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Decolonizing writing centre internationalization:

Reflective Strategies for Ethical Engagement

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Abstract

This article critically examines the internationalization of US-style writing centres as a mechanism of neocolonial soft power. Drawing on decolonial theory and the concept of cognitive empire, the authors argue that transregional writing centre collaborations—particularly those supported by the U.S. Department of State—often perpetuate linguistic, epistemic, and cultural imperialism under the guise of educational development. Situating these initiatives within broader geopolitical and historical contexts, the article explores how English for Academic Purposes (EAP) centres function as instruments of epistemicide and cultural assimilation. The authors offer reflective strategies to support co-conspiratorial engagement by Global North scholars and institutions. These include strategies such as engaged awareness, equitable partnerships, epistemic disobedience, and strategic refusals of neocolonial funding. The article emphasizes the need to delink from Western epistemological dominance and resist

performative decolonization by fostering relational accountability and structural change. Ultimately, the authors call for a radical reimagining of writing centre internationalization—one that centers the agency of Global South communities, challenges colonial hierarchies, and embraces the discomfort necessary for genuine transformation. This work contributes to on-going conversations about decolonization in higher education and offers practical guidance for scholars seeking to engage ethically in transnational writing centre initiatives.

Introduction

How education may function as a vehicle for center dominance needs to be analyzed carefully…

—Canagarajah, *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*

In 2014, Chris Anson, Strategic Advisor of the Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University, asked composition scholars situated in the US: What learning must we take on when we do international work in composition? In this paper, we respond to Anson's question by turning "the gaze back upon power" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 241). We seek to implicate ourselves and our colleagues in this process and open discussion as we take on "the hard, unsettling work of decolonization" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 4). Our goal is not only to raise awareness, but also to promote appropriate action in response to the ongoing complicity of writing centre scholars and practitioners in global neocolonialism and in what de Sousa Santos (2018) calls the Global North's "cognitive empire." We do not claim to offer a decolonizing framework—such work must be led by those most impacted by colonial systems. Instead, we offer a sociohistorical analysis and a set of reflective strategies that may support scholars in the Global North in recognizing their complicity and engaging more ethically in transregional writing centre collaborations.

For context, significant patterns of global proliferation of writing centres over the last three decades have involved transregional (across formal and informal regional borders of all sorts, from national to cultural and economic) collaborations between the U.S. Department of State (DOS), US-based scholars and institutions, and scholars and institutions across Africa; the Middle East; Central, East, and Southeast Asia; and Latin America, often called the Global South, as well as Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

US-authored literature documenting transregional writing centre initiatives (TWCI) typically articulates social justice aims involving increasing access for international students

and scholars to an imagined 'standard' US English,[1] and, therefore, to highly ranked, US academic publications and higher education (HE) institutions. In this literature, considerations for inclusion and access are not typically extended to considerations of the global political systems that maintain the dominance of US and Western languages, epistemologies, and institutions across HE and academia more broadly (see Donahue, 2009; Hotson & Bell, 2024; Zenger, 2016). In this way, this literature does not tend toward decolonial goals; decolonial effort involves pushing beyond questions of access to and inclusion within centres of power to questions about the nature of the colonial systems that dictate the lines of inclusion and exclusion. As Tuck and Yang (2012) assert, decolonization "is a distinct project from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects" that "wants something different than those forms of justice" (p. 2).

The power of TWCIs to provide pathways for decolonial forms of social justice is limited if they ultimately require individuals to adopt the cultural, linguistic, epistemic socio-political norms of the exclusive, dominant power and perpetuate a centre/periphery dynamic within a neocolonial world order. Neocolonial soft power operates via both cognitive (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, 2023a) and cultural (wa Thiong'o, 1993) colonial processes concurrently, using precisely the sort of exportation of educational institutions, pedagogies, and languages that, we recognize, is reflected in many TWCIs (Altbach, 2003, 2004; Canagarajah, 2002; wa Thiong'o, 1993). In order to operate with decolonizing intentions, individuals involved in taking writing centre work across regional borders need to serve as decolonial co-conspirators, listening to and working with students, teachers, and scholars who endeavour to "struggle for the right to name the world for [themselves]" (wa Thiong'o, 1993, p. 3)—an unsettling and dangerous struggle that necessarily counters the educational and linguistic imperialism at the foundation of

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[1] Our reference to "imagined" here draws on the work of Rosina Lippi-Green in *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States* (2011) and the authors and editors of *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change* (Eds. L. Greenfield & K. Rowan).

US HE internationalization and its TWCIs. This co-conspiratorial work is founded on a recognition of white complicity that involves a "refusal" (Tuck & Yang, 2014) to participate in "a deep and systematic form of forgetting about, or refusing to recognize, their [white peoples'] implication in relations of domination, subordination and privilege; and the injustice, cruelty, and suffering they cause" (Swan, 2017, p. 551). This refusal involves "unsettling innocence" (Tuck & Yang, 2014) and reckoning with the "wilful ignorance" (Swan, 2017, p. 552) required by HE institutions that demand and reward service to the neocolonial state apparatus with, for example, funding for writing centre establishment through the U.S. DOS's support for study abroad and scholarly exchange.

Co-conspiratorial decolonial efforts by writing centre scholars and practitioners who, like the authors of this paper, are situated in the Global North and "bound" by white systems within North American-centric and/or Eurocentric upbringing and experiences must be led by a recognition of their inability to fully grasp or respond to experiences of imperialism (wa Thiong'o, 1993, p. 4). García (2024) writes,

> [w]e are all entangled and complicit in modern/colonial and settlerizing designs… We are its affective channels of rhetorical transmission via coloniality of instruction-and--curriculum—a settler-centered instruction in which educators to writing center consultants like the 'men of letters' of the past are both entangled in informing--giving form to coloniality of knowledge-being and complicit in managing and controlling bodies of knowledge and the bodies of human beings." (p. 4)

We must avoid engaging in the cognitive dissonance involved in ignoring the colonial forces embedded in TWCIs, as well as in overly idealizing the power of decolonial strategies we may use. Instead, we must reckon earnestly with the colonial forces embedded in our work.

In this paper, we unsettle innocence, cognitive dissonance, and willful ignorance (Tuck & Yang, 2014; Swan, 2017, p. 552) by accounting for the historical context within which TWCIs participate arguably regardless of decolonial intentions. We ask: What strategies and

approaches to international writing centre work might hold scholars situated in the Global North accountable to the complex educational, cognitive, epistemic, and linguistic imperialisms potentially at work in writing centre internationalization? We hope that future research will extend this inquiry by examining how elite education policies in Global South countries intersect with or resist the neocolonial dynamics of writing centre internationalization. Comparative studies could explore how local institutions navigate pressures to adopt US-style writing pedagogies while maintaining or reclaiming Indigenous epistemologies and linguistic traditions. Such work would deepen our understanding of how writing centres are being adapted, resisted, or reimagined in diverse geopolitical contexts, and could illuminate alternative models of international collaboration that challenge the dominance of the cognitive empire.

To guide our exploration, this paper is organized into several key sections. We begin by situating writing centre internationalization within its broader geopolitical and historical context, emphasizing the role of education as a tool of neocolonial soft power. We then examine the language politics of TWCIs, highlighting how English for Academic Purposes (EAP) centres often reinforce linguistic imperialism. Building on this foundation, we propose a series of "appropriate actions" for scholars and practitioners seeking to engage in decolonial work, including strategies of engaged awareness, equitable partnership-building, epistemic disobedience, and refusal. Finally, we conclude with a call for accountability and structural transformation, urging writing centre scholars to critically reflect on their positionality and the systems they operate within. Throughout, we frame our analysis as a set of strategies to unsettle assumptions and provoke meaningful dialogue about the future of writing centre internationalization.

