

To Cite: Lin, A. M. Y. (2012). Towards transformation of knowledge and subjectivity in curriculum inquiry: Insights from Chen Kuan-Hsing's "Asia as method". *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42 (1), 153-178.

Towards Transformation of Knowledge and Subjectivity in Curriculum Inquiry: Insights from Chen Kuan-Hsing's 'Asia as Method'

ANGEL M. Y. LIN

Faculty of Education

The University of Hong Kong

Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Abstract

Chen's book, *Asia as Method* (Duke University Press, 2010), and his theorization on topics of de-imperialization, de-colonization, de-cold war, as well as on foregrounding epistemologies and frames of reference situated in the diverse contexts in Asia have contributed to empowering scholars and researchers situated not only in Taiwan, but also in many parts of the world. His critical cultural studies project in linking up scholars both inside and outside of Asia and in putting forward counter-discourses to the binary 'the West and the rest' knowledge structures and knowledge production practices has important implications for critical curriculum and education work. My review article will focus on the implications of his notion of 'Asia as Method' and his 'strategy of critical syncretism' in exploring and designing critical curriculum and education inquiry that seeks to transform deep-rooted colonial, imperialist, and cold war subjectivities. These subjectivities are part of the cultural and psychic aftermath of various imperialist, colonial, and cold war histories, the impact of which is still with us today.

Towards Transformation of Knowledge and Subjectivity in Curriculum Inquiry: Insights from Chen Kuan-Hsing's 'Asia as Method'

ANGEL M. Y. LIN

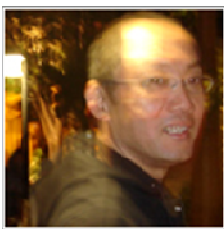
Faculty of Education
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

... rather than equivocating about or suppressing the emotional conditions of the subject, I have found that critical cultural studies works best when it brings sentiment to the forefront, making it a source of thought and analysis. (Chen, 2010, p. xvi)

My primary concern is with the social world, and I engage with academic discourse only when this kind of explanatory machinery is necessary to understand real conditions. (p. xi)

[I] put forward 'Asia as Method' as a critical proposition to transform the existing knowledge structure and at the same time to transform ourselves. (p. 212)

INTRODUCTION



Chen Kuan Hsing was born in Taiwan in 1957. Although he was a Taiwanese-born national, as his family had moved to Taiwan from mainland China, he grew up in Taiwan as a 'wai-sheng-ren' (literally meaning: 'outside-province-person') a term used in Taiwan to refer to Mandarin-Chinese speaking people who moved to Taiwan from mainland China after the 1949 communist takeover of China, in contrast to 'ben-sheng-ren' (literally meaning: this-province-person)--local Taiwanese people whose ancestors had moved to Taiwan from China many centuries ago. With this socially constructed 'foreignness' or 'outside-ness' in his own background and

growing up intermingling with other Taiwanese, Japanese, Koreans, and other 'foreigners,' he is well-positioned to understand the macro- and micro-politics of inter- and intra-ethnic and cultural diversity and identity issues.

Chen studied for his BA in Mass Communication at the famous private Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan from 1975-79. Two years later he went to the U.S. and studied for his MA in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa. In 1984 he was CICⁱ Scholar at the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He then studied for his PhD at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa from 1984-88. During 1988-89, he worked as Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, Queens College, City University of New York, before returning in late 1989 to Taiwan to teach in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Tsing Hua University, where he became a full Professor in 1995. He stayed in Tsing Hua until 2008, when he moved to the Graduate Institute for Social Research and Cultural Studies, Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. While Chen has spent most of his academic teaching years in Taiwan, he has held visiting professorships at universities in Korea, China, Japan, Singapore and the U.S. In 2011, he was on sabbatical in Shanghai, China.

Chen has published extensively both in Chinese and English, and many of his works have been translated into Japanese and Korean and circulated widely among intellectuals in Japan and Korea. He has published mainly on topics of critical cultural studies. The central themes of his research and publications include: de-colonization, de-cold-war, and de-imperialization. As a critical cultural studies scholar trained in Western postmodernist critical theory, he is, however, centrally concerned with the critical educational project of developing and raising the status of local knowledges, epistemologies, methodologies, and works published in local languages addressing the specific needs and issues of local communities in different parts of Asia. He has been keenly aware of the recent incursion of the global university management discourses and practices that privilege publications in English-language indexed journals, and has thus started the project of linking up scholars to critically analyze and resist this incursion in universities in different Asian societies (Chen, 2009). It is in this context that I have become associated with Chen's works and circle of scholars and have started taking a serious interest in drawing on Chen's works in de-colonizing curriculum and educational inquiry and practice. As Chen is first and foremost a critical cultural studies scholar, it is not his major objective to personally engage in projects that decolonize curriculum inquiry

and educational practice in Asia. However, in my view, his critical theories and insights regarding de-colonization, de-cold war, and de-imperialization will have a significant impact in critical curriculum and education work both in and beyond Asia. For instance, there is an urgent need for research on the design of pedagogical and curricular strategies for facilitating the reconstitution of imperialist and colonial cultural imaginariesⁱⁱ and subjectivities (e.g., one's sense of self, self-understanding, ways of seeing self and others, worldviews).

HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Born in the 1950s and growing up in Taiwan in the 1960s and 1970s, Chen can be said to belong to the generation of post-war baby-boomers who have benefited from the rapid economic development in one of the four East Asian 'dragon economies' (i.e., Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea). All four economies (along with Japan) have benefited from the US's cold-war economic policies towards these pro-West East Asian societies. Many of these societies have been split off from their mainland (or motherland) directly or indirectly as a result of Western political actions or influences. For instance, Hong Kong was a British colony since 1842 and was handed over to China in 1997; Singapore was split off and created as a new state in 1965 from Malaysia shortly after Malaysia won independence from colonial rule by Britain; South Korea was created and protected largely by the US as a stronghold against communist North Korea following the Korean war where both the US and China had direct participation; Taiwan was under the shadow protection of the US after the National Democratic Party was defeated by the Communist Party in mainland China and fled to the island of Taiwan in 1949. All four dragon economies have thus been groomed as Western allies in the cold war era (1950s-1990s) against the spread of communism in Asia. By allowing for massive exports of manufactured products from these economies into the US and the West in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., textiles and clothes, toys, electrical appliances, electronic products), these four dragon economies enjoyed steady economic growth during these two decades. One can say that young people growing up in these 'dragon' economies in the 70s and 80s have been given a taste of 'modernity' both in terms of material and economic conditions and liberal ideas. They have higher family income, better living and health conditions, greater educational opportunities, and, in general, have been more influenced by Western popular culture and Western ideas and practices in everyday life, compared with their parents' generation. Most of them have also learnt and mastered to varying degrees English, the language of Western modernity, in a school system which has been modeled on some form of modern school systems in the West.

Chen and young intellectuals of his generation, who have grown up during the 1960s and 70s, however, have the additional benefit of witnessing first-hand, and the opportunity of critically reflecting on, the dramatic transition of a poverty-stricken post-war society in the 50s and 60s to an economically booming city in the 70s and 80s. Chen is sandwiched, so to speak, between two generations (like the son of Dou-sang, a character in a Taiwanese movie reviewed in Chen's book; see next section), which are distinguished by not only temporal differences but also drastic changes taking place in the transition between a traditional society and a modernizing society. Those who were born a decade later (e.g., born in the 1960s and 70s, like myself) did not have the benefit of witnessing the rapid social and economic changes as vividly as those who were born in the 50s.

What impact does this historical, socioeconomic and political context have on Chen's work? Chen is constantly referring in his works to the importance of considering the historical and geopolitical specificities of different Asian societies. He shares a deep interest with other Asian intellectuals in learning about these different specificities and experiences to multiply our frames of reference and our objects of identification.

