin, 2019); Appraisal (Martin and White, 2005); Social Actor Theory (Van Leeuwen, 2008) on representation and erasure
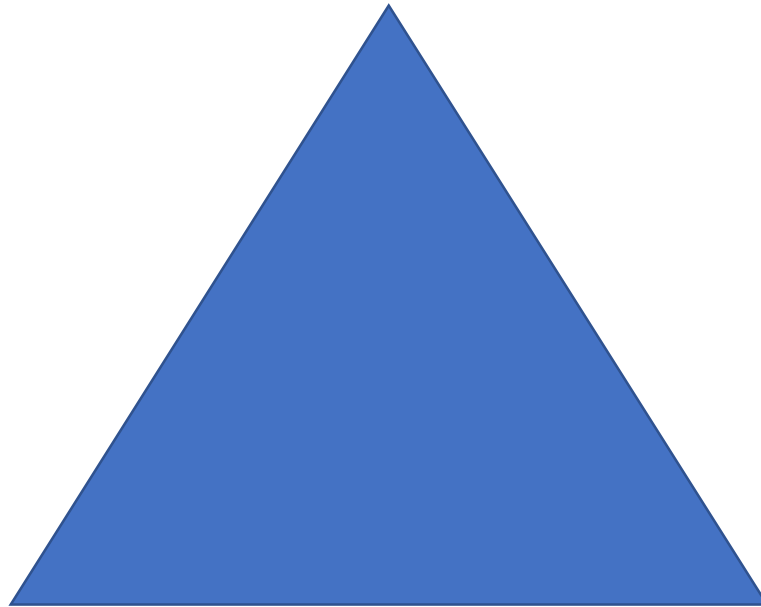

Data:

Publicly available texts constructing the EAP practitioner identity, specifically important actors at the beginning of their careers ('luminaries') on various websites such as BALEAP, platforms such as uefap.net, and in various publications such as blogs, obituaries, theses.

Questionnaire: 47 responses, 27 women, 17 men, and 1 non-binary

Illusio

Agents: epistemic agents and institutions

Knowledge:
What we teach
What influences us

Pedagogy:
Critical/Subversive/Pragmatic

The high priests, the missionaries and the diplomats

- The narratives of origin: These stories constitute the field's heritage, frame our understanding. Bourdieu (1990) explains how our habitus is shaped by a collective memory which reproduces itself through the ways social actors are represented.

- Representation of the practitioner in the early days of the field provides an insight into the basis of legitimation of agents, purposes, and values in EAP.

- **Data:** Publicly available texts, interviews, obituaries, auto-biographical texts, theses…

- **3 main narratives of legitimation**

1st Narrative of legitimation: **practitioner's mobility**

- Circumstance of place and time (Bartlett, 2014) and the 'expansionist rhetoric' (Pennycook, 2002)

- Agents' names are *consistently* followed by an inventory of countries: *Emirates, Hong Kong, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Venezuela...*

- *Economic and cultural motif: "Petroleum companies", "British telecom", "BP", "Shell", references to "the Royal Family", "the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee", "the Centre for British Teachers", "VSO" "coincidental careers",   and quaint lexis such as "cutting your teeth", "[name's] Libyan period", "3-year posting to the University of Kuwait"*

Paul Theroux
Bill Bryson
David Crystal
(Pennycook, 2002)

The **British Empire** is no more, but the **empire of its language flourishes**. This is in part because of the efforts of itinerant teachers in **far-flung corners of what used to be called British spheres of interest**. Enduring coups and odd customs, enjoying unexpected delights, two veterans of this life provide intimate recollections of what it was like **to ply their profession** during the decades of change between 1960 and 1990.
Abbott and Jordan (2001), *English all over the place*

2nd Narrative of legitimation: **expertise and agency**

Agents are represented through 'activation' as powerful, agentive, dynamic experts (van Leeuwen, 2008). Transitivity: process types and active/passive voice (Bartlett, 2014), nominalisation (Lukin, 2019).

EAP practitioners are **active agents** in most clauses and act on the local educational world through <u>material processes</u>: **They** <u>*set up centres and programmes*</u>, **they** <u>*build educational initiatives*</u>, **they** <u>*consult*</u> *on government educational plans*, T**hey** '<u>*advised on*</u>' '<u>*worked with the education authorities to develop*</u>', '<u>*led on … projects*</u>'.

When not active agents, they are a willing passive agent of a powerful institutional agent, as in: "*I was posted in … by the British Council*", "*further British Council **postings***" or their missions are aligned with the broader linguistic expansion (as in Abbott and Jordan)

This evokes a world where white English-speaking academics make use of their epistemic, cultural, racial (also gender) capital to develop the 'less fortunate', the 'linguistically deprived' and embody "the onward march of the English language' (Pennycook, 2002:136).