Geopolitical Context: Required Reading for TWCI Collaborators

Neo-colonialism, and the US leadership of it, do[es] not evoke the same sense of horror as the old colonialism and the oppressor nations of Europe used to evoke in the general imagination and in political practice. In some quarters the USA is not even seen as an imperialist power.

—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*

Education as Soft Power

Education has been, and continues to be, a powerful colonizing tool for nations of the Global North, especially the US, even though—as wa Thiong'o points out above—many in these nations fail to see their own participation in this colonization. Writing centre scholars involved in TWCIs need to take up Canagarajah's (2002) invitation to carefully analyze "[h]ow education may function as a vehicle for center dominance" (p. 40). de Wit and Altbach (2021) report that national governments of the Global North have spent the last 30 years investing in the internationalization of HE as an instrument of "soft power" (p. 34) in the Global South. Nye (2005), who invented the term, *soft power*, views education as a key tool for US dominance:

> Many observers agree that American higher education produces significant soft power for the United States. Secretary of State Colin Powell, for example, said in 2001: 'I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated [in the US].' (pp. 12-13)

Neocolonial soft power is a creation of the governments of the Global North as a means to continue both the actions and controls of settler colonialism after the end of their physical empires (Nye, 2008; Siltaoja, Juusola, & Kivijärvi, 2019). Mignolo (in Open University, 2015) describes neocolonialism as "re-fashioned colonial relations which maps the world according to Western interests even when the West is no longer in complete charge" (p. 226). Under neocolonialism, imperialistic control is exerted indirectly via cultural domination involving, "the maintenance, management, manipulation, and mobilisation of the entire system of edu-

cation, language and language use, literature, religion, [and] the media," which "secures the oppressor nation power over the transmission of a certain ideology, set of values, outlook, attitudes, feelings, etc, and hence power over the whole area of consciousness" (wa Thiong'o, 1993, p. 51).

Describing the hegemonic control at the heart of neocolonialism, Melissen (2006) characterizes soft-power tactics like education as ways of "getting other people on your side." Soft power's focus on influencing minds, for wa Thiong'o (in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021), is characterized as the workings of a "cognitive" or "metaphysical" empire that seeks to commit "epistemicides" and "cognitive injustices" as it gains control and power. "The cognitive empire operated through detonation of a 'cultural bomb' at the centre of victim societies, causing various dissonances and alienations" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, p. 886).

> The key consequences of all these processes have been epistemicides (killing of existing endogenous knowledges), linguicides (killing of existing indigenous languages and the imposition of colonial languages), culturecides (killing of indigenous cultures and setting afoot cultural imperialism) and alienation (exiling of indigenous people from their languages, histories and cultures, and even from themselves). (p. 886)

Epistemicide as a neocolonial tactic is a core tenet of the modern epistemology of the Global North's arising from the Enlightenment.

Mignolo (2007) describes this epistemology as an "imperial form of consciousness" that proclaimed itself "as the 'center' of a World History that it inaugurate[d]" (p. 454), creating and positioning "the Other" on its periphery in a simultaneously "engulfing" and a "defensive and exclusionary" relationship (p. 451). Imperial consciousnesses (Mignolo offers Christianity, Liberalism, and Marxism, as examples) make use of abstract universals or "Totalities" (p. 451) that obscure their geo-historical and biographical locations (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160). From this totalitarian positioning, the imperial form of consciousness has the "epistemic privilege" (p. 166) to control the production of knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes,

The coloniser's model of the world was originally predicated on the notion of the emptiness of the world outside of Europe and survives today on the notion of inferior people who are yet to attain full humanity under the "civilising" tutelage of Europe. (2023b, p. 83)

Neocolonialism involves processes of "creative destruction" on the basis of rhetorics of modernity and development (de Sousa Santos et al., 2008). Mignolo (2007) describes these as "crooked rhetorics," working ideologically to "naturalize 'modernity'," a product of European Enlightenment imperialism, "as a universal global process and point of arrival" in a manner that "hides its darker side, the constant reproduction of 'coloniality'" (p. 450). Fleschenberg, Castillo, & Kresse write in the introduction to *Thinking with the South: Reframing Research Collaboration amid Decolonial Imperatives and Challenges* (2023),

there is a need to undo systems of higher education and research that have long been built on the seemingly certain pillars of Eurocentrism, with its underpinning hierarchical conceptions of human beings with whiteness at the top, and teleological models of human development in mind. There is, as [Achille] Mbembe asserts, a "global Apartheid in Higher Education" which needs to be overcome. (p. 1)

Educated Agents of Neocolonialism

As a vehicle of soft power, education works as a colonizing process with snowballing effects. Educated individuals—often elites—become agents of colonization spreading the colonizer's values and ways of life. Neocolonial soft power's exertion of cultural domination and control of minds enables oppressor nations the ability to trust that the oppressed will "become their own policemen" (wa Thiong'o, 1993, p. 51), especially when elites across the world are the beneficiaries of the highest honours within the oppressor's education system (pp. 51-52). Kurihara (2013) offers an example of this scenario playing out in Japan with decades of US effort to influence Japanese culture. They explain that when the US occupied Japan after WWII, it used American-style education and English language programs in an effort to "completely

change Japanese minds, with their pre-war hatred morphing into a very close brotherhood with the U.S.A." (p. 93). Through this process, many Japanese leaders and culture makers have espoused American language, culture, knowledge, and institutions as standards for Japanese life (p. 93). Because of neocolonial exchange programs like the DOS' Fulbright scholarship program, Japanese leaders across fields, Kurihara explains, "are those who studied in America when they were young" (p. 92). These leaders are examples of the valuable assets inserted into the colonized societies by the US, as Powell described above.

Kurihara's description of "educational imperialism" in Japan is similar to that described by Canagarajah (2002):

> Through the elite groups in the periphery, the center dominates these communities. This is a very effective form of hegemony as the center doesn't have to impose its values and power directly, but through a group of natives who act as its agents. This model thus allows for a dynamic process of center dominance that doesn't have to be imposed unilaterally from the center. Such a perspective accounts, paradoxically, for ways in which the periphery may participate in its own domination. (pp. 39-40)

This form of cultural hegemony used in lieu of domination by physical force is a tried-and-true neocolonial strategy; the British used assimilation-style education across its colonies to create elites capable of facilitating British rule without the need for the physical presence of any British nationals. These tactics were replicated within settler-colonial nations, as evidenced in Canada's Residential School System (see, for example, Hanson, Gamez, & Manuel, 2020) and the British residential schools across Africa (see Lugard, 1922). The settler-colonial US government also used education as a tool for the physical and cognitive subjugation of Indigenous peoples internally, before extending the strategy in foreign policy to Latin America and the Pacific by the 1880s (see Isenberg & Richards, 2017 and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, n.d.).

US Neocolonial Education Policy

US foreign policy explicitly describes education, including language education, as a neo-colonial tool. This is evident in the 1948 Fulbright Program, the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act (formally, US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948) and the 1962 Fulbright-Hayes Act (formally, Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Program of 1961).