While Chen has grown up and received his first university degree in Taiwan, Chen did his M.A. and Ph.D. in the U.S. He studied and worked on postmodernist critical theory for his doctoral studies in the University of Iowa and taught cultural studies from 1988-89 in the City University of New York. In 1996 he co-edited with the famous British critical cultural studies scholar, David Morley, what has now become a classical reader in cultural studies-- *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*. Chen is thus well positioned to be both local and international at the same time, or better still, to overcome the local-international dichotomy.

Chen's work, both textual and political, has thus been characterized by a constant urge to seek connections with other scholars and activists situated in other contexts both inside and outside of Asia and with other frames of reference and theoretical orientations, especially those coming from non-Western traditions, while at the same time not excluding those from the West. Chen himself mentions that his project is deeply indebted to "the critical traditions and works of Lu Xunⁱⁱⁱ, Chen Ying-zhen^{iv}, Frantz Fanon, Stuart Hall, Partha Chatterjee, and Mizoguchi Yuzo, among others who came out of the colonized world to honestly confront the limits of their times" (p. x). While Chen is cautious about nationalism, he is not fixated on negating nationalism or national identities. He explains:

My own attitude toward nationalism has thus changed over the years from pure negation to a conditional acceptance. As presented in the following chapters, nationalism is a common element of three even more fundamental problems: *colonialism, the structure of the world during the cold war, and the imperialist imaginary*. Corresponding to this entangled problematic are the often combined movements for *de-colonization, de-imperialization*, and what I call “*de-cold war*,” confronting the legacies and continuing tensions of the cold war. The mediating site for these forces and movements is the imaginary Asia. It would be wrong to consider these interwoven problems as theoretical abstractions. On the contrary, they exist in our bodies and minds, and the *related desires and psychic pain* that must be overcome are palpable parts of our everyday lives. In short, they are matters of subjectivity, and it is on the plane of subjectivity that we must reopen the past for reflection in order to make moments of liberation possible in the future. (p. x; italics added)

The central problems of Chen’s critical analysis thus include colonialism, cold war, imperialism. The critical projects that drive him are de-colonization, de-cold war, and de-imperialization. In the next section, I discuss the major work that addresses these problems and projects. In the last two sections, I discuss the significance and implications of his work for scholars in critical education studies and critical pedagogy, especially with reference to English language education in Asian societies.

MAJOR WORK

Chen’s latest book, *Asia as Method: Towards De-Imperialization*, published in English in 2010, was actually first published in Chinese in 2006 with a somewhat different title: *Towards De-Imperialization: Asia as Method*. For the English version, he wanted ‘Towards De-Imperialization’ as the main title, but the publisher thought highlighting ‘Asia as Method’ would attract wider attention (personal communication, 3 June 2011). What does ‘Asia as Method’ mean? Chen was worried that others might mistakenly credit him as the first person to come up with this notion. In fact, it is a Japanese scholar, Takeuchi Yoshimi, who first proposed this concept: This I have called ‘Asia as method,’ and yet it is impossible to definitely state what this might mean. (Takeuchi Yoshimi, ‘Asia as Method,’ quoted. in Chen, 2010, p. 211).

‘Asia as Method’ indeed is an intriguing title. Chen explains:

... this chapter puts forward ‘Asia as method’ as a critical proposition to transform the existing knowledge structure and at the same time to transform

ourselves. The potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other's points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt. On this basis, the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices of Asia may be mobilized to provide alternative horizons and perspectives. This method of engagement, I believe, has the potential to advance a different understanding of world history. (Chen, 2010, p. 212)

'Asia as Method' is the last chapter in his book. The book consists of five chapters with the following titles:

Chapter 1: The Imperialist Eye: The Discourse of the Southward Advance and the Subimperial Imaginary

Chapter 2: De-colonization: A Geocolonial Historical Materialism

Chapter 3: De-Cold War: The Im/possibility of 'Great Reconciliation'

Chapter 4: De-imperialization: Club 51 and the Imperialist Assumption of Democracy

Chapter 5: Asia as Method: Overcoming the Present Conditions of Knowledge Production.

Why is the discussion on 'Asia as Method' put at the end of the treatise? To Chen, most Asian societies are still suffering from the aftermath of colonization at the cultural and subjectivity level. For instance, many people in Asian societies still have the deep-rooted mindset of looking to the West and the often unconscious desire to emulate the West in all pursuits including knowledge production and the seeking of 'modernity'. This modernity, as a result of our previous colonial contact with the imperializing West, has often meant only Western modernity. Chen struggles to understand our present dilemmas by tracing them, through the insights offered by Fanon's sociopolitical psychoanalysis, back to the roots of the psychic aftermath of colonialism and imperialism. Chen focuses on the on-going psychological complexes and cultural imaginations of the ex-colonized. He observes that even when previous colonials have been ex-colonized at the political level, they are still colonized at the deep-rooted cultural and psychic level. What is most problematic about this still colonized state is that these deep-rooted desires, attitudes, beliefs, and cultural imaginaries are often unconscious.

To illustrate the cultural and psychological aftermath of colonization, let us look at studies on the coloniality (or the still colonized state) of many deep-rooted language attitudes and education policies and practices in post-1997 Hong Kong. For instance, recent studies have found that the many myths about the superiority of the colonizer's

language and the beauty of English native speaker speech are still with us even in ‘post’-colonial days (Luk, 2001; Luk & Lin, 2006). The impact of these myths is found not only among education officials but also among the general public including school teachers, principals and students. A telling example is found in a story from one of my doctoral students. Two months ago, my doctoral student, who is also a lecturer in a university in Hong Kong, expressed to me that he was feeling depressed because his undergraduate students criticized his English as carrying a ‘Hong Kong accent.’ This is precisely the kind of deep-rooted colonial structure of sentiment^v analysed by Chen in the Taiwanese movie, *Dou-sang*^{vi}. Chen’s analysis of the psychological structure of the protagonist illustrates a similar hierarchical colonial structure of sentiment: Japanese (the ex-colonizer) being the most superior, Taiwanese in the middle, and mainland Chinese at the bottom. In the Hong Kong situation, the colonial structure of sentiment might have a different hierarchy: The British being the most superior, Hong Kong people in the middle, and perhaps, mainland Chinese at the bottom. The cultural and psychic aftermath of colonization is still very much with us today. To better understand Chen’s line of argument, I provide a synopsis of the key concepts in his chapters.

Chapter 1 focuses on duplicating the imperialist eye. It discusses the economic expansion of the Taiwan capital in recent decades into Southeast Asian developing countries, exploiting these countries’ labour and natural resources. With this economic expansion there also arises the Taiwan sub-empire cultural imaginary. The colonized’s deep desire to replace the former colonizer is reincarnated into either internal colonialism or regional imperialism. In this chapter, Chen critically analyzes the way in which Taiwan has become one of the regional imperialist sub-empires and the rising Taiwanese-centric and imperialist public discourses:

My analysis also describes how the imperial subject (Taiwan) moves close to the target of colonization (Southeast Asia), while anxiously distancing itself from the enemy (communist China) in order to discover its new (but also already existing) self-identity. It reveals that the old imperialist cultural imagination (in the form of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere^{vii} and the Wallace Line^{viii} still conditions the imagination of the colonized. The new empire’s imagination, as constructed by the southward-advance discourse, is a copy—a new, pirated edition—of the Japanese imperial thought of a half-century ago. (p. 35)

This reincarnation of the colonized into the neo-colonialist, Chen argues, results from the lack of (opportunity for) critical reflection on de-colonization in these ‘postcolonial’ societies:

The ubiquity of the postcolonial trajectory, in which de-colonization is followed by recolonization or neocolonization, shows that the ideological condition that permits the subimperial desire to take shape exists precisely because there has been no critical reflection on de-colonization. This is what makes it possible for the imperialist cultural imaginary to be so effortlessly inherited by the colonized. Whether other potentially subimperial places, such as Korea and Hong Kong, have gone through their de-colonization phases remains to be seen. (p. 63)

Why has there been a lack of critical reflection on colonization in the ex-colonial societies? This brings us to Chapter 2, which focuses on the problematic of de-colonization and asks this central question: ‘Why has de-colonization work on the level of the cultural imaginary not been more thoroughly developed?’ (p. 65). In this chapter, Chen discusses Fanon’s psychoanalysis of de-colonization at length and points out that the fundamental logic of colonialism is racism, and that essentialized racist differences cannot be overcome. Like Fanon, Chen also realizes that apart from racism there are multiple structures of domination. Colonization and colonial identification can no longer be understood simply in terms of race relations. ‘The various strains of identity politics that have emerged in the postwar era—gender, sexuality, even class—can also be conceptualized in terms of the Fanonian problematic’ (p. 80).

