Internationalising Western Doctoral Education through Bilingual Research Literacy

Michael Singh* and Guihua Cui
Building K2.22, Penrith Campus (Kingswood), Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1797 Penrith NSW 2751, Australia
*E-mail: m.j.singh@uws.edu.au

ABSTRACT
This paper reports an original study into possibilities for internationalising Western doctoral education programmes by engaging the bilingual capabilities international research students use through their informal globally networked learning. This study is situated in the debates over research which centres on learning Western knowledge through English, and studies arguing for engaging non-Western knowledge through bilingual education. This question is explored through evidence from a group of female Chinese research students and their uses of English and Chinese to engage in different forms of globally networked learning. The term bilingual research literacy is used to describe the use of two languages for research purposes which may contribute to internationalising Western doctoral education programmes.

Keywords: Bilingual research literacy, doctoral education, globally networked learning, globally networked language learning

INTRODUCTION
International student numbers around the world are increasing, thereby increasing the global networking of learning and the linguistic diversity on university campuses. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) defines ‘international students’ as those who travel to a country different from their own for the purpose of tertiary study. However, definitions of an ‘international student’ vary from country to country in accordance to their own national education system. Usually, they are young adults who pay fees to study on-shore in foreign educational institutions under a specific visa, and are not a citizen or permanent resident in the country where they are studying (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). For the academic year ending in 2009, the number of international students studying worldwide rose to 3.43 million from 2.96 million in 2008, rising by over 75% since 2000 (Coughlan, 2011; Jaume, 2011). Countries throughout Asia, such as China, are increasing their recruitment of international students through organization such as The Asia-Pacific Association for International Education. In 2010, more than six hundred thousand international students were studying in Australia; nearly one-quarter of these come from China (Studies in Australia, 2010).

These students bring with them a diversity of languages. They need to, and want to learn Western (content-area) knowledge through
English, and to do so by engaging in globally networked learning (GNL). However, GNL is opening up to questions concerning assumptions about Western university education and research being used to promote Western knowledge through monolingual, English-only pedagogies. Chen, Bennett & Maton (2008) found that while international students like the flexibility of formal GNL, their lack of intellectual interactions with academics and peers is an impediment to their learning. Furthermore, formal GNL promises to enable research students, both domestic and foreign, to reflect on ‘their own environment and culture by interacting with foreign partners and answering their questions about the home culture’ (O’Dowd, 2003, p. 129). However, this undertaking to provide cross-cultural intellectual engagement and the extension of their linguistic repertoire remains to be fulfilled (Mihhailova, 2006).

Here, the researchers distinguish among formal, non-formal, and informal GNL (Shrestra, Wilson & Singh, 2008). Formal GNL entails the provision of learning materials and/or instruction for formal coursework requirements for research education programmes by means of authorised information and communication technologies. Non-formal GNL refers to doctoral education programmes and pedagogies that are purposefully structured and provided by supervisors (research educators) but are not part of, and may deviate from a university’s prescribed or accredited requirements. Informal GNL encompasses the unconventional, amorphous and/or unplanned knowledge, and/or skills research students gain incidentally through their daily uses of information and communication technologies, including social networking. This definition of GNL draws attention to the power relations governing who normally authorises and initiates the learning process.

How the internationalisation of Western research education programmes and pedagogies might encourage and benefit through Western intellectual engagement with non-Western knowledge is an area in which there has been little research (Singh, 2009). While some studies focus on Asian students’ ‘voices’ (Campbell & Li, 2008), this paper explores this question through a group of female Chinese research students’ uses of English and Chinese via different forms of GNL. To understand the intellectual context, the first section of this paper situates this study in the key debates over internationalising Western doctoral education by learning Western knowledge through English versus also engaging non-Western knowledge through bilingual literacy education. The research method is then explained and justified with reference to this original study’s participants and the procedures used for data collection and analysis. The results of this study are framed in terms of formal English-only research literacy and, non-formal and informal bilingual research literacy.

INTERNATIONALISING WESTERN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

With the internationalisation of Western doctoral education the norms for learning Western knowledge through English have become a taken-for-granted part of Western research education. The first group of studies reviewed below focus on the norms for learning Western knowledge through English. The central message of these studies is that the problem of intellectual order in Western Anglophone universities is to have non-Western international students share in, and adhere to their norms of English-only pedagogy. In Parsons’ (1968) terms, these studies suggest that, given the increasing plurality of international (and immigrant) students, these universities can stabilise their intellectual activity systems by using the power of English to regulate the norms by which such students relate to these institutions. The second group of studies reviewed below focus on the norms of bilingual literacy education. The key theme in these studies is that the problems of intellectual order in Western Anglophone universities is the use of English-only pedagogies (and Western-centred knowledge) as the classificatory system for normalising the production of international students as their graduates. In Foucault’s (1979) terms, it is the normative use of English-only metrics, rather than a bilingual framework to
measure and grade international students that is integral to this complex and challenging problem.