These founding documents legitimizing the US' cognitive empire (de Sousa Santos, 2018), the Smith-Mundt Act (1948) and the Fulbright Program (1948), enacted the formalization of education as a colonizing tool of the US government through educational exchange (Metzgar, 2012, p. 76). The purpose of educational exchange as enacted in the Smith-Mundt Act is described in a 1948 report of the Act to the U.S. Congress:

> The United States is also investing heavily in military preparedness to insure [sic] national security. Ideas are also weapons—weapons which can be utilized only by educational exchange. The free mind and free flow of ideas and knowledge among peoples provide such powerful weapons for peace that only when we review the progress of mankind itself can we measure their potentialities... Through enactment of the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948...the Congress carefully and deliberately determined that a program of educational exchange shall become an essential part of the conduct of this Nation's foreign affairs. (Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, p. 4)

This report also provides descriptions of the establishment at the time of American English libraries in locations such as Mexico, Nicaragua, and Uruguay in order to share "the American way of life" (p. 6). This strategy of sharing American way of life is also described as the beneficial outcome of study abroad and exchange programs: the US "contributes technical knowledge and training by sending to the various countries Government specialists and technicians and by bringing trainees" to the US, so they can "study and become expert in our scientific and technological methods" (p. 5). In contrast, the document describes other coun-

tries as non-knowledge resource sharers, typically as contributors of "money, facilities, or land" (p. 5).

In 1961, the Smith-Mundt Act was subsumed into the Fulbright-Hays Act, which continued the focus on education in DOS foreign policy by creating the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which eventually directed the Fulbright Program. The ECA's current mandate is, in part, to use "educational, professional, and cultural exchange" to "strengthen the national security" of the United States (About ECA, n.d.). Both the Smith-Mundt and the Fulbright-Hayes acts, in the eyes of US legislators and the Department of State, legitimize and legalize the ECA's neocolonial programs, including the Fulbright Scholarship program, English Language Fellow Exchange Program, English Language Specialist Program, and Ameri-can English language-instruction programs. These ECA programs engage, operate, and collab-orate with, in, and through US HE institutions and individual faculty and staff. ECA's annual report, *Functional Bureau Strategy* (2018 & 2022) on the ECA's activities makes this clear: "ECA identifies policy-relevant global trends, selects thematic priorities, and targets emerging and current leaders who can effectively be reached through international exchanges" (2018, p. 3). To pursue these foreign policy goals, ECA designs programs with specific operational emphases, "We focus on youth to cultivate the next generation of global leaders" (2018, p. 3). This is done for the advancement of US citizens, business, and trade: "We seek international opportunities for American citizens and US institutions to make them more competitive in our globalized economy" (2018, p. 3). These foreign policy goals are set at the highest level of the US government, "ECA's bureau strategy draws upon the Secretary of State's foreign policy goals, the *FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan* (JSP), *White House Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (INSSG), and the *Public Diplomacy Strategic Plan* (Functional Bureau Strategy, 2022, p. 1).

The ECA's weaponization of American English as a tool to achieve these foreign policy goals is explicit in these documents, "We promote the learning of English as a gateway to

educational and economic advancement and as a foundation for a rich international dialogue" (Functional Bureau Strategy, 2018, p. 3), "…and [as] a foundation for withstanding disinformation" (Functional Bureau Strategy, 2022, p. 1). Administrators of ECA's language programs, Regional English Language Officers, counsel and assist "US mission officials in determining and developing the most effective use of English language programs and services" to carry out the diplomatic goals of the US government (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Secretary of State, Anthony Bliken, in a 2023 speech at the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, speaks specifically to American English as a colonizing tool,

> And so it's a wonderful ability to have to speak English, to understand English, and it's something that we are very, very happy to share. We're working here in Uzbekistan not only to help instruct English, but also, especially, to help train teachers in English. And I think to date we've trained almost 10,000, and now there are English-language school books in about 10,000 schools here in Uzbekistan. In many ways, English is the most important export from the United States to other countries. (Secretary Antony J. Blinken…, 2023)

As DOS collaborators, HE institutions and their staff and faculty become de facto agents of the US government's cultural neocolonialism, participating in enacting US foreign policies, which perpetuate cultural and linguistic colonial processes of Americanization and Anglicization. These ECA programs, especially the Fulbright Program, are deeply embedded in the culture, functioning, and funding of US HE institutions by DOS. Funding for Fulbright programs for 2023 was $287.5 million USD (Horton-Dirschberger, 2023). Total estimated budget for DOS' "Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs" was $779.5 million for 2024 (FY2024…, 2024).

Ultimately, what becomes apparent is not that decolonization is not working, but that it has never existed. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2023a) writes,

> Ramón Grosfoguel posited that the decolonization of the twenty-first century was a myth, as direct colonialism metamorphosed into global coloniality to sustain the

colonial matrices of power. Within this context, attainment of a modicum of political

sovereignty did not change the epistemic injustices committed by the cognitive empire.

(p. 42)

HE institutions' turn to Indigenization and decolonization over the last few decades obfuscates its continued and deep-rooted connections to the neocolonial world order. Scholarly and pedagogical concerns for decolonial action must reckon with the systematic neocoloniality outlined here.

Writing Centre Internationalization

If it was the gun which made possible the mining of this gold and which effected the political captivity of their owners, it was language which held captive their cultures, their values, and hence their minds.

—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms

The history of education as a neocolonial tool of soft power calls on writing centre scholars and practitioners to recognize how the internationalization of US writing centre institutions and pedagogies to continue the legacy of colonialism and to earnestly reckon with neocolonial systems and the US cognitive empire that ultimately curtail the power of any given decolonial strategy at play in the tutoring session. Even those who are not directly paid agents of the DOS, US centre directors, writing scholars, and instructors and practitioners act as de facto agents of the DOS' cultural neo-colonialism and cognitive empire building when they participate in TWCIs that offer "gifts" of prestigious American English for academic purposes, Western epistemologies, American-style institutions, and access to American English within North-South power asymmetries that can be expressed as teacher/learner and designer/implementer paradigms. TWCI's risk operating like other international agencies, "on the premise that the South has problems and the North has the solutions to them" (de Sousa Santos et al., 2008, p. xxxviii)—the colonizer helping the colonized to help themselves. This dynamic "normalizes the right of the North to intervene and control, adapt, and reshape structures, practices, and ways of life" (p. xxxviii) in alignment with the colonizer, in this case, those of the US

The risk of serving as de facto agents of the DOS' cultural neocolonialism is especially high given the apparent lack of awareness of the colonial aspects of writing centre internation-alization among writing centre scholars and instructors in the Global North (Donahue, 2009). This lack of awareness is perpetuated by leading US organizations in the field, which have

themselves adopted international positionings seemingly uncritically. Donahue (2009) en-quires about the internationalization of the US National Writing Centers Association (NWCA), the US Writing Across the Curriculum group, as well as the US Council of Writing Program Administrators: "What does it mean to internationalize an association or a conference, and to whose benefit? What has been different as a result of the choice to proclaim international-ization?" (p. 237). The US NWCA, operating as the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) since 2001, occupies the international space by simply staking claim to it, while its actions, scope, practices, and administration are US-based and focused (Hotson & Bell, 2024). Whether intentionally or not is notwithstanding, the NWCA/IWCA uncritically perpetuates US neocolonial processes with its prioritization of US concerns and contexts within the inter-national arena. In contrast, decolonial or anti-colonial internationalization would involve NWCA/IWCA restructuring to integrate and elevate perspectives and approaches from across regions such that the theory and practice of the organization becomes something "built for us"[2] ("us" including all represented groups, not just some). Imposing the perspectives and approaches used by one dominant group is often, in effect, colonial. Calls to the NWCA/IWCA for these reforms have gone publicly unanswered and unmanifested.