However, in the postcolonial era, most ex-colonies have turned to nationalism and/or nativism as strategies of de-colonization. Chen cautions against both of these. Nationalism can easily become ultra-nationalism, chauvinism, and ultimately racism. Nativism, on the other hand, still defines the self within the colonial framework:

If, as Fanon and Nandy argue, colonialism is enabled by the mechanism of identification with the colonizer—both through the aggression that binds the colonizer and the colonized together, and by establishing the colonizer as the embodiment of modernity for the colonized to emulate—then nativism works by identification with the self. But the Other, the opponent of the self-recovery movement, is still the colonizer, who has now left the colony. In the process of reconstituting the subject, nativism must constantly keep moving away from the narcissistic self, or risk being dragged once again into the colonial framework. (p. 85)

The colonized must stop defining him/herself through categories of the colonizer. Even as one attempts to negate everything introduced by the colonizer, one is still paradoxically trapped in the categories introduced and defined by the colonizer.

However, how can one achieve a decolonized subjectivity? How can the colonized person's subjectivity be reconstructed? Towards the end of the chapter, Chen proposes a critical syncretism as a cultural strategy to achieve a more liberating form of subjectivity:

The direction of identification put forward by a critical syncretism is outward; the intent is to become others, to actively interiorize elements of others into the subjectivity of the self so as to move beyond the boundaries and divisive positions historically constructed by colonial power relations in the form of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, chauvinism, heterosexism, or nationalistic xenophobia. Becoming others is to become female, aboriginal, homosexual, transsexual, working class, and poor; ... Critical syncretism is a cultural strategy of identification for subaltern subject groups. Here "others" refers not just to racial, ethnic, and national categories but also includes class, sex and gender, and geographical positions. (p. 99)

In this passage, Chen then wants to stop looking *only* to the powerful as models (or as negative models) but also to look across a wide range of possible models elsewhere. Traditionally the 'weak' or the 'marginal' as defined by various structures of domination (e.g., patriarchy, colonialism, heterosexualism) is seldom looked up to as possible models for identification, but Chen here is inviting the ex-colonized to try out the subject positions of women, of homosexuals, of transsexuals, of linguistic and ethnic minorities, of the 'learning disabled,' of the poor and so on. From these diverse perspectives and identity positions we can discover new ways of seeing things and multiply our frames of reference. In this way, we might be able to step out of the straightjacket of identity categories defined by the (former or neo-) colonizer. By being able to see things from the identity positions of other people who are also struggling, it becomes possible to make connections and networks that can link different efforts to an overarching political struggle. For instance, the male working class activist can join efforts with the feminist activist, the homosexual activist, and the migrant worker activist. They can also share their different perspectives, epistemologies, strategies, and knowledge frameworks. However, why have people in many ex-colonized societies in Asia failed to go through this de-colonization process at the deeper cultural and subjectivity level? Chen proposes that the onset of the cold war era right after many Asian colonies gained independence has been largely responsible. This brings us to a discussion of Chapter 3: De-Cold War: The Im/possibility of 'Great Reconciliation.'

In Chapter 3, Chen analyses two Taiwanese movies^{ix} made during the cold war era to illustrate the impact of the cold war sociopolitical structures on people at the level of

subjectivity and cultural imaginary to explain why the opportunity for the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizer to critically reflect on colonization and imperialization has been pre-empted by cold war politics. Chen prefaces his chapter with a quote from Chen Ying-zhen, a critical writer in Taiwan, to illustrate vividly how cold war politics in Taiwan has prevented any opportunity for the ex-colonized to critically reflect on former and neo-imperialisms:

In the 50s, anticommunists cleansing radically eradicated intellectual thought and knowledge on anti-imperialist national liberation. For a long time, in Taiwan, anyone who criticized the U.S. would be labeled a 'communist spy,' which would destroy one's life and family. Unlike other progressive intellectuals in the Third World, those in Taiwan lost the knowledge, ideas, and ability to criticize the hegemony of U.S. neo-colonialism. Under the Cold War structure in East Asia, the anticommunist security regime deeply penetrated the social body and educational institutions. In the minds of young intellectuals, the image of America as a powerful, civilized, developed, and wealthy country was solidly established. Until today, 'the best will study in the U.S.' has become the highest value for young students in Taiwan. (Chen Ying-zhen, *The Making of Taiwan's Americanization*, quoted in Chen, 2010, p. 115)

Growing up in British colonial Hong Kong in the 1960s and 70s, I can readily echo the above observation (but only to add Britain, Canada and Australia to the league of these prestigious Western countries) about the aspirations and desires of young students in Hong Kong and their objects of identification. Just as in Taiwan, in British colonial Hong Kong, it was mainland China which had been portrayed as the cultural and political Other in much of the popular media and discourse: communist, poor, backward, uncivilized, or un-modern. In reaction, there were also the patriotic, leftist student movements at the universities in the 1970s in Hong Kong. However, both the negative portrayal of mainland China in popular media (e.g., in the series of Hong Kong movies stereotyping mainland Chinese people), and the idealization of motherland China among leftist student movement activists at universities can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Both are defined by the cold war imaginary: the good guy (the democratic West) versus the bad guy (the communist East), or vice versa. In this de-cold war chapter, Chen shares his own family history with the reader and illustrates the impact of cold war structures at the cultural and psychic level in Taiwan (and I would add, in much of East Asia as well). Chen writes about his mother:

Having spent a difficult life bringing up three sons, my mother had had a breakdown after her children left home. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and indeed she had created an imaginary world to liberate herself from the sad

life she had led. For each meal, she insisted on setting our dining table with a full bowl of rice and a pair of chopsticks for the invisible ‘Father Chiang’ (Chiang Kai-shek^x). She swore she would never go back to her homeland (Peking) while it was ‘occupied’ by the communists. (p. 118)

The cold war imaginary reinforces the colonial imaginary of a hierarchical structure with which the colonized makes evaluations in the world: what is good, superior, modern, civilized versus what is bad, inferior, backward, uncivilized. Many ‘ben-sheng-ren’ (‘this-province-people’) in Taiwan, Chen writes, ‘rely on a hierarchical structure to make judgments and comparisons, with the Japanese at the top, “us” in the middle, and mainland Chinese at the bottom’ (p. 133). As briefly mentioned above, Dou-sang, the protagonist in the movie ‘*Dou-sang: Borrowed Life*’ that Chen analyses, embodies this colonial aspiration for modernity:

... for things that are better, more advanced, more modern, and more civilized—desires that explain how colonialism was able to operate in the colony—indicates that such a structure of sentiment was not limited to intellectuals and other social elites of the colonial period. Japan, as the symbol of modernity, penetrated deep into the social strata, reaching even the rural working class, who had also tasted the fruits of modernization. (p. 133)