In Bourdieu's words

- The grip of strongly integrated groups [...] is to a large extent due to the fact that they are linked by a collusio in the illusio, a deep-rooted complicity in the collective fantasy, which provides each of its members with the experience of an exaltation of the ego, the principle of a solidarity rooted in attachment to the group as an enchanted image of the self. It is indeed this socially constructed feeling of being a 'superior essence' which, together with the solidarities of interests and the affinities of habitus, does most to engender and support what must indeed be called an 'esprit de corps' – however strange the expression may seem when applied to a set of individuals persuaded of their prefect non-substitutability.

- Bourdieu, 2008:7.

3ʳᵈ Narrative of legitimation: Erasing local actors and knowledge

- **Discursive strategy:** Erasure is shown by a complete absence of linguistic traces - a void or suppression (Stibbe, 2020; Venkataraman 2018; van Leeuwen, 2008).

- Rare but deficit representation: the **need for foreign experts** because of a lack of local ones.

- **No mention** of local knowledge, expertise, scholars, practices…

- The erasure of local agents:
  - how they can be envisaged and envisage themselves
  - agency to define issues
  - ability to be heard

- Perceived differently by practitioners originating from the countries themselves

A basis of legitimacy that is difficult to shake off

- Narratives are shifting: professionalization, scholarship, inclusivity, diversity, equity, anti-racism, decolonization, translanguaging and multilingualism

- Anti-hegemonic discourses: Native-speakerism and linguistic imperialism (Ndebele, 1987; Phillipson, 1986, 1988, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 2002 and many others in TESOL and Applied Linguistics; Benesch, 2001, in EAP)

- BALEAP mailing list: "outside the UK **we** are <u>very likely</u> to find 'English' teachers who <u>are</u> *unqualified* or *poorly qualified*: **they** <u>may</u> be *qualified* as teachers, **but** <u>not</u> of English; **they** <u>may</u> *have a degree in English,* **but** <u>no</u> *teacher training/educ coursework.*' (Ding, Bond and Bruce, 2022:8).

- Jobs in 'faraway' countries constructed as a 'non-ideal' but necessary notch on one's professional trajectory belt.

- Global North experts in **leadership** positions, or representing 'expertise'
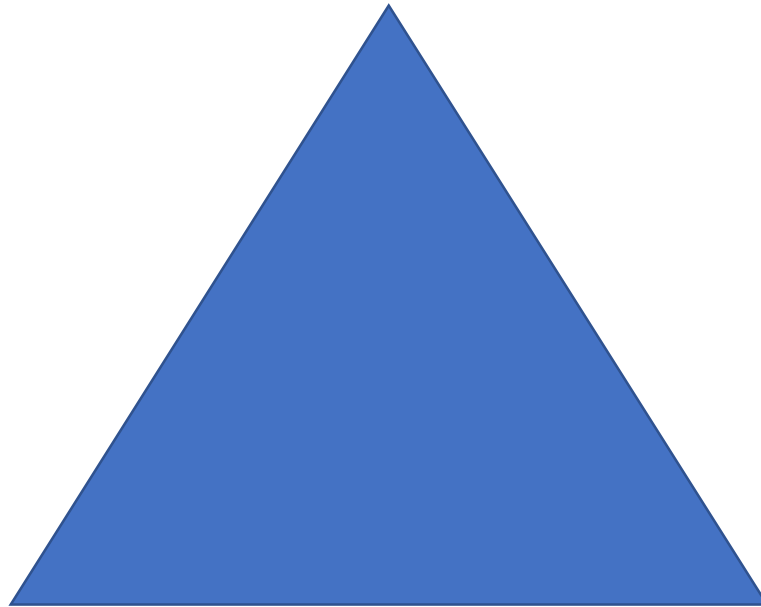
Representation is key

- It is essential to pay attention to the ways local actors and knowledge are represented in discourse, and to notice (and call out) when they remain **occluded** or **inconsequential,** mere **props** in a practitioner's negotiation of their own position in the field.

- […]The way participants are construed, erased, positioned as agentive or passive actors, is partly how dominance in the material world is perpetuated and so […] close attention to and deliberate use of language is a way, if not to transform the world, at least to lift the illusio.

Ding and Monbec (forthcoming)

Illusio

Agents: epistemic agents and institutions

Knowledge:
What we teach
What influences us

Pedagogy:
Critical/Subversive/Pragmatic

Impact on the EAP knowledge-base

cultural constructs of colonialism shape **common myths in** ELT**: English is simple**, superior for thinking. (Pennycook, 2002)

The **monolingual fallacy**, or no L1 in rhe English classroom (Tupas and Renandya, 2021; Reynanda et al. 2023).