International education initiatives are often initiated and conducted with "a profound lack of awareness of the impact of their internationalization goals on others in the world" (Shultz, 2013, p. 76). The neoliberalization of HE drives much of the willful ignorance and cognitive dissonance necessary for this lack of awareness, as institutions and scholars are motivated to follow money and sources of prestige, even when they are rooted in neo-colonialism. Donahue (2009) addresses this reality:

> Recently, U.S. scholar Chris Anson asked, "what do we give and what do we get when
> we do international work in composition?" He suggested, with a bit of guilt, that those

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[2] Here, we are drawing on Nikole Hannah-Jones (Brown, 2021, n.p.).

of us who do work internationally advance in our careers in the United States because of the international appeal of our work, and I believe that is true. He was not so sure he could articulate accurately what we give. But the question might instead be: What do we need to receive? What can we, as a field, no longer do without, that is thoroughly grounded and developed in other national-cultural contexts? What learning must we take on? (p. 236)

As individual writing centres and writing centre practitioners, to access funding from the DOS creates an untenable position. As deeply rooted as governmental neocolonial projects are in the design, development, implementation, delivery, and funding of internationalization writing centre projects, decolonialism as part of internationalization should be viewed as a failure.

Language politics of TWCIs

It is possible that the language politics in which TWCIs tread are of most explicit concern for neocolonial critics. Lape (2020) asserts that the language politics of TWCIs "should give writing center professionals pause" (p. 21), especially given that the majority of writing centres in countries where English is not an official language offer support for only for English academic writing (EAP) (Lape, 2019, p. 10). The hegemony of English monolingualism "works to colonize everything" (Naydan as cited in Lape, 2020, p. 21), operating as a tool of the cognitive empire because of the extent to which language is "itself constitutive of knowledge" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 46) and loaded with the values and ideologies of the centre.

EAP-focused writing centres, in particular, must contend with the role that language supremacy plays in globalization, which is explicitly evident in US foreign policy. While students and scholars globally demand instruction in English in order to participate in both a globalized economy and an academy dominated by English—"the universal language of the intellect in the contemporary world" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 41)—writing centre professionals must consider how to respond without contributing to colonizing forces at work. wa Thiong'o

(1993) explains why this is particularly difficult in the context of oppressor-oppressed dynamics:

> When nations meet on terms of independence and equality, they tend to stress the need for communication in language of the other. They choose the language of the other merely to ease communication in their dealings with one another. But when they meet as oppressor and oppressed, as for instance under imperialism, then their languages cannot experience a genuinely democratic encounter. The oppressor nation uses language as a means of entrenching itself in the oppressed nation. (p. 31)

This is not to say that EAP TWCIs are not well-intentioned by those in the Global North whose intentions may be altruistic or even conducted on the premise of social justice. It may seem that there is an implicit generosity and a kind of equity-building behind giving the gift of access to the economic systems of the colonial centre. This kind of ethos of empathy is deeply colonial. As Lape (2020) reminds us, "English-centric writing centers in international locations do the important work of preparing students to participate as scholars in a monolingual, globalized world" (p. 21). However, even well-intentioned efforts of writing centre teacher-scholars to help "outsiders" gain access to the power centre through language and literacy instruction are, ultimately, colonial in nature. In the context of social science research, Coultas (2022) points out that "focus on the pain of marginalized groups acts in service of constructing a need for [colonial] intervention" (p. 415). Indeed, Mignolo (2007) instructs that coloniality is evident in the "politics of knowledge, even when good intentions [can] be found in their content" (p. 463).

Of the ethos of good intentions, empathy, and succor of the writing centre, García (2024) writes,

> [t]he shadow of the settler remains in the buildings of democracy, education, the disciplines, and the working parts or devises of the university such as the WC—the pale

ghost walks the hallways of democracy, the pages of the archive of ghosts disciplines

hitch themselves to, the WCs that welcome without welcoming. (p. 36)

Altruistic EAP TWCIs serve to reify the colonial centre, to reinforce its base of power, and perpetuate its mythos. This is why state actors of the colonial centre, like the DOS and its ECA agents, who are invested in public diplomacy and soft power for the military and economic security of the US, are eager to fund the transnational English language and literacy projects of scholars who speak in social justice terms. While many scholars might use decolonial strategies within transnational EAP initiatives—e.g., code switching, translanguaging, and border thinking—they are not working within a decolonial initiative unless the ultimate goal shifts away from helping "outsiders" gain access to the colonial centre to altering the locus of power itself. North's (1986) "*idea of the writing center* is the *working part of the idea of the university*, which is the device of *the idea of the Americas*" (García, 2024, p. 24, emphasis the author's). The writing centre cannot be removed from its own continuing coloniality.

Lape (2020) asserts that "[i]t is time for writing center scholars to tackle the language politics of English-centric writing centers" (p. 33), and begins this work by asking: "To what extent do English-centric writing centers help the West dominate the intellectual community and at what cost? How can writing centers educate writers about and resist the linguicism that permeates contemporary life?" (pp. 32-33). These are crucial questions given that English language education has helped colonial powers use English "to yoke the world system under the leadership of the centre" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 40).

To demonstrate how closely English language education is tied to colonial efforts, Carnoy (1974) points to instructions provided by Charles Grant, an 18th-century Scot involved in colonial government and missionary work. Grant instructed the British colonial powers to strategically make English the language of government, justice, and the economy in the British colonies in India, such that it would become a necessity for social participation. Taking a cue

from strategies used by the Mogul Empire, he advocated for the establishment of free English-language schooling featuring native Hindu instructors trained in the English language:

> To introduce the language of the conquerors, seems to be an obvious means of assimilating a conquered people to them. The Mahomedans [sic] from the beginning of their power employed the Persian language in the affairs of government, and in the public departments. This practice aided them in maintaining their superiority, and enabled them, instead of depending blindly on native agents to look into the conduct and details of public business as well as to keep intelligible registers of the income and expenditure of the State. Natives readily learnt the language of Government, finding that it was necessary in every concern of Revenue and Justice; they next became teachers of it; and in all the provinces over which the Mogul Empire extended, it is still understood and taught by numbers of Hindoos. It would have been in our interest to have followed their example. (qtd. from Nurullah & Naik, *History of Education in India*, 1951, p. 72; emphasis and citation in Carnoy, p. 97)

This colonial history underscores the reality that the teaching of English as a foreign language will never take place outside of a colonial context regardless of how normalized or necessary it becomes within contexts of internationalization. It is also notable to recognize the long history of recruiting instructors of English from a local population as a neocolonial strategy of educating local elites to police oppressive processes (wa Thiong'o, 1993).