**LEARNING WESTERN KNOWLEDGE THROUGH ENGLISH**

Research that focuses on the challenges of teaching Asian students tends to reveal their lack of knowledge of Western academic norms. Campbell & Li (2008) report that Asian students’ language and cultural differences create intercultural communication barriers and lead to challenging Western norms of classroom interactions. The study by Campbell & Li (2008, p. 392) suggests that Western lecturers and host institutions help Asian international students make adaptations ‘to equip them with adequate knowledge of academic discourses and to transcend [their Asian] culturally framed borders and subjectivities.’ Like other studies in this section, this study indicates Western universities’ engagement in a pervasive process of ‘normalisation’ (Foucault, 1992, p. 18) through acculturating Asian students to the Western academic knowledge they are seen to need in order to detach themselves from their culturally determined Asianness.

The dynamics of this drive to adjust non-Western international postgraduate students to Western universities can be unpredictable, with acculturative stress caused by individual and cultural factors. Accordingly, Brown & Holloway (2008) offer a model for effecting these students’ Western adjustment which focuses on helping them cope with the challenging uses of English and an unfamiliar Western academic environment.

The mastering of the English language is a key focus for research into non-native English-speaking international students undertaking graduate studies. Halic, Greenberg & Paulus’ (2009) findings focus on the meaning the students attach to their English language proficiency, and the relationship between English and their acculturation into a Western academic identity through joining a Western research community. These students had a sense of starting their education all over again, knowing when their English sounds wrong, and feeling in-between Western and Eastern academic cultures. The study by Halic, Greenberg & Paulus’ (2009) suggests that the English language and Western cultural identity are central to the academic success of these ‘non-native’ speakers of English, and recommends learner-centred instruction to addressing these deviances.

Improving the written English of non-Western international students is a key focus for research into the effectiveness of Western academics’ teaching. A case in point is Bitchener & Knoch’s (2008) study of the extent to which direct corrective feedback (with or without written and oral meta-linguistic explanation), versus no corrective feedback helped these students improve their accuracy in the use of the English articles (a, the). This study found that all the students who received all forms of feedback outperformed those who did not, and that their level of accuracy was retained over several weeks.

A key theme in studies such as these is that having international students adjust to the norms of English-only pedagogy will minimise the troubling of intellectual activity in Western Anglophone universities. These studies imply that universities can reinforce their intellectual order through using the power of English to normalise how international students relate to them. However, these studies can be critiqued by reference to an alternative body of research. This latter research supports and explains the pedagogical possibilities for normalising bilingual literacy education that is now feasible given the increasing presence of non-Western international students. The literature reviewed below suggests that the certainties Western universities have in promoting Western knowledge through monolingual, English-only pedagogies are being questioned.

**BILINGUAL LITERACY EDUCATION**

Bilingualism has entered Western Anglophone universities. Its every day presence is audible among the hundreds of thousands of
international (and immigrant) students on their campuses. The research below suggests that some of the challenges encountered by bilingual (and multilingual) students entering research programmes in Western universities relate to their privileging of English-only pedagogies.

That international students are graduating with degrees without having developed their English language skills is a cause for concern among Australian universities. A possible way forward is increasing the selective recruitment of international students by eliminating those with low levels of English proficiency and increasing the performance level required on English language tests. Another option is for Australian universities to create post-entry English language assessments to evaluate the English language competence and academic literacy of these students. Dunworth (2009) found that in certain discipline areas over one third of Australian universities currently do this. However, Benzie (2010) argues that the debates over the English language proficiency of international students construct them in terms of so-called ‘native English speakers.’ Therefore, she contends, international students are defined as deficient, and negative attitudes towards them are reinforced.

The assumption that local linguistic and cultural knowledge should prevail in the internationalisation of Western education is being questioned. Ryan & Viete (2009) argue that intellectual disengagement among international students is related to the undervaluing of their knowledge. They further contend that pedagogical and assessment practices in English-speaking universities privilege the power of an imagined native-speaker norm. Thus, they call for research into ways to promote dialogic, multi-voiced learning for all students.