The **critical period hypothesis** for a 'native-like' accent is anchored in 'nativeness' ideology and has supported the 'young learner' industry in ELT.

Lack of clarity around **language ontology.**

This, working hand in hand with the erasure of local knowledge and agents, can be seen as having **legitimized and empowered thousands of monolingual anglophone teachers around the world.**

The zombie-like persistence (even sadly when well-meaning) of **the portrayal of** multi/bilingual **teachers of EAP** as lacking, deficient, struggling and agentless. Claim to moral capital?

Imagination around the curriculum's breadth and **depth** is impacted

The minor prophets and the heretics

Survey of practitioners: capitals, influence, values, ethics…

- **Legitimate capitals:** professional experience, qualifications, scholarship, multilingualism
- **Influences**: <u>practitioner scholarship is cited</u> beyond the high priests: Swales, Hyland, Bruce, Ding, Halliday, Kirk, Street, Alexander, Lillis, Lea, Bond, Benesch…Evans, Cowley-Haselden, Monbec, Walková - Compare with Hyland and Jiang (2020)

  "any EAP teacher reaches their point of saturation with articles on lexical bundles and starts disengage with the endless papers on minute elements of academic writing".

- **Ethical concerns**: calls for more diverse representation, more ethics in scholarship, in employment conditions, better treatment of (international) students.

- **Problematic dichotomies**: scholarship vs teaching skills; knowledge of language, language ontology, assumptions around pragmatism (pragmatic vs critical)

- A **homogeneous** (fairly **heterodox**) on what EAP practitioners contribute (academic genres, conventions, 'ways to think', 'critical thinking'…)

- **Influences are mostly limited** to the global North and mostly white: with the exceptions of Suresh Canagarajah at the 19th place, bell hooks ($35^{th)}$, and Ruqaiya Hasan (101st). In Singapore, the top influences were: Hyland, Swales, Halliday, Canagarajah, and (Michelle) Lazar.

- **Ethics are for others** to practise..

To be continued….

From collective amnesia to collective anamnesis

Anamnesis in the field offers practitioners the first steps to a rupture with the unsaid, the unthought thought, the implicit, the doxas that permeate the field and then to trigger resistance to domination, orthodoxy, and injustices. And in doing so we have:
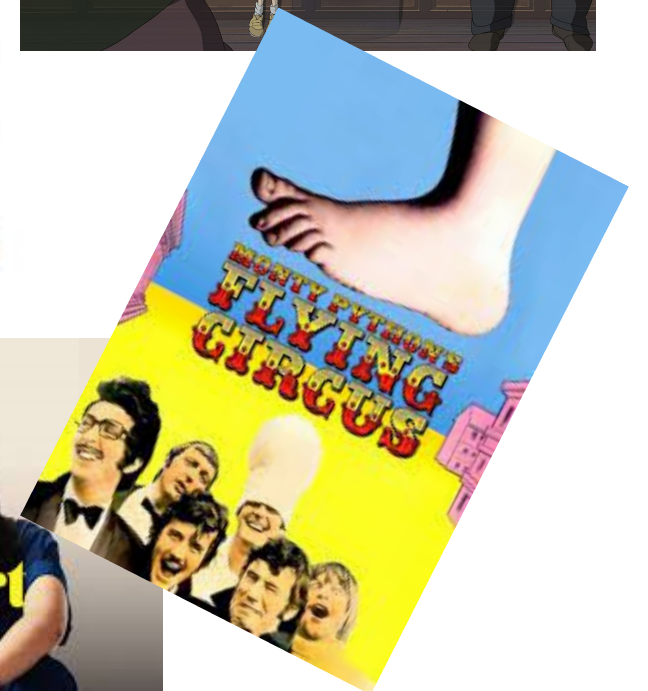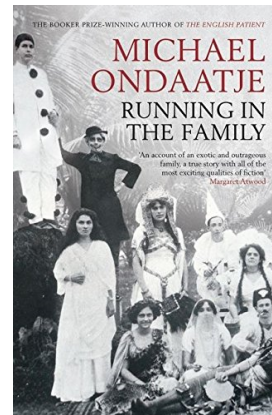
a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimizing the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve …[Sociology] allows us to discern the sites where we do indeed enjoy a degree of freedom and those where we do not.

Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 198–9.

Bourdieu (1988:276)

Legend:
- ● Collège de France
- ■ Sorbonne
- ▲ Faculty of Nanterre
- ○ EPHE 6th section
- □ EPHE 4th and 5th section

What would EAP be ...

"The Penguin Book of Short Stories - a wide range of forms, structures, characters and interesting sketches which are valuable in themselves but perhaps do not quite add up to a completely coherent 'whole', somewhat culture-bound and which most universities have on their shelves but rarely, if ever, bother to read."

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