Despite the broad neocolonial contexts of HE internationalization and EAP instruction in regions where English is not an official language, the US-authored scholarship on TWCIs does not seem to reference this global context or engage with growing decolonial theory (see Hotson & Bell, 2024). Many published reports of TWCIs in the last two decades (e.g., Broekhoff, 2017; McHarg, 2014; McHarg, 2015; Papay, 2002) describe what Canagarajah (2002) captures as "[a] cadre of teachers from the center [who] travel all over the world to practice their expertise gained at home with little consideration of the needs of local communities" (p. 73). TWCIs take

place within a politicized context and must proceed with explicit recognition that all space is political and all collaborations involve power dynamics. To expose these power dynamics, collaborators often need not look much farther than the funding agencies supporting their work, including the DOS and its ECA programs, as well as other agencies in the neocolonial capitalist system (e.g., the World Bank, Carnegie Mellon, Institute of International Education, and World Learning) and multinational corporations (e.g., Dow, Boeing, Gulf, and Walmart). Truly, to expose and refuse to participate in these dynamics, writing centre practitioners must be willing to "unsettl[e] innocence" (Tuck & Yang, 2014) and address the "willful ignorance" (Swan, 2017, p. 552) required by institutions that demand and reward service to the neocolonial state apparatus. As García writes, "The *idea of the WC* does not exist in a vacuum, as much as the writing center community (WCC) would like to believe it's discrete from it all, nor is it a monolithic institution" (2024, p. 4, emphasis the author's).

Appropriate Actions: Reflective Strategies for Ethical Engagement

At the risk of bruising friendships, I also ask that we think fully about theories of change that rely on raising awareness or raising visibility. This theory of change assumes that people are unaware of an injustice or issue or illness or social calamity—and that in making them more aware, we ready them to take appropriate action. It is a theory of pre-change. It assumes that people will generally do the right thing with the right information. It anticipates that the reason for inaction thus far is missing information, or lack of depth of understanding of the significance of need.

—Eve Tuck, *Biting the University that Feeds us*

In our conversations about the neocolonial context of international writing centre work with scholars at conferences like the NWCA/IWCA's over the last few years, we have repeatedly been asked by US and Canadian-based attendees for advice about appropriate action. Our author team comes to this request with different and nuanced positionalities: two of us, Stevie

and Brian, are Anglo White Canadian, while one author, Marci, is Black/Caribbean Canadian. What follows will be our varied thoughts as viewed through the lenses of our racial positioning.

Stevie and Brian understand our work as white settler scholars to be necessarily co-conspiratorial based on listening and learning from individuals with lived experiences in white settler-colonial ideologies and systems. As white Canadians, we recognize that decolonial work is not initiated in the centre by settler-colonizers, nor can it be fully conceptualized from within the white systems and perspectives we embody.

As a white, male settler, I [Brian] lay no claim to any understanding of the effects of colonialism. I cannot speak for the experience of the colonized. My ancestors' settled on land taken from the Cree and Métis peoples in what is now Manitoba, stolen land made available by the racist and genocidal Indian Act, 1876 (See Palmater, 2023). I continue to live on unceded land that belongs to the Mi'kmaq people, in a province where slavery continued until 1834 (See Whitfield, 2016), where Indigenous people and African Nova Scotians still have not been allow-ed justice or given compensation. It is my task to implicate myself in my own settler history and its continuing repercussions, as well as to speak to the injustices built into and perpet-uated by settler cultures, in the work of allyship described by Neisha-Anne Green as an "accomplice" (2018).

Stevie's interest in this work has developed over the last two decades through sustained engagement with scholarship centering decoloniality, guided by a commitment to under-standing and living out its principles. This scholarly journey has shaped a personal and professional ethic of accountability leveraging her institutional positions as a tenured scholar, which affords a degree of protection and visibility that can be both a privilege and a responsibility. Speaking out against colonial systems can subject scholars to increased scrutiny, marginalization, or exclusion, especially in spaces where whiteness is centered and protected. Yet, white bodies are often seen as more legitimate or less threatening when voicing critiques of colonialism. This dynamic allows both Brian and Stevie to do this work without

bearing the emotional labour or fatigue that comes from being continually victimized by the very systems we critique. That privilege must be named and leveraged in service of solidarity.

One irony of this conversation about how to work as co-conspiratorial decolonizing agents through TWCIs is that centre scholars equipped with Western pedagogies and English language are often in high demand by periphery communities looking for access to economic security promised by prestigious American HE and Anglicization (e.g., Bryant et al., 2020; MSU Writing Center Expands…, 2022). Consent to one's own colonization is manufactured by the economic and geo-political realities of the neocolonial world order and the degree of alienation from Indigenous cultures that has taken place. African scholar, Ugwu (2019), explains that this alienation creates a sort of "inferiority complex" that drives "a loss of contact with or unconscious rejection of one's own reality in preference to the other people's reality" (p. 102). Ugwu argues that this inferiority complex is "the most difficult obstacle in dealing with the process of decolonization," which is a "protracted process" of "mental emancipation" and "self-discovery culminating in reawakening and reorientation" (p. 102). At the outset of decolonization is a "conscious decision" to "uncover, uproot and remove" colonial beliefs (p. 102). Marci feels that this work aligns with her own positionality and discusses it as follows: As a BIPOC woman, I (Marci) understand my own lived experience as well as numerous theorizations of the impacts of existing outside of the locus of racial power. Yet I continually listen to people from various cultures to understand how colonialism impacts them in their own unique contexts, considering how those intersect with or diverge from experiences and theorizations that resonate with me and thus what I can learn as I listen. The recommendations below offer appropriate actions that align with my lived experiences regarding what approaches can open doors for the explicit living out of decolonial and antiracist commitments in writing spaces. They also are designed to be used by all scholars (regardless of race); colonial approaches are often perpetrated by Whites scholars/systems, but non-White scholars under pressure from colonial systems of reward and punishment can certainly reinforce these

systems too. Nonetheless, minoritized people resisting the White Habitus (as Inoue styles it) too often do not have support from White colleagues. I face a continual tension between preserving my own energy and well-being and being explicit when other scholars are missing effective inclusion in their approach: this work is both energizing and exhausting. White allyship is critical in moving this work forward.

All the authors of this article believe that the most impactful co-conspiratorial decolonial work of settler-colonial writing centre scholars in the Global North involves dismantling systems, such as those embedded in academic publishing and scholarly knowledge production, in order to make decolonization a more viable option. However, where TWCIs are themselves pursued, appropriate actions for respectfully engaging in decolonial ways are necessary. When considering appropriate actions for TWCIs, we prioritize the voices of periphery scholars as an act of "political listening" through which we focus on the circulation of discourses rather than the presumptuous domination of space (Swan, 2017, p. 553). We recommend, however, that our readers go beyond what we are able to present here to seek out and engage with this literature in its original context as an act of accountability before getting involved in—or moving deeper within—the complex geopolitical entanglements of international writing centre work.

Appropriate Action: Engaged Awareness

Much has been written about approaches to transcultural work within academic and outside of academic contexts. de Sousa Santos (2008) offers "procedural orientations and transcultural imperatives," which he contends are fundamental and "must be accepted by all social groups interested in intercultural dialogues" (p. 25). Three of these imperatives describe shifts in how one understands one's own and other cultures:

a. "From completeness to incompleteness" (p. 26) involving a growing sense that one's culture has limited explanatory powers and a "diffuse sensibility" about "other possible cultures and their answers" leading to an "impulse for intercultural dialogue

and diatopical hermeneutics" (p. 26) that only deepens with intercultural dialogue. This shift in orientation works to counter the Western impulse to universalize European knowledge.

b. "From narrow to wide versions of cultures" that feature deepening understandings of the "rich internal variety" and "different versions" of a given culture (p. 26).

c. "From equality or difference to equality and difference" (p. 28) as partners come to value not only everyone's right to be equal as well as their right to be different "whenever equality jeopardizes their identity" (p. 28).