International students’ educational trajectories are shaped in part through the medium of bilingual literacy practices. Bartlett’s (2007) study of a young female international student found that she was able to position herself as a successful student through her bilingual literacy because her educational institutions positioned bilingualism as educationally valued and valuable. Education for bilingual literacy is the norm in many universities around the world, from Sweden (Airey & Linder, 2008) to South Africa (Benson & Plüddemann, 2010). However, in multilingual Australia, as it is in other Anglophone nations (McPake, Tinsley & Ceri, 2007), the provision of, and engagement with language learning, is fragile. Henderson (2008, p. 171) reports that in Australia ‘the value of language skills in terms of national capacity building is contested.’ Orton (2008, p. 5) reports that in Australia’s senior secondary school, the teaching and learning of Chinese is largely a matter of Chinese teaching Chinese to Chinese students; 94% of those learning Chinese as a second language drop out before Year 12.

The presence of international students in Western universities sees libraries responding to their bilingual capabilities with provisions for their electronic databases to be searched using a range of languages. By way of illustration, EBSCO, FirstSearch, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, and JSTOR provide for electronic data searches in Chinese, French, Korean, Japanese and Spanish. From a survey conducted at two universities in the USA Zhuo, Emanuel & Jiao (2007) found that international students preferred using such library databases. They were asked about the use of multilingual features, bibliographic instructions given in the students’ home nations, and questions about the literal translation of search keywords and terms. This presents a novel way of providing a key Western research service to international research students in seemingly Anglophone universities.

The intellectual interactions afforded by globally networked learning (GNL) face contradictions when teaching English to international students. Basharina’s (2007) study of GNL identified intra-cultural and inter-cultural contradictions as well as technology-related incongruities among English language learners from Japan, Mexico and Russia. Various interventions are suggested by Basharina (2007) for addressing these challenges. These include realigning curriculum drivers with students’ desires for interactive learning, making
explicit and engaging culturally different uses of GNL, and engaging the intellectual resources available to students.

These particular studies offer a different perspective on the problem confronting the internationalisation of Western Anglophone universities. This research questions the exclusive use of English-only pedagogies and Western-centred knowledge. These studies raise the prospects of a bilingual framework, rather than just the use of English-only metrics to address this multifaceted challenge.

The original study reported in this paper is part of a project investigating the potential for new approaches to doctoral education programmes and pedagogies that support language learning so international research students can position themselves as bilingual, intellectual agents in the progressive internationalisation of work-intensive Western universities (Singh, 2010), and secure their participation in the world’s multilingual knowledge societies (Singh & Han, 2009). The power of this investigation resides in centring these Chinese research students’ knowledge and turning these into analytical tools—concepts, metaphors, and diagrams (Turner, 2010)—for their research into, and original contributions to debating Western education (Singh & Han, 2010). This means recognising what Western, Anglophone educators do not know, and that this provides pedagogical spaces for non-Western research students to use their intellectual heritage as a normal part of their research, and to deepen their abilities for scholarly disputation (Singh, 2009).

This research departs from approaches to equality that takes students’ intellectual differences as deficiencies that require remediation, or which position them solely in terms of research income and outcomes. In contrast, this research investigates the potency of Ranciere’s (1991) argument that equality in education begins with the presupposition that Chinese research students are already capable of scholarly argumentation and, that Chinese intellectual culture provides them with the theoretical tools for doing so. The pedagogical task for Western, Anglophone research educators is to create conditions for non-Western international research students to use formal, non-formal and informal GNL to verify this.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

To study ways of internationalising Western research education programmes and pedagogies so as to enhance Chinese research students’ bilingual research literacy, this section briefly explains the method used to study their formal, non-formal and informal GNL. Given that a goal of research education is to produce research literate graduates, then the term bilingual research literacy refers to their use of two languages for the purposes of generating, interpreting and/or analysing evidence. As is the norm for people generally, the lives of the female research students in this study were embedded in social and intellectual relationships with kin and friends who crossed their life span and nations. For this reason a life history method was chosen because it is able to deal with ‘the ways in which all and any life events potentially influence and impact upon all experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and values’ (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 96). While allowing for the identification of contingencies, this approach permitted the investigation into intellectual links between the students’ research education, their uses of GNL and the prospects for extending their bilingual research literacy.