Japan, which had colonized Taiwan from 1895-1945, had itself launched its modernization projects modeling on Europe, chiefly Germany, ever since the Meiji Reform in the mid-19th century. With its success in modernizing itself, Japan had emerged as the most powerful country in East Asia in the 19th and early 20th century, culminating in its military colonization of many parts of Asia during the 2nd World War. After the war, the impact of colonization is still felt as a structure of sentiment and an unconscious hierarchical frame of reference. Such a colonialist hierarchy of modernity still resides in the body, mind, and desire of many people in ex-colonized societies. Cold war politics, Chen argues, has thus prevented both the former colonizer (e.g., Japan), the neo-colonizer (e.g., U.S.), and the (formerly) colonized (e.g., Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea) from engaging in critical reflection. They have been prevented from going through the processes of de-imperialization and de-colonization at the deep-rooted cultural and psychological level. Chen frequently invokes Fanon's (1952) sociopolitical psychoanalysis of the colonized personality or subjectivity and draws attention to the on-going psychological complexes and cultural imaginations of the ex-colonized. These are the two major spheres in which the effect of imperialism and colonialism remains operating actively, preventing subjects in the ex-imperialist countries and subjects in the ex-colonized countries to reach

reconciliation. In his cold war analysis, Chen emphasizes the need to understand the popular emotional energy of these ‘historically rooted structures of sentiment:’

How to properly analyze and harness popular energy and transform it into a motor of change working in the interests of the subaltern population is a difficult challenge. Imperialism, colonialism and the cold war are inherently international forces. In the era of globalization that has emerged in the wake of the cold war, it is even clearer that these questions can no longer be addressed inside any national border. ... If critiques remain within the limits of the nationalist framework, it will not be possible to work toward regional reconciliation. (p. 159)

How can regional reconciliation take place? Chen argues that people in the imperialist countries need to go through a de-imperialization process just as people in the ex-colonized societies need to go through a de-colonization process and these processes must also take place at the deep-rooted cultural and psychic level. This brings us to a discussion of Chapter 4: De-imperialization: Club 51 and the Imperialist Assumption of Democracy.

In this de-imperialization chapter, Chen argues that America has emerged as the dominant symbol of the modern and this has to do with its image as a liberator in East Asia and elsewhere and as the champion of democracy, especially during the cold war era. Chen writes:

If we wish to honestly understand the subjectivity of the self in East Asia, we have to recognize that the United States has not merely defined our identities but has become deeply embedded within our subjectivity. And it is precisely by occupying this position as the dominant system of reference that America constitutes our subjectivity. When the United States, rather than the Philippines or Korea, has been consistently adopted as our default point of reference, it means that we are Americanized, if not American. This basic recognition is the necessary starting point if Taiwanese subjectivity is to be transformed. (pp. 178-9)

The extent to which Taiwan people have been Americanized at the subjectivity level is illustrated by the activities of Club 51, which was founded on 4 July 1994 by fifty-one intellectuals and businessmen in Taiwan and grew to some five hundred members in 1996. Club 51 called for Taiwan to join the United States as its 51st state, so as to ‘guarantee Taiwan’s security, stability, prosperity, liberty, and democracy’ (quoted on p. 162). Although Club 51 has not grown into a mainstream movement, it illustrates the deep cultural imaginary of the United States as the dominant symbol of modernity, prosperity, and democracy. Chen invokes Takeuchi’s notion of ‘cultural

independence' and proposes that his notion of 'cultural independence' can be understood as an attempt to build a more penetrating critical subjectivity at the societal level. (p. 195)

Chen argues that imperialism has the effect of not only shaping the subjectivity of the colonized but also the subjectivity and cultural imaginary of people in the imperializing countries, that is, imperialism works both ways. Within the imperializing countries, imperialism shapes the subjectivity of the imperial subjects, forming their identity and subjectivity in relation to the colonized people. For instance, during war-time Japan, many people in Japan have gone through an imperializing process. Their subjectivity, frames of reference, and worldviews were shaped by the imperializing discourses such as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere (大東亜共栄圏 *Dai-tō-a Kyōeiken*), which justifies military colonization of other countries in Asia. To achieve regional reconciliation, both the imperialized subjects and the colonized subjects need to go through the processes of de-imperialization and de-colonization, not only at the military, political level, but also at the deeper cultural and psychological level. The same can be said about the imperializing desire of the subjects in the (former) Chinese empire, as Chen argues:

... The worship of America in Chinese and Taiwanese intellectual circles is due to our inability to recognize our own imperial identification with the Chinese empire. To peel back the layers of history and expose imperial desire is a precondition for moving toward regional reconciliation, integration, and independence. (p. 198)

Knowledge production (e.g., textbook/curriculum production; university research and publication; teacher preparation) and knowledge circulation/dissemination (e.g., schooling, curriculum, and pedagogy) constitute the major sites in which imperialism operates and exercises its power. I remember that in my high school Chinese history lessons, I was told that during the Tang Dynasty, China was the cultural and intellectual centre of East Asia, with Japan, Chosan (Korea), Siam (Thailand), Annam (Vietnam) all sending students to study in the capital city of China, Chang-an (Xian). They all learnt the Chinese writing system (Chinese characters) and Confucianist classics, Chinese poetry and literature. This knowledge had long formed part of my subjectivity (e.g., seeing China as the centre of cultural learning in the ancient world) until recently when I started to critically reflect on the discourses constituting this imperialist, 'centre of the world', cultural imaginary.

How do we carry out de-imperialization and de-colonization at the cultural and

psychological level? How do we deal with our ancient past, as well as the West, which has already constituted our worldviews about what counts as superior, modern and civilized? What kind of modernity and progress should we seek? What kind of epistemology should we have? How do we negotiate with traditional and Western knowledges, cultures, and ways of doing scholarship? These are questions facing critical scholars located in our time and historical juncture. We are ex-imperialist and ex-colonial subjects, but have we really gone through de-imperialization and de-colonization at the deeper level of cultural imaginary and subjectivity?

It is in this struggle that I find Chen's sharing of his own struggle most useful. When engaging in curriculum and educational inquiry and practice as a Hong Kong scholar located in post-British colonial Hong Kong, where can I look for frames of reference (e.g., theoretical frameworks, methodologies, epistemologies)? Should I stick to Anglo-European theories and epistemologies, so as to publish in international journals (after all, does not our overseas education and qualification give us prestige and cultural capital; see Lin, 2009)? (How) Should I look to different Asian, African, and South American traditions for insights? (How) Should I introduce and apply foreign curriculum and pedagogical theories and methodologies in our local contexts? These are very real and personal struggles of education researchers in present-day Hong Kong and many other (postcolonial) Asian contexts as well.

This brings us to a discussion of the most important chapter in Chen's book--Chapter 5: Asia as Method: Overcoming the Present Conditions of Knowledge Production. Here, Chen cautions against an essentialist, fixated notion of Asia and instead recognizes Asia as a fluid product of history:

Asia as method recognizes the need to keep a critical distance from un-interrogated notions of Asia ... It sees Asia as a product of history, and realizes that Asia has been an active participant in historical processes (p. 215)

Then Chen points out how he used Asia as Method as a postcolonial strategy to release ourselves from an obsession with the West and Western knowledge, theories and epistemologies (e.g., the love-hate, or worship-negate, psychological complex):

The purpose here is to pinpoint the understandable but unnecessary obsession with the question of the West, and then to suggest a move towards Asia as a possible way of shifting points of reference and breaking away from the East-West binary structure. (pp. 215-6)

Chen explains what he means by Asia of Method by first showing that, as Hall (1992) argues, we have in fact been using ‘the West as method’ all along:

For the past few centuries, ‘the West as method’ has become the dominant condition of knowledge production. As Stuart Hall points out in his important essay, ‘The West and the Rest,’ the West performs a wide range of functions. It is a framework to categorize different societies and their characteristics. It is a structure of knowledge, a series of images that form a system of representation that connects with other concepts (the West/ metropolitan/ developed/ industrialized versus the non-West/ rural/ underdeveloped/ agricultural). It is the basic criterion from the desirable and progressive (Hall, 1992, p. 277).

