

Article

# Trans-Cultural, Trans-Language Practices: Potentialities for Rethinking Doctoral Education Pedagogies

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**Abstract:** Over the last decade, there has been a rapid increase in doctoral enrolments of Asian international students in Australian universities. While policies have been developed to meet the needs of these students, there seems to be some confusion around the terms internationalisation, globalisation, bi-cultural, inter-cultural, multi-cultural, and trans-cultural within these policies. In this paper, we define these terms and advocate for a policy position which orients to a futurist definition of culture. We then review the work of Michael Singh and his research team at Western Sydney University who have responded to this rapid increase in Asian international student doctoral enrolments in Australian universities by developing pedagogic principles around notions of trans-language and trans-cultural practices. In the final section of the paper, we then draw on our own experiences of doctoral supervision in Australian universities to reflect on our positioning within the pedagogic principles around trans-language and trans-cultural practices.

**Keywords:** internationalising higher education; trans-language and trans-cultural practices; doctoral education; *bi-cultural*; *inter-cultural*; *multi-cultural*; *trans-cultural*

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## 1. Introduction

Doctorate programs in Western universities are marketed using assurances of internationalisation and offering worldly orientations so that graduates are able to operate in global spaces. Graduate research programs claim to be international or global, encouraging students to engage in globally networked learning and connect to international research communities. In recent times, development of ‘the understanding of global interrelatedness, and the capacity to live, work and contribute positively as a member of global communities’ has become a research priority in Australia [1]. Often within policy discourses, the terms internationalisation and globalisation are used interchangeably. We define globalisation processes and phenomenon as making reference to ‘time-space compression’ and ‘global consciousness’ [2] (p. 103). Time-space compression refers to the physical and virtual reduction in time taken to travel across vast distances of space, so that people can be simultaneously in one place or locale but connected to far-away places by electronic means. Relatively inexpensive, anytime, anywhere connectivity via applications such as Skype, FaceTime, Messenger, and Facebook on devices such as smart phones, tablets, and laptop computers means that people remain connected across vast distances. Moreover, this connectivity is in multiple directions, not simply one directional from home country to host nation. In addition, the term global consciousness refers to the ways in which people increasingly talk about events using adjectives such as international and global, for example, the

international economy, international sporting events, global warming, global climate change, world peace, and so forth. This ‘globe-talk’ is “symptomatic of the perception that we live in rapidly changing and uncertain times, and that the fate of local communities is connected to distant political, economic and cultural happenings” [2] (p. 104). Yet, most Australian universities, although using the adjective ‘international’ to describe research and research education practices, maintain a Euro-American-centric curriculum and the English language as the primary and only language of communication for thesis preparation and examination. Ryan [3] argues that this practice presents a mono-cultural perspective to doctoral education, and maintains a ‘one-way’ model which is counter-productive to policies around global orientations. In other words, research students are expected to conform to Western notions of scholarship [3], or to assimilate and conform to Western knowledge [4] commonly available in the academic literature written in English, rather than be offered opportunities to share culturally different perspectives around research practices [5].

Our task in this paper is to distinguish between the different ways that the term culture has been taken up in various policy discourses. We do this by considering the meaning that the term culture takes when it is preceded by a variety of different prefixes, for example, bi, inter, multi, and trans. Following Appadurai [6] and Bauman [7], we argue that the term culture remains a crucial term in the social sciences. However, we are interested in exploring how the term culture can be used when it is oriented to the future as well as the past, and how the term might be extended to consider a sense of belonging. We then review the work of Michael Singh and his research team at Western Sydney University who have responded to the rapid increase in Asian international student doctoral enrolments in Australian universities by developing pedagogic principles around notions of trans-language and trans-cultural practices. In the final section of the paper, we draw on our own experiences of doctoral supervision in Australian universities to reflect on our positioning within the pedagogic principles around trans-language and trans-cultural practices.

## 2. The Matter of the Prefix

The theoretical assumptions underpinning the term ‘internationalisation’ have been questioned by a number of researchers. Internationalisation, according to Gu [8], is often associated with communication across cultures based on an implicit assumption of cultural difference. This is captured in the dominance of cultural terms in policy documents on internationalising higher education such as: *bi-cultural*, *inter-cultural*, *multi-cultural*, and *trans-cultural*. The uptake of these terms in the higher education policy literature has implications for doctoral education curriculum and pedagogic practices.

For example, *bi-cultural*, a term popular in Indigenous education policies [9] has placed importance on schooling systems engaging systematically with Indigenous knowledges and languages, rather than simply transmitting Western knowledges and English language (see [10]). The prefix *bi* implies two-way communication between Indigenous and Western knowledge and cultures. The assumption is that the two categories of knowledge are tightly bounded and separated. Consequently, the use of *bi* implies that mechanisms have been put in place to encourage knowledge flows between the tightly bounded cultures.

The prefix *inter* means ‘between’, ‘among’, ‘together’ and when used with culture, suggests a reciprocal exchange of knowledge across cultures. The assumption is that the cultures are tightly bounded, fixed, and static and the exchange occurs in a common language, usually English, without any significant change to either culture (see [11]). Similarly, the prefix *multi* added to culture, in *multi-cultural*, suggests many (more than one) cultures, and so proposes that many cultures co-habit the one place. It does not explicitly indicate that significant change occurs to the host culture, rather that minority cultures could be expected to assimilate and the host culture may tolerate the differences of minority cultures (see [11]).

In contrast, Gu