**Participants**

The participants in this study, all female international research students from China (n=24) had multiple and shifting identities, ranging from being as wives, daughters, teachers, international students, beginning teacher-researchers—and bilingual in what was normally taken to be a Western, Anglophone university (Dunworth, 2009; Halic, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009). Some had left their roles relating to paid and unpaid work behind them to become international research students. Making the choice to go abroad to study was not easy for these women because they needed to take into...
consideration their parents, family, colleagues, friends, and even students. They all had made an abrupt transition in their life projects, flying nine to twelve hours from China to Australia, a useful reminder that aeroplanes represent a major technology underwriting the internationalisation of education.

**Data Collection**

The research students who volunteered to participate in this study were asked to keep diaries, in English and/or Chinese, recording the impact of their changed learning environment on themselves (Brown & Holloway, 2008). This data collection procedure, which accorded with ethical requirements, provided a good basis for them to depict the linguistic and technological dimensions of their learning practices, whether these were formal, non-formal, or informal. For some students, this data collection method pushed the boundaries of their academic understanding of normal research methods.

**Data Analysis**

The 24 students generated ninety reflections over 6 months, which constitute the data base for this study, and provide the source for the selected evidentiary excerpts analysed in this paper (see Table 1). The main topics of their reflections covered daily life, study and research, academic progress and improvement, supervisors and teaching facilities, ideas about education, and cultural similarities/differences. All these reflections were analysed to identify their key themes and then categorised. Their journal entries were analysed using the three-dimensional conceptualisation of formal, non-formal and informal GNL (Shrestra, Wilson & Singh, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal GNL in English</td>
<td>New teaching technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only</td>
<td>PhD course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leximancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-formal GNL in English or Han Yu (Mandarin)</td>
<td>Plagiarism and real plagiarism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher vs. responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Routine life vs. good achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Videoconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My first informal presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second videoconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The third videoconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication between Aus and Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17th National Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The consequence of Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professor vs. students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal GNL in Han Yu (Mandarin)</td>
<td>Mother’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disaster earthquake in China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different educational systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skype: Devil or Angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Unusual’ capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xin You Ling Xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closing ceremony of Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bad mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opening ceremony of Paralympics Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mooncake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-autumn festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skype made me feel bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The launch of Shenzhou No. 7 spaceship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS
The following analysis seeks to make sense of rich and representative evidentiary excerpts selected to foreground the links between the students’ research literacy practices; their uses of formal, non-formal and informal GNL, and the prospects for transformative, transnational dialogical research processes.

Formal English-only Research Literacy
These research students’ formal GNL involved the training officially organised by their university, all of which was in English as might normally be expected. However, many of them had expected to have courses with lectures on educational theories and research methodologies. This is the case in China, but not in their particular university in Australia. They did undertake a prescribed on-line training programme that came close to the formal course they had expected:

Of the six modules, most of them are very useful to my research, especially the literature review module. The least useful module is how to deal with the supervisor module, because the ‘supervisors’ it mentioned are those who meet students infrequently, but my supervisor is together with me every day, in his office across the hallway. So I can talk with him any time I want to, from early in the morning to late in the evening. But in China for a PhD student, the first thing s/he should do is to have one or more years of formal courses in which s/he may be taught theories of different subjects, and knowledge of different fields. The students then usually write a term paper for each course.

This excerpt provides insights into how research training and formal GNL are understood institutionally and the consequences for research students and those who educate them. This formal GNL involved using on-line e-learning to deliver the principles and rules issued by the university governing research ethics and academic integrity, teaching research methodology, and learning materials. However, in the absence of formal university courses, these students found that it was their research supervisors who educated them in research methods and educational theory through weekly research training workshops, seminars and one-on-one, face-to-face tutorials. This being the case, they had to adjust to an unexpected pedagogical relationship for which the formal GNL was a supplement. Substantively, their research education was provided through non-formal GNL.

Non-formal Bilingual Research Literacy
What supported the students’ survival during their first six months in Australia was the daily help from their research educators and fellow full-time, on-campus research students. Communication with their close friends in China with whom they shared their experiences in Australia was also very important. They often spoke in Putonghua (spoken Chinese) via Skype with those overseas about each others’ lives and studies. This non-formal GNL provided valuable opportunities, especially given that there was little interaction with locals:

在网上和我的好朋友聊聊我在澳大利亚的生活。我将之称为“枯燥的生活显著的成果”。我觉得我在澳洲的生活与我之前的期待不同。来澳之前，我曾经想象那里的生活一定是丰富多彩的，经常会有各种各样的活动。我能够接触到很多当地人，和他们聊天。我希望我的英语听力和口语短时间内会有很大提高。然而，三个月过去了，我发现并没有那些想象中的活动。我能够接触到当地人，但也只限于打招呼。我的英语听力和口语略有提高，但不显著。每天的生活千篇一律，确实有些单调枯燥。可是令我吃惊的事，当我总结三个月来的学
I talked to my good friend in China on Skype about my life in Australia. I described my experience here as 'routine life but good achievements.' I think the life in Australia is quite different from what I expected. Before I came here, I imagined that the life here must be colourful, with diverse activities. I thought I would be able to meet with and talk to many local people. I hoped my listening and spoken English would be improved in a short time. However, after three months, I have found there are not many such activities or opportunities. I can meet with many local people, but I cannot talk to them except for greetings. My listening and spoken English have improved a little, but not much. Everyday my life is almost the same. It is really a bit dull and boring. But to my surprise, when I summarized my three months’ work, I found I had achieved much in my studies. That accords with a Chinese metaphor, ‘di nei sun shi di wai bu,’ which means, ‘you lose in some aspects, but you gain in other aspects.’ But I think what I have gained is much more valuable than what I have lost, for that is the main aim of my coming here. In this sense, I do not feel life is boring any more. I get pleasure from my studies. Gradually I love it.

These research students were taken aback when they discovered that chances to talk to local Anglo-Australian students or faculty were not the norm. They had hoped to share their research interests and knowledge gained through their life experiences. Like so many international students, this lack of social and intellectual interaction was a challenge for their research and education (Singh & Sproats, 2005).

Informal Bilingual Research Literacy
Contrary to the idea of GNL shattering distance (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008), these students were a long way from home, and worried about their husbands or partners, their aged parents, their colleagues, and/or their students. Using the university’s internet capabilities, they talked to family members via Skype to ensure their well being on a daily basis. In some cases they talked to their parents via the telephone, using relatively inexpensive phone cards, to know that they were happy and healthy. Chatting with family and friends released the students from their qualms about them; leaving them worry-free time to study:

It is said that if a couple is a best couple, they are Xin You Ling Xi (like the sixth sense). I have never tested this proposition before, but today I tested it and confirmed it. My husband had gone to visit his friend in another city. He said he would stay there for at least five days or more. After he left I was not on Skype. I could make use of this time to do more work. On the 4th day in the morning without any reason and unconsciously I opened up Skype.
and was surprised to find that he was on Skype. He said he arrived at home five minutes ago and he just opened up Skype. Is it Xin You Ling Xi?

The use of informal GNL described above indicates the work of a bilingual research student engaging in trans-national, cross-border experiences. Even though the students were in Australia now, they could not escape being concerned about what was happening in China. Informal GNL involved the private, personal communication between the students and their family, friends, students or colleagues in China or other countries. Their informal GNL included good friends in Japan, classmates in the USA and former students in Britain, all of whom informed their research studies in Australia. All such informal GNL was conducted in Putonghua.

CONCLUSION
The global networking of Western research education programmes and pedagogies now has to contend with the bilingual capabilities of non-Western international students as a norm. The normative use of bilingual research literacy as part of the metrics to measure and grade non-Western international students is part of the complex and challenging problem of internationalising of Western education. From Parson’s (1968) perspective, for there to be a stable Western intellectual order involving a plurality of international students there must be a normative framework that sets limits on the linguistic and intellectual resources used within Western universities. However, the monolingual, English only framing of what makes internationalisation of Western research education normal foregrounds the inadequacies of international students from Asia.

There is, however, nothing natural or rational about seeing the internationalisation of Western research education programmes and pedagogies in terms of Western-centred knowledge and English-only pedagogies; this view must be established and sustained as a norm through processes which prioritise subjecting non-Western students to Western acculturation and adjustment. The study reported in this paper raises questions about the reign of this claim on normality, not in the least because of the need to extend and deepen non-Western students’ commitment to critique and scholarly argumentation. Similarly, Foucault (1979, p. 304) argues for knowing 'how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimizing what is already known.'

Globally networked research education may open up possibilities for normalising their bilingual research literacy in Western universities. Bilingual research literacy signifies possibilities for expanding the range of students’ research capabilities, as well as enhancing their potential to make novel contributions using non-Western theoretical tools, whether these be everyday metaphors, scholarly concepts, and images of various kinds. It is no longer just a question of English and Western knowledge being provided for international students from Asia. Their presence provides a basis for making it normal that Western universities engage intellectually with Asian languages and theories. Nonetheless, further research is still needed to establish how the concept of bilingual research literacy affects the conduct of Western research education programmes and pedagogies, and the learning involved for all parties.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
The project reported here was supported by a research grant from the University of Western Sydney.

REFERENCES