For Chen, Hall’s analysis neatly sums up the functions of the West within the geographical space of the West. In the third world, the West has become the object of both desire and resentment. This fatal attraction—or, ‘fatal distraction’ (Dirlik, 1997)—has become the backbone of third-world nationalism. For instance, the discussion has always been framed as a dichotomy: the East versus the West, China versus the West, Japan versus the West, and so on. In this situation, what is the subject of nationalist discourse, if not the West? Chen thus concludes:

If this political unconscious has become the basis for the reproduction of the structure of desire, we need to reconsider this history and compare how the West has been imagined and reimagined in various local spaces over time. The task is not so much to conduct an ideological critique, but to discover ways to break through this analytical impasse. ... (p. 217)

To achieve the task of moving away from the West as the sole frame of reference, Chen discusses postcolonial strategies of two other critical scholars in Asia, Naoki Sakai and Dipesh Chakrabarty. The first strategy is to disrupt the Other by deconstructing it. This strategy argues that the West has no essence and no unity; it is only putative, and therefore cannot be ‘our’ Other. In ‘Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism,’ Sakai critiques Habermas, who ‘takes for granted a parallel correspondence among the binary oppositions: pre-modern/modern, non-West/West, mythical/rational. Moreover, for him, the very unity of the West is a given; it is an almost tactile reality’ (Sakai, 1988, p. 478). Sakai points out that the complicity between universalism and particularism is a consequence of colonial practices. In Sakai’s view, Europe, along with its invented discourse, has the value of universalism, whereas the rest are seen as particularistic.

The second strategy is to de-universalize, provincialize, or regionalize the West, so

that the experiences of the West are limited to only one part of the globe. Postcolonial scholar, Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992), argues in his essay ‘Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the critique of history:’

In the academic discourse of history—that is, ‘history’ as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university—‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, the theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Kenyan,’ etc. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe’ (p. 337)

Chen, however, sees both of the above postcolonial strategies as still having limitations because using the West as the point of opposition reconsolidates the formula: the West and the rest (Said, 1979; Hall, 1992). Chen admits that an undeniable condition exists: ‘the global structure of power is uneven, and the geographical and imaginary site of the West is the most dominant and the richest in resources. The West has been able to enter and generate real impacts on other geographical spaces without experiencing the same type or intensity of impacts from the outside. “The West and the rest” has a historical material basis. Western-centrism has constituted a solid structure of desire and knowledge, a structure that is indeed difficult to shake loose’ (p. 222).

Chen thus proposes an alternative strategy. Instead of reproducing the West as the Other, an alternative discursive strategy would be to see the West as bits and fragments that participate in local social formations in a systematic but never totalizing way. The modernization of different societies includes important elements of the West, but it is not fully constituted by it. Chen states:

... Rather than being constantly anxious about the question of the West, we can actively acknowledge it as a part of the formation of our subjectivity. In the form of fragmented pieces, the West has entered our history and become part of it, but never in a totalizing manner. The task for Asia as Method is to multiply frames of reference in our subjectivity and worldview, so that our anxiety over the West can be diluted, and productive critical work can move forward. (p. 223)

What I would like to add to Chen’s quote is that we need to outgrow the binary categories of the West and the rest, so that we can be liberated from its limiting psychic and epistemological effect on us. Then we no longer talk, think or construe the world in these binary categories. In this context we can ask: What is the significance of Chen’s work in delineating the projects of de-colonization, de-cold war, and de-imperialization for education and for critical scholarship at large? Why

is it important to consider his work and his proposal of Asia as Method in our inquiry in curriculum and critical pedagogy in Asia and beyond? In the next section, I personalize the discussion of educational significance, as I probe into Chen's ideas in search of how it might affect my life and an educational researcher in Hong Kong and Asia.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHEN'S WORK IN CRITICAL EDUCATION STUDIES

Before discussing the implications of Chen's Asia as Method for critical education work, it would be useful to first recapitulate the inter-relationship of the three main themes in Chen's book (2010): de-imperialization, de-cold war, and de-colonization, and to discuss how these themes relate to using Asia as Method in critical education studies.

What is the difference between de-imperialization and de-colonization?

What is the difference between de-imperialization and de-colonization and why are these concepts still relevant in the new millennium, when (with some exceptions) most countries are no longer visibly colonizing other countries? It is important, however, to highlight Chen's emphasis on the unfinished work of de-colonization and de-imperialization *at the cultural and psychological level*. This work has to happen at the deep-rooted level of cultural imaginary and subjectivity, and it has to be done by people in both ex-imperialist and ex-colonized societies in order to achieve regional reconciliation. It is true that after the 2nd World War, many countries have gone through the process of de-imperialization and de-colonization at the military and political level. The formerly imperialist countries have gradually pulled out from their colonies in the form of military and political withdrawal (e.g., Japan has ceased its military occupation of many parts of East Asia since the end of the 2nd World War; Britain has pulled out of Hong Kong in 1997; Portugal has pulled out of Macau in 1999). Many ex-colonies have also gone through the process of military and political de-colonization through establishing new military and political structures of their own. The significance of Chen's work, however, lies in pointing out the cultural and psychological aftermath of imperialism and colonization and calling for continuous critical work in these two spheres: how to de-imperialize one's cultural imaginary and subjectivity in formerly imperialist countries, and how to de-colonize one's cultural imaginary and subjectivity in formerly colonized societies.

To answer these questions we must understand the mirror processes of de-colonization on the part of ex-colonized people, and de-imperialization on the part

of people in the former imperialist, or neo-imperialist, countries. Chen differentiates between de/imperialization and de/colonization. It is in general easier to understand that ex-colonized people need to go through a process of re-constituting their subjectivity so as to release themselves from the hierarchical structure of sentiment (e.g., seeing/feeling the ex-colonizer as culturally/linguistically superior to oneself and one's fellow countrymen). However, what is meant by the need for people in previously imperialist countries or neo-imperialist countries to de-imperialize themselves? Chen explains:

The fact that imperialization is a double process, one that takes place in the imperial centre as well as in the colonies, has only recently been realized.

Much recent historical research, in particular the work of Catherine Hall (2002), has forcefully demonstrated that the identity of the empire is directly shaped by its relation with the colony. (p. 7)

In East Asian contexts there have been at least three earlier moments of imperialism: those of the Chinese empire, the Japanese military occupation, and U.S. imperialism after the 2nd World War. The consequence of not having gone through the process of critical reflection on the imperialism of the Chinese empire is still very much with us today. Some evidence can be seen in the findings of a study that analysed contemporary Hong Kong people's weblog messages revolving around a popular South Korean historical TV drama, *Dae Jang Geum* (Lin & Tong, 2009). Some of the messages posted by Hong Kong Chinese expressed superior cultural attitudes towards both South Koreans and Japanese, asserting historical China as the cultural centre of civilization and learning in relation to historical Korea (Chosan) and Japan. Ironically, these messages also simultaneously expressed a superior Hong Kong attitude towards contemporary communist Mainland Chinese--a cultural consequence of cold-war structures. The persistence of this imperialist subjectivity and superior cultural imaginary (e.g., imagining historical China as the 'cultural father' surrounded and emulated by 'cultural children' like Chosan and Japan) is likely a consequence of not having gone through the process of critically reflecting on the imperialism of the (historical) Chinese empire. The 'superior cultural self' is defined in relation to the 'inferior cultural other'. Without going through the process of de-imperialization at the psychological and cultural imaginary level, subjects (of historical or new empires such as China/Japan or U.S.) remain locked in the hierarchical structure of sentiment regarding cultural self and others.