The other two imperatives call upon especially Western participants in intercultural dialogue to check their hubris in shifts from unilateral approaches to dialogue to mutual if not deferential approaches (especially in light of the manufactured consent of less powerful partners):

d. "From unilateral to shared times" in a shift away from unilaterally initiating dialogue only when it suits the West to participate in it. Rather, dialogue should take place when all parties desire it.

e. "From unilaterally imposed to mutually chosen partners and issues" (p. 27) in a movement where Western partners do not (and do not seek to) control the terms of and issues at the centre of intercultural dialogue.

These imperatives are foundational if TWCIs are to avoid, as much as possible, perpetuating the harms of neocolonialism. Investing in the work involved in making these movements possible should be done before an international initiative is conceived and certainly before its initiation or funding. This work involves study of decolonial and neocolonial theory and practice in education as well as learning about cultures that are not one's own. In this endeavour, writing centre scholars can draw on the work of Pohlhaus (2017) who "identifies this kind of reflexive accountability as a feminist responsibility, in that when working across borders from a position of epistemic dominance, we need to recognize that our 'knowing' has

material effects and can contribute to discursive colonizations" (In Coultas, 2022, p. 420). In alignment with this awareness, Coultas reflects on how we can resist violence towards knowledges that are not our own:

> This responsibility in regard to not being "epistemically violent" (Spivak, 1994) or "epistemically extractive" (Readsura Decolonial Issue Editorial Collective, 2022), involves being cautious in both how we apply Western theorizing across borders, but also in how we engage with cosmologies, ontologies, and epistemologies that are different from our own, making sure to not appropriate or attempt to absorb alterity into our own frames of reference. (2022, p. 421)

This caution and posture of questioning runs counter to Western epistemologies, which tend to dominate through extraction and integration, and may thus be deeply uncomfortable for some, but is vital if we are to address the reproduction of colonial values in writerly spaces. As Mignolo (2011) argues, a commitment to decoloniality by individuals within the colonial centre requires sustained "giving"—of effort and attentiveness to coloniality, its constructions of the Other, its "crooked rhetorics", its imperial consciousness, and its totalitarian bent. This posture is an integral part of the engaged awareness needed to resist decoloniality that is merely performative. In essence, if you are surprised by the people, ideas, and cultures that you encounter during an international writing centre initiative, you are very likely acting irresponsibly when it comes to becoming a cog in the wheel of neocolonialism. This surprise is reported repeatedly in literature on TWCIs (see Hotson & Bell, 2024).

Appropriate Action: Building Equitable Partnerships

Decolonial TWCIs might rely on pragmatic principles or guidelines for working with partners. This does not seem to have been theorized for writing centre initiatives specifically, but it has been explored in the context of international education more broadly. We look to Shultz (2013) whose critical framing of international education points to the value of a set of ethical guidelines developed by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC). These

guidelines or "partnership principles" foreground reciprocity in internationalizing HE. They were developed collaboratively by Canadian academics and academics from "the Global South" with experience being involved in international partnerships. According to the CCIC, decolonial partnerships should:

- Be vehicles for long-term accompaniment that support the right of people to determine and carry out activities that further their own development options, through their civil society organizations.

- Advance and exemplify the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, social justice, equitable distribution of global wealth, and environmental sustainability.

- Be built on shared visions and goals for society, which imply mutual support and solidarity beyond the implementation of specific programs and projects.

- Be formed in a spirit of inclusiveness that respects and promotes the value of diversity.

- Embody equity, acknowledging that inequalities often exist as a result of power dynamics, especially in funding relations, partners should strive for equitable partnership.

- Dynamic relationships build on respect and honesty, in which partners strive for better understanding and appreciation of one another.

- Be transparent and accountable to one another.

- Respect one another's autonomy and constraints and strive to foster a climate of mutual trust in all their partnership activities.

- Endeavour to learn from one another and facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

Shultz (2013) describes these principles as "enactments of justice" (p. 81) and emphasizes the courage that may be required to adhere to/uphold them as they can "disrupt" or "refuse" (Tuck & Yang, 2014) institutionalized norms and cause conflict. The CCIC's partnership principles, and

other resources like it, need to result in action in order to create sustained change in writing facilitation spaces. The extent to which they are having this desired impact across Canadian institutions of HE varies, and thus they remain ideals rather than achievements.

Appropriate Action: Refusals as Anti-colonial Praxis

Coultas (2022) and Tuck and Yang (2012) also provide guidelines for scholars who wish to live out their commitments to anti-colonial praxis of resistance that may be relevant for writing instructors:

- Refuse to create projects that are "designed as interventions"—those projects which are "defined through 'entries,' 'exits,' and preordained 'outcomes'" and where "'fidelity to design' and the maintenance of intervention borders are often prioritized above and beyond more explorative learning and investments in the cultivation of relationships that are essential for collaborative and deeply contextual work" (Coultas, 2022. pp. 425-426).
- Refuse to "'perform' white saviourism'."[3] Be particularly vigilant when considering researcher development programmes and grants which "prioritize individualistic leadership skills," as these often lead to such performances. Acknowledge the tensions between this refusal and the expectations of "limitations" placed by the neoliberal academy (Coultas, 2022, p. 426).

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[3] White Saviourism "is simultaneously a state of mind and a concrete unequal power structure between the Global North and the Global South. White Saviorism is founded on the benevolence of Whiteness, which elevates people of White European descent despite their role in exploiting and dispossessing people from the Global South. Their self-perception as more capable, more intelligent and thus more 'developed' directs their actions in communities of the Global South. The helping imperative often comes in contradiction with a system of capitalist exploitation and dispossession...The literature defines six different types of White Saviors": "Proselytizer White Savior," "Cultural White Savior," "Sojourner White Savior," "Remainer White Savior," and "Ideational White Savior." (Khan, Dickson, & Sondarjee, 2023, n.p.)

- Refuse to "disengage" as a white settler scholar but rather choose to refuse in ways that mobilize "careful and thoughtful engagements with the already 'elsewhere' and 'otherwise'," drawing on "our connections with systems of power in service of the decolonizing strategies borne out of these alternative modes of existence. Even when we absent ourselves, we must take care to ensure that this act is about creating space for marginalized Others, and not just disengagement related to our shying away from discomfort" (Coultas, 2022, p. 425).

- Refuse "settler futurity" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35)—a concept that represents the colonial desire to maintain dominance and continuity of settler institutions—and abandon "the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples" (p. 36). Instead, work towards "Indigenous futurity," which centres decolonial accountability and the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty. While these terms originate in the context of North American settler colonialism, they serve as powerful metaphors for broader global dynamics. In transregional writing centre initiatives, this refusal invites collaborators to reject colonial timelines and goals, and instead prioritize futures defined by local communities, epistemologies, and aspirations.

- Refuse to "do 'that' research or take 'that' job," as Rutazibwa (2019) advises (in Coultas, 2022, p. 418).