Why is it important to go through the process of de-cold war?

The above discussion brings us to the consideration of the process of de-cold war.

Chen explains that the opportunity for East Asian subjects to go through the process of de-colonization, and for subjects in historical and neo-imperialist countries to go through the process of de-imperialization have been interrupted by the onset of the cold war immediately after the 2nd World War. With the cold-war sociopolitical construction of the binarism of ‘Western, advanced, democratic countries’ versus ‘Eastern, backward, communist countries,’ subjects in many East Asian societies (e.g., Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore) have been under the cultural influence of Western modernity and have developed a hierarchical structure of sentiment: seeing a superior, modern, democratic West at the top, the Hong Kong Chinese at the middle, and backward, communist China, North Korea (and former Soviet Union) at the bottom. The cold war sociopolitical structures have thus prevented the process of critical reflection on the aftermath of colonization and (both historical and neo-) imperialisms. In consequence, we have not been able to release ourselves from these colonial and imperialist structures of sentiment and cultural imaginaries (e.g., for Taiwanese to feel that the U.S. and Japan are superior, Taiwanese in the middle, and Mainland Chinese at the bottom). To go through the process of de-cold war is to undertake the critical reflection on the consequences of cold war and to release ourselves from the binary worldviews imposed by cold war structures.

What are the curriculum implications of de-imperialization, de-colonization and de-cold war?

One key implication of critical cultural studies for curriculum and educational inquiry is the recognition that curriculum is a key site where people’s subjectivities and cultural imaginaries are produced, contested, or transformed. While this insight is not new—various researchers in critical education and critical literacies, especially those inspired by Foucault, have already argued this position (e.g., Apple, 1999; Luke, 1996; Tavares, 1996)—Chen’s work further enhances our understanding of specific aspects of such processes.

For instance, Chen asks us to focus on the importance of understanding how the structure of our knowledge and our own subjectivity is produced through curriculum practices. While curriculum inquiry has usually included the study of both explicit and hidden values and ideologies in curriculum processes, Chen’s work inspires us to ask deeper questions not only about values and ideologies but also about the more invisible, subtle processes of the constitution of one’s structure of sentiment, desires, cultural imagination, and sense of self and others (i.e., subjectivity).

Recognizing that curriculum is often the site of production and reproduction (but also possible transformation) of imperialist, colonial, and cold war subjectivities, we can propose a tentative research agenda for critical curriculum inquiry through the following research questions:

What are the orientations or goals (both explicit and implicit) of the current curricula of such school subjects as social studies, liberal studies, history, or English language? How do these subject curricula provide the opportunity for critical reflection on imperialism, binarism, colonialism, and their effects on one's worldviews, cultural imaginaries, and most importantly, structures of desire and sentiment?

A similar set of research questions can be asked of current teacher-education curricula. For example, how do the goals of and pedagogical strategies in teacher education programs prepare beginning teachers to engage in the critical examination of such issues as how: the content in subject curricula are selected and structured; certain knowledge structures are privileged while others are excluded; particular worldviews are explicitly or implicitly communicated; various desires and sentiments are instilled or inculcated; or specific forms of cultural imagination are induced.

With Chen's strategy of critical syncretism in mind, curriculum inquiry can also begin to focus on the design and development of both curriculum content and pedagogical strategies for transforming existing colonial, imperialist, or cold war subjectivities and structures of sentiment. In the next section I shall present some tentative suggestions for possible future research work in critical pedagogy.

How can we de-imperialize or de-colonize subjectivities and cultural imaginaries?

How can the imperialist, colonial, or cold war structures of sentiment and cultural imaginaries be reconstituted? Chen's key insight is to highlight the importance of understanding the emotional conditions (or structures of sentiment) of the imperialist, cold-war, or colonial subject^{xi}. Traditional critical pedagogical work has emphasized the goal of achieving critical consciousness in liberating students from ideological myths or false consciousness (e.g., the colonial belief that former colonial masters are superior to oneself, or the myth that the colonizer's language/speech is more scientific, modern, rational, or beautiful). It focuses on designing critical curricula and pedagogy for raising students' critical consciousness of their own sociopolitical

situation. This critical consciousness is seen as key to subsequent liberating work leading to self-empowerment (Freire, 1973). While recognizing the importance of critical reflection and critical awareness, Chen also stresses the importance of bringing to the forefront the emotional conditions of the imperialist, colonial, and cold war subject. Critical analysis of classroom processes, curriculum texts, and official language and education policy discourses has constituted an important body of literature in critical applied linguistics and critical English language education studies (e.g., Pennycook, 1998, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999; Lin, 1997, 1999; Luk & Lin, 2006). While critical discourse analysis is both necessary and valuable in raising our critical consciousness, it seems that critical discourse analysis alone is not sufficient in achieving the goal of re-constituting the emotional structure of sentiment and cultural imaginaries of colonized and imperialized subjectivities. Western Enlightenment modernity has emphasized critical and rational thinking (Marshall, 1994; Felski, 1995). Anglo-European theories of the subject or the self since Descartes have also privileged the *thinking* subject/self. Analysis of the emotional conditions of the subject/self, however, will contribute to further enhancing critical pedagogical work. Chen, via Fanon's sociopolitical psychoanalysis of the emotional structure of the colonized subject, can offer us some insights on how to further enhance critical curriculum design work. This work aims to achieve the twin goals of both raising critical consciousness, and reconstituting the structure of sentiment and cultural imaginaries. It aims at re-shaping and reconstituting the deep-rooted desires, attitudes, imaginaries, and emotions of ex/neo-colonials and ex/neo-imperialists.

To achieve these goals, it seems that critical discourse analysis will need to go hand in hand with creative curriculum design that also seeks to provide the opportunity for students to emotionally take up the subject positions of 'the weak' as defined by current structures of domination. Here, Chen's strategy of critical syncretism is useful (see discussion of Chapter 5 of his book in the above section). It is a strategy of multiplying our patterns of cultural identification. Instead of merely identifying with the rich, the powerful, the able-bodied, the healthy, the male, the heterosexual, the white, the middle-class, the educated, and so on, innovative critical pedagogical design can create psycho-dramas and scenarios in which students can try out different identities, in psychologically realistic role-play and performative acts. Students can try out (different combinations of) the subject positions of the homosexual, the female, the colored person, the poor, the working class, the migrant worker, the trans-sexual, the linguistic minority, the physically challenged, the un-educated, the outsider, the foreigner, the communist, and so on. In the process, the new psychological experience would contribute to re-shaping our cultural imaginary and structure of

sentiment towards more understanding and empathy of the formerly cultural ‘other’ or ‘inferior’. Such critical pedagogical design will facilitate the bringing to the forefront of our deep-rooted desires, fears, cultural stereotypes, and emotions, which have been the effect of colonialism, cold war, imperialism, and other dominant social structures. Such innovative curriculum design can also draw on facilities offered by new media. For instance, Second Life^{xii} avatars can be used to enable students to take up new identities with realistic, psychologically significant effects, although much more research is needed in this area.

Innovative critical pedagogical design can also seek to provide students with a chance to learn about and appreciate (but not to essentialize, fixate, or exoticize) the cultures of other societies and the cultural knowledge and worldviews of other groups of people situated elsewhere. Critical cultural studies projects that draw on a repertoire of strategies and resources including new media communication facilities can be designed to facilitate such new cultural experiences through interacting with people located in different places and cultures. For instance, a story co-construction project can be designed to link up English language teachers-in-training in one locality (e.g., Hong Kong) and those in another culture and place (e.g., Myanmar) to co-construct/co-author, or co-redesign traditional Chinese folk stories and Burmese folk tales. Students/teachers from both localities can engage in creative and critical discussion of different folk legend traditions and how this can enrich our cultural imaginary repertoire (e.g., apart from learning well-known Western fairy tales, which traditionally form an important part of our English reading curriculum). This will help multiply our frames of reference and de-centre our obsession with Western knowledge and cultural imaginaries that often hold the central position in our thinking and practice in critical curriculum and pedagogical design.

While much further curriculum development work remains to be done, Chen has provided us with useful insights to plan our future directions of curriculum inquiry in critical pedagogy and critical education studies. This kind of innovative cultural and psychological reconstruction work can be done in teacher education as well as in the schools, just as critical discourse analysis has been incorporated into teacher education curriculums as well as school curriculums. In the next section, I move the discussion to the broader consideration of how ‘Asia as Method’ can contribute to building knowledge, theories, and epistemologies that are useful in diverse contexts of the world.

How can we use *Asia as Method* to transform the structure of knowledge in

curriculum inquiry?

‘Asia as Method’ has been proposed by Chen as an innovative strategy to overcome the binary deadlock of either worshipping the West (e.g., following their theories, knowledge, epistemologies, cultures) or reacting against it (e.g., negating anything from the West). Both worshipping the West and reacting against it (e.g., nativism) are actually the two sides of the same coin: they lock us up in an obsession with the West and in epistemological categories given by them. For instance, in English language education, the communicative language teaching approach is usually seen as a methodology from the West and one way of doing critical work in English language education is to critique the suitability of applying the communication language teaching approach in Asian contexts (e.g., Ouyang, 2000). While recognizing this as valuable critical work to carve out a space for an alternative voice in the face of domination of Western methodology in English language education in many Asian contexts, we also need to look beyond these binarisms and look towards other places in Asia, Africa, South America, Middle East, and so on to discover new categories, new methodologies and practices by inter-referencing and multiplying our frames of reference, as Chen proposes through the strategy of ‘Asia as Method’. The more we look into diverse contexts, the greater the chance we shall discover new categories and practices: e.g., teaching methodologies and practices that cannot be neatly pigeon-holed as the communication language teaching approach or traditional methodology.

Chen reminds us that all along we seem to have been using ‘*the West as method*’. We have been learning theories and practices from the West and trying to apply them (or critique the domination of them) in our own contexts. In doing so, we are, however, still locked up in a love-hate relationship with them, and cannot be liberated from these categories both emotionally and epistemologically. Our ways of thinking, feeling, and doing inquiry have thus been inadvertently constrained by these ‘West versus non-West’ epistemological binarisms. The more we critique them or modify them, the more we are locked up by them, and the more our gaze cannot be removed from them to look to other diverse contexts for new frames of reference and new epistemologies. If we survey the research questions in the educational journals in English language education, we shall find that they have largely evolved around elaborating, replicating, supporting, or conversely, critiquing and reacting against theories and knowledge that have first arisen in contexts of inquiry in a few Anglo-European countries. This is using ‘the West as method’ in our education inquiry even as we are critiquing these theories. In fact, to publish in these international research journals one has to constantly quote or relate to Western

theories and justify how one's study can contribute to enriching, or conversely, critiquing these theories (and either way, we cannot depart from these theories). Our knowledge production seems to be already constrained within a particular structure of knowledge and cannot break away from it.

Using 'Asia as Method', however, does not mean that we must not draw on theories that have originated from Western or Anglo-European contexts. To do so will be to fall into the same trap of binarism. **Asia as Method is not the reverse of 'the West as method.'** Rather, Chen proposes inter-referencing, multiplying our frames of reference, and a strategy of critical syncretism, recognizing that 'West versus non-West' is a sociohistorically constructed binarism. This binarism has originated from imperialism and colonialism, which have constructed the imperialist metropole self versus a peripheral, colonized other. For instance, the World Englishes theory (Kachru, 1986, 1992) has inadvertently followed the same 'centre-periphery' cultural imaginary, and places different English varieties into different concentric circles, with English varieties originating from Britain, U.S., Canada, or Australia classified as 'inner circle' Englishes. Those from the ex-colonial countries such as India, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Philippines are placed in the 'norm-developing' 'outer circle'. The most peripheral circle, termed 'the expanding circle', includes English varieties spoken in places like China, Japan, Korea and so on. They are classified as 'norm-dependent' English varieties (i.e., dependent on linguistic norms developed by inner and outer circles).

This 'inner-outer-expanding' cultural imaginary cannot help us break away from the straitjacket of the 'centre-periphery' categories underlying the imperialist and colonial cultural imaginary. It distracts us from finding new frames of reference in looking at and conceptualizing the diverse functions and statuses of English practices in different contexts in the world without putting them in a hierarchy. The diverse ways in which people practice and perform English need not be placed in a hierarchical or concentric structure as predisposed in the centre-periphery cultural imaginary, which the World Englishes theory reproduces. However, using 'Asia as Method' means that we do not just stop at critiquing these theories, for doing so still leaves us trapped in the categories given by them. Using 'Asia as Method' means that we start to look beyond Western theories and the epistemological categories and start looking at a diverse range of categories and frameworks developed from different contexts that are still not represented or conceptualized in these theories (e.g., Lin and Man, 2009). Epistemologically we must release ourselves from the grip of theories that have developed from just a small cluster of contexts. For instance, in ELE many theories

have originated from contexts in a few Anglo-European countries and have been widely applied outside of these contexts (e.g., Second Language Acquisition theories). Using 'Asia as Method' means re-gaining the agency and confidence to develop indigenous theories and knowledge suitable for our own contexts, not necessarily relying on applying imported Western theories, though we might be actively modifying and adapting them.

CODA: DILEMMAS AND DIFFICULTIES, POSSIBILITIES AND HOPE

In writing this essay review, I have gone through an emotionally unsettling process of bringing to critical consciousness my own colonized beliefs, attitudes, and structures of feeling. I have also experienced the anxiety of not knowing how to pursue the project of undoing and overcoming the deep-rooted colonial impact inscribed in my own cultural imaginary and subjectivity through the historical conditions under which I had grown up and been educated (e.g., British colonial Hong Kong and the cold war period). However, Chen is, first and foremost, a cultural studies scholar, not an education and curriculum inquirer. The onus is on us, critical education workers, to explore and discover our diverse, innovative ways to move forward our critical curriculum and pedagogical projects.

In writing this essay, I also hope Chen's work can be more widely known to other education scholars and researchers, especially those located in English-speaking societies. My hope is that when there are more critical education workers doing the work of de-imperialization, de-colonization, and de-cold war at the deeper cultural imaginary and psychological levels, and at the curriculum and pedagogical levels, then perhaps, we can move ourselves closer to the goal of undoing the damaging impact of both historical and neo- imperialisms and neo- colonialisms, and achieving reconciliation between the former/neo- colonizers and colonized people. It is especially in this respect that Chen's work is not only relevant to critical education workers in Asia but also in other parts of the world.

References

- Apple, M. W. (1999). *Power, meaning, and identity: Essays in critical educational studies*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of culture*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Canagarajah, A. C. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*.

- Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chakrabarty, D. (1992). Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the critique of history. *Cultural Studies*, 6 (3), 337-357.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Chatterjee, P. (1993/1986). *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: A derivative discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Chen, K-H. (Ed.) (2009). Neo-liberal conditions of knowledge. Special Issue, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 10 (2): 179-302.
- Chen, K-H. (2010). *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- 陳光興 (2006) 《去帝國 亞洲做為方法》，台灣社會研究書系 12，臺北：行人出版社。 [Chen, Kuan-Hsing (2006). De-imperialization—Asia as method. Taipei, Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies Book series no. 12 (in Chinese)].
- Dirlik, A. (1997). *Eurocentrism, the fatal distraction? Globalism, postcolonialism and the disavowal of history*. Paper presented at the Colonialism and its Discontents Conference. Academia Sinica, Taipei.
- Fanon, F. (1952). *Peau noire, masques blancs*.^{xiii} Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Felski, R. (1995). *The gender of modernity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York : Continuum.
- Fromm, E., & Maccoby, M. (1970). *Social character in a Mexican village*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Hall, C. (2002). *Civilizing subjects: Metropole and colony in the English imagination 1830-1867*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hall, S. (1992). The West and the rest: Discourse and power. In S. Hall, & B. Gieben

- (Eds.), *Formations of modernity* (pp. 275-332). Cambridge: Polity.
- Kachru, B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of non-native Englishes*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, reprinted 1990, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Kachru, B. (1992). Teaching world Englishes. In B. Kachru (Ed.), *The other tongue. English across cultures*, 2nd edition, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Lin, A. M. Y. (1997). Analysing the “language problem” discourses in Hong Kong: How official, academic and media discourses construct and perpetuate dominant models of language, learning and education. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 28, 427-440.
- Lin, A. M. Y. (1999). Doing-English-lessons in the reproduction or transformation of social worlds? *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 393-412.
- Lin, A. M. Y. (2009). Local interpretation of global management discourses in higher education in Hong Kong: potential impact on academic culture. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 10 (2), 260-274.
- Lin, A. M. Y., & Man, E. M. F. (2009). *Bilingual education: Southeast Asian perspectives*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Lin, A. M. Y., & Tong, A. (2009). Constructing cultural self and other in the Internet discussion of a Korean historical drama: A discourse analysis of weblog messages of Hong Kong viewers of Dae Jang Geum. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 19 (2), 289-312.
- Luk, J. C. M. (2001). Exploring the sociocultural implications of the Native English-speaker Teacher Scheme in Hong Kong through the eyes of the students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Language in Education*, 4(2), 19-50.
- Luk, J. C. M. & Lin, A. M. Y. (2006). Uncovering the sociopolitical situatedness of

- accents in World Englishes paradigm. In Hughes, R. (Ed.), *Spoken English, applied linguistics and TESOL: Challenges for theory and practice* (pp. 3-22). Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Luke, A. (1996). Genres of power? Literacy education and the production of capital. In R. Hasan, & G. Williams (Eds.), *Literacy in society* (pp. 308-338). London: Longman.
- Marshall, B. L. (1994). *Engendering modernity: Feminism, social theory, and social change*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Ouyang, H. (2000). One way ticket: A story of an innovative teacher in Mainland China. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 31(4): 397-425.
- Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Said, Edward (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Sakai, Naoki (1988). Modernity and its critique: The problem of universalism and particularism. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 87 (3): 475-504.
- Strauss, C. (2006). The imaginary. *Anthropological Theory*, 6 (3): 322-344.
- Tavares, H. (1996). Classroom management and subjectivity: A genealogy of educational identities. *Educational Theory*, 46 (2): 189-201.
- Takeuchi, Yoshimi (2005/1960). "Asia as method." What is modernity? In R. F. Calichman (Ed. & Trans.), *Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi* (pp. 149-165). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Williams, R. (1965). *The long revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Endnotes:

-
- ⁱ CIC refers to the Committee on Institutional Cooperation
- ⁱⁱ ‘Cultural imaginaries’ refers to cultural ethos, shared cultural schemata, and fantasies. For a theoretical delineation of the term and concept of ‘imaginary’, see Strauss, 2006.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Lu Xun is a critical thinker and writer of modern China in the early 20th century
- ^{iv} Chen Ying-zhen is a critical thinker and writer in Taiwan in the second half of the 20th century
- ^v Chen’s notion of ‘structure of sentiment’ is different from Raymond Williams’ notion of ‘structure of feeling’. Williams first came up with the notion of ‘structure of feeling’ (1965) to remedy the abstractness of Eric Fromm’s notion of ‘social character’ (Fromm & Maccoby, 1970) and Ruth Benedict’s notion of ‘pattern of culture’ (Benedict, 1934). Williams uses the term to refer to the actually experienced culture of a particular period of time and place. The term highlights the *experienced quality of life* of a particular social milieu and the social experiences of a particular class or group of people. It refers to a common set of lived experiences, perceptions and values shared by a particular generation, and these experiences, perceptions and values are usually articulated in particular artistic forms and conventions of popular cultural texts and products of this generation. Williams thus talks about the ‘popular structure of feeling’ of the 1840s as reflected in the novels of that period. Williams sees the term as important in the analysis of culture and literary works. For instance, his analysis of the popular British novels of the 1840s has led him to conclude that some of the writers of that period could take their works outside of ‘the ordinary structure of feeling’ of that era and ‘teaches a new feeling’ (Williams, 1965, p. 85). Chen, however, has not borrowed the term from Williams and has developed the term, ‘structure of sentiment’, independently of Williams. Chen explains in an email message about the origin of the notion of ‘structure of sentiment’ or ‘emotional structure of sentiment’: ‘I do not know well enough Raymond William’s work in general, nor the context of formulating the “structure of feeling”. At times, I use “emotional structure of sentiment,” because it was translated from the Mandarin Chinese expression: “情緒性的感情結構”, which is closer to the expression of “structure of sentiment.” It wasn’t me who first used this, but Ding Naifei’ (Chen, personal communication, July 8th, 2011). To me, Chen’s ‘structure of sentiment’ focuses more on the psychic structure of emotions as recurrently experienced by an ex-colonized person and is closer to Fanon’s (1952) sociopolitical psychoanalysis of the psychological aftermath of colonization. While one can argue for some similarities between Williams’ notion and Chen’s notion, the contexts and ways in which the two notions have arisen and been used are distinctly different.
- ^{vi} The Taiwanese movie *Dou-sang* (the English translation adds a subtitle: “A

Borrowed Life”) was written and directed by the famous Taiwanese scriptwriter and novelist Wu Nian-chen. Released in 1994, it was the first film to address the effects of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan after the 2nd World War. *Dou-sang* is a Taiwanese term for father that has come from the Japanese word, *Otosan*.

^{vii} It is a discourse promoted by the war-time Japanese government to justify military colonization of other parts of Asia

^{viii} It is a geo-biological discourse drawing a boundary between Australia and Asia

^{ix} These two movies are *Dou-sang* (see endnote vi above) and *Banana Paradise*. *Banana Paradise* was released in 1989. The film was told from the perspective of “old soldiers” (“laobing”) who fled to Taiwan from mainland China after the communist takeover in 1949. It was the first film produced in Taiwan that was critical of the Kuomintang regime in Taiwan.

^x Chiang is the leader of the National Democratic Party (Kuomintang) who fled to Taiwan after the Chinese Communist Party had taken over China.

^{xi} The imperialist, colonial, or cold-war ‘subject’ here means a person who has been *subjected to* the ideological shaping forces and sociopolitical mechanisms of imperialism, colonialism, or cold war. The person’s subjectivities, structures of sentiment, and cultural imaginaries have been constituted by these forces and sociopolitical mechanisms.

^{xii} ‘Second Life’ is a new media application in which participants can create on-line realistic 3-D images (called ‘avatars’) of new identities and personas for themselves. They can interact with other avatars ‘living in’ their own avatars in the on-line virtual world.

^{xiii} It was translated into English by Charles L. Markman and first published in English in 1967 by Paladin Press in London.