These refusals encourage disruptions of norms, which are necessary for decolonial endeavours. They take courage and the privileges of job security and, perhaps, whiteness to enact. Refusals of funding, in particular, are challenging, especially for precariously positioned writing centre faculty and staff as well as for BIPOC scholars with access to fewer options and opportunities. When possible, however, this refusal is significant and represents a fundamental rejection of neocolonialism. Accepting funding from institutions of neocolonialism, such as the U.S. Department of State, is problematic, as is any funding with ties to any programs with neocolonial intent that has the potential to oblige TWCIs to uphold the neocolonial

world order and the cognitive empire. Programs such as the Fulbright program in the US have intentionally been given a veneer of prestige and are considered a significant achievement for individuals and institutions in HE. Other neocolonial funders that often collaborate with neo-colonial governments projects are the International Monetary Fund (See Jenkner & Hillman, 2004) and the World Bank (Education, n.d.), as well as those previously mentioned. As García writes, "If WCS are going to undertake a decolonial option, it is imperative WC scholars know they cannot be anticolonial without the epistemological, political, and ethical commitments of being anti-epistemic racism and anticapitalism" (2024, p. 80).

It is unclear to what extent decolonial goals can be achieved within the scope of neocolonial funding opportunities through forms of subversion from within. Scholars must critically reflect on how the funder influences the scope, objectives, and goals of the TWCI, looking specifically at the activities the funder is willing to support. When funding from neo-colonial agents has been accepted, scholars should account for this and the full limitations it presents for decolonial project goals in any scholarly publications that result.

Appropriate Action: Delinking from Centre Power

Mignolo's (2007, 2011) explanations of the decolonial option via *delinking*[4] and geopolitics helps us to understand that no amount of Western generosity or "decolonial" tactics within the colonial frame are sufficient to avoid contributing to "the colonial wound" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161) resulting from the centre's crooked rhetorics of "underdeveloped" classifications and

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[4] Egyptian sociologist and Marxist, Samir Amin (1987), who coined the term, *delinking*, defines it as, "[t]he development of countries at the periphery of the world-capitalist system" that pass "through a necessary 'break' from this world capitalist system—a 'delinking'—that is to say, the refusal to submit national-development strategy to the imperatives of "globalization" (pp. 435-436). Mignolo (2007) comments, "Samir Amin's version [of delinking] is formulated at the level of economic and political (state) delinking. Without an epistemic delinking it is difficult to really delink from the modern notion of Totality…Thus, his delinking was proposed at the level of the *content* rather than *at the epistemic level that sustain the logic of coloniality*" (p. 502, note 10, emphasis is the author's).

"racialized" constructions. The impulse to cross borders with American writing centre institutions, pedagogy, and American EAP within US-based writing centre institutions and their pedagogies is usually premised on the manufactured consent of "Others" located outside the colonial centre of power. Consent is manufactured because of the illusion of choice that results from the dominance of American English as the lingua franca of global business, politics, and economics, as well as the American- and Euro-centric locus of epistemic power. There is little to no choice here, as Mignolo points out:

> What could a person who was not born speaking one of the privileged languages and who was not educated in privileged institutions do? Either accept his or her inferiority or make an effort to demonstrate that he or she was a human being equal to those who placed him or her as second-class. That is, two of the choices are to accept the humiliation of being inferior to those who decided that you are inferior, or to assimilate. And to assimilate means that you accept your inferiority and resign yourself to play the game that is not yours but that has been imposed upon you. Or, the third option, border thinking and border epistemology [disobedient decolonization]. (2011, p. 275)

Mignolo contends that decolonial initiatives are marked by "changing the terms of the conversation and not only its content" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 275)—to "delink from colonial matrix of power and the logic of coloniality" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 454)—by refusing to "play a game whose rules you cannot control, and there is no room to complain" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 277) and rather to think and work "in exteriority" (p. 282) meaning outside of the locus of colonial power. This "disobedient decolonization" resists decolonization efforts that are performative, without addressing the root systems that nourish colonial powers at the expense of all others. These initiatives involve what Mignolo calls decolonial "ways of being, thinking and doing" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 282) such as "epistemic disobedience," "delinking," and "border thinking," which have the power to shift the terms of reference in ways that affirm the embodied, incomplete, and geographical situatedness of all knowledge.

Mignolo describes three interrelated decolonial ways of being and acting as a "third option" to acceptance of prescribed inferiority or assimilation within the colonial centre: delinking, border thinking/epistemology, and epistemic disobedience. Delinking is required for the other two and involves rejecting or breaking from "the magic of the Western idea of modernity, ideals of humanity and promises of economic growth and financial prosperity" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161). Delinking involves an active rejection of the crooked rhetorics of "the colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 282) as well as from the universalizing claims of colonial modernity in an acceptance of incomplete and situated "geo- and body politics of knowledge" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 178). This rejection is a form of epistemic disobedience that allows for border thinking, "thinking in exteriority, in the spaces and times that the self-narrative of modernity invented as its outside to legitimize its own logic of coloniality" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 282). Border thinking encourages building alternative knowledges that draw on diverse cultural, Indigenous, and non-Western epistemologies. It is up to writing centre scholars and practitioners, who

> must determine for themselves and at the same time see themselves partaking in a much larger conversation of (epistemic) delinking, epistemological decolonization, epistemic reconstitution, and pluriversality if they are to do 'decolonial' work beyond a proper name or heading. (García, 2024, p. 31)

Appropriate Action: Disobedient Thinking and Epistemic Resistance

As part of a broader framework of appropriate actions, disobedient thinking offers a critical strategy for resisting the epistemic dominance of the colonial centre. Drawing on Mignolo's concepts of delinking, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience, this approach calls on writing centre scholars to actively challenge the normative assumptions embedded in knowledge production and institutional structures. Rather than merely reforming existing systems, disobedient thinking invites a reorientation toward alternative epistemologies and the creation of third spaces where marginalized voices and knowledges are not only included

but centered. This section outlines how disobedient thinking can function as a sustained relational, and transformative practice within TWCIs.

Disobedient thinking is dependent upon the establishment of spaces where marginalized voices and knowledge systems can be restored, respected, shared, and valued. Enacting delinking and epistemic disobedience is a complex and ongoing process that requires continuous learning, unlearning, and active commitment to challenging entrenched power structures in the realm of knowledge production and institutional authority. The following actions support the enactment of disobedient thinking within TWCIs:

- Cultivate epistemic reflexivity by continuously examining the power dynamics embedded in knowledge production, including one's own positionality, biases, and institutional affiliations.

- Interrogate institutional imperatives, such as the drive to internationalize, and advocate for policy shifts that prioritize decolonial values over global prestige or market competitiveness.

- Diversify curricula and pedagogies to include and validate multiple epistemologies, especially those rooted in Indigenous, local, and non-Western traditions.

- Stand in solidarity with decolonial movements, using institutional privilege to amplify their goals and resist co-optation by dominant systems.

- Support epistemic sovereignty by affirming the right of all communities to their own educational and intellectual futures, free from colonial imposition.

- Dedicate resources and platforms to the investigation and articulation of alternative perspectives and models

Appropriate Action: Non-Performative Decolonization

Decolonial TWCIs should endeavour on the one hand to undo/open systems that affirm colonial inferiority complexes, such as academic publishing standards, and on the other hand to support decolonial impulses/desires of periphery communities. As Fanon (1963) explained, de-

colonizing the mind must occur first—unseating colonial regimes cannot happen without this work. In response to this, Tuck and Yang (2012) reflect on the "settler move to innocence" via "focus[ing] on decolonizing the mind, or the cultivation of critical consciousness, as if it were the sole activity of decolonization; to allow conscientization to stand in for the more uncomfortable task of relinquishing stolen land" (p. 19). "Curricula, literature, and pedagogy can be crafted to aid people in learning to see settler colonialism" and to produce necessary "critiques" of colonialism and to thus dispute the subordination of knowledges from diverse communities to bolster the task of eschewing "domination and exploitation" (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 19). Such critiques are immensely valuable, "so powerful" that it might feel like actual change occurs (p. 19). Yet all too often, these approaches unwittingly encourage individuals to perform decoloniality without taking further action to dismantle the colonial system at the root. We must be careful to avoid allowing the elation of such critiques to "waylay decolonization" (2012, p. 19). Therefore, we offer a list of approaches and actions that are needed for actionable decolonization to occur:

- In the spirit of the combined reflections of Fanon (1963) as well as Tuck and Yang (2012), we recommend that decolonizing begin in the mind but not stop there—the tricky labour of dismantling colonialism must be undertaken in tangible ways.

- We suggest settler scholars be willing to converse with scholars of diverse communities regarding whether well-intentioned efforts to unseat colonialism are doing enough, or if further action is recommended. In this way, we honour the lived experiences of those most impacted by the legacies of colonialism and seek to see our actions from their perspective, not just our own.

- We affirm that "decolonization is not a metonym for social justice" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 21) and call for collective and individual resistance to reductive approaches to decolonialization. Decolonization "is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and

alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes" (p. 21).

Appropriate Action: Accountability

One clear collegial process that can be used to ensure that these actions are integrated in a tangible way throughout various planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of TWCIs is creating working groups. These groups are one way to live out commitments to "engaged awareness;" through them, people developing TWCIs effectively push the issue of the need to resist colonial imperatives in the planning, funding, and evaluation of these initiatives; thus, they acknowledge the inevitable incompleteness in each person's knowledge of various cultures. By welcoming diverse voices into the process intentionally, project collaborators can hold space for the uncomfortable but necessary conversations around how to create TWCIs that are nourishing to—as well as valued and respected by—all collaborators. These working groups should include individuals who can speak to diverse experiences, especially non-settler experiences, among each collaborator group in response to the project's development, design, implementation, and any post-project follow-up and writing. It is important that these groups become sites of diversity and accountability, not tokenism, with an ethic of active listening. Having at least three to five members who are not settler scholars reduces the chance of putting an onerous burden on only one or two such scholars to speak for their groups; truly, having people from a variety of backgrounds (BIPOC, regional representatives, et cetera) increases the sense of how a particular initiative may impact individuals from non-settler communities by providing a sense of both the similarities and differences between these communities.

Over time, retaining the notes of the meetings for these various working groups can create a repository of knowledge within organizations committed to decolonization of TWCIs in order to create sustained change as more individuals of diverse backgrounds join these working groups to share their insights. This also allows TWCIs to undertake course corrections

as the recommendations of past working groups and their results when implemented can be considered by a future working group; whether changes should be made can be addressed as well as rationales provided for future recommended changes. Ultimately, regular creation and use of working group insights when planning, implementing, and evaluating the work of TWCIs can play a key role in implementing truly decolonial work that strives to avoid harm.

Conclusions

We realize that the strategies we have presented has the potential to generate further considerations beyond what we have shared here; we hope we have offered thought—and action—points that can play a key role in helping people to earnestly engage in the work of reconsidering the ways of planning, funding, and evaluating TWCIs through a decolonial lens and seek to change the future of TWCIs. Decolonial approaches require fundamental reframing of TWCIs away from US writing scholars, instructors, and program administrators as benefactors who offer funding, expertise, and social capital for Americanization, Anglicization and the US government's cognitive empire building. This work requires practices of engaged awareness in advance of and throughout a TWCI, when all participants should be actively involved in the processes of developing situational, organizational, social, and self-awareness. These processes involve committed mindfulness and thoughtfulness that lay the foundation for understanding the "incompleteness" of one's culture and the rich internal varieties of other cultures (de Sousa Santos, 2008). This work also calls on TWCI collaborators to engage in disobedient goal setting; when formulating a TWCI (and setting evaluative measures), all participants should account for the ways project goals may perpetuate a dominant colonial world order and dare to disobey or "refuse" (Tuck & Yang, 2012) the pressures (by institutions, funding agencies, and globalization itself) to conform by leveraging the privileges of collaborators in powerful positions to be disruptive of neocolonial systems (Shultz, 2013) and find ways to delink and "work in exteriority" (Mignolo, 2011).

Self-accountability

Decolonial approaches also require that TWCI collaborators hold themselves accountable. All participants involved in TWCIs should be ready to take responsibility for their actions and their impacts, intentional or not, at any point throughout the initiative. At the outset of a TWCI, collaborators should outline expectations and develop collaborative processes for account- ability. Clear collegial processes such as working groups and regular project check-ins and opportunities for pivoting should be established to facilitate accountability in the form of recognizing and taking responsibility for wrongdoing or harm caused. Through what is called "relational accountability" in decolonial and Indigenous literatures, participants in TWCIs can heed the call "to be responsible and locate [them]selves (and [their] theories) within the political and violent histories which continue to structure sites of oppression in our societies today" (Coultas, 2022, p. 427).

Ultimately, what we see here is that decolonial work is messy; it does not simply involve the integration of decolonial pedagogies (e.g., code switching, translanguaging, border think- ing), but also potentially refusals of funding opportunities (and the prestige and possibilities for promotion that come along with it) when that funding forces a neocolonial frame on TWCIs. As deeply rooted as governmental neocolonial projects are in the design, development, implementation, delivery, and funding of internationalization writing centre projects, decolon- ialism as part of internationalization should be viewed as antithetical. The internationalization of US-style writing centre theory, practice, and institutions does not occur outside of colonial processes, as much as it might seem generous to help the "Other" gain entry into the hege- monic centre and the power it promises to offer.

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It is important to recognize that an official mandate of those working for the ECA is to deter- mine and develop "the most effective use of English language programs and services to meet" the mission goal of the DOS, and "[e]valuating and reporting to Washington on the English language programs in the geographic area of responsibility and, when appropriate, recom-

mending new programs" (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). The acknowledgement of this cognitive-imperialist reality is critical to limit the reproduction of neocolonial harms. The institution of TWCI's often is, in fact, a global bait-and-switch, both for those US citizens who naively assume that the US government has good intentions and also for those receiving the help, believing that there are no caveats or conditions for the new writing centres, translation services, literacy brokering, and American language programs. Loosening TWCIs from funding that enforces neocolonial systems paired with investments in establishing practices of engaged awareness and accountability may offer authentic pathways towards decolonizing TWCIs. If we want to answer back to the abuses of TWCIs by striving to negotiate a better future through more radically inclusive planning, implementation, and evaluation of these programs, this messy thought-work is vital.

We also acknowledge the ways in which decolonizing TWCIs is messy precisely because the project may take longer. Often, efficiency is the main metric considered when seeking to change entrenched modus operandi from what is currently done to some new approach. We urge scholars to consider the value of any of these suggested changes that are not already in use primarily in terms of the outcome desired—the unseating of colonial approaches to TWCIs and the transformation to TWCIs that are considered nourishing to the community at all levels in the partner region—rather than only seeking the speediest way to do TWCI work. Thus, despite the overwhelming ease (comparatively speaking) of simply creating TWCIs as they have been in the past, we urge you to choose inconvenience, to lean away from ease, to choose more voices, and to choose refusals where co-option into neocolonialism and cognitive empire building is offered in exchange for prestige, advancement, and financial rewards. Ultimately, the future of TWCIs and their legacies depend upon our individual and collective choices to embrace disruptive disobedience through refusal, resistance, and change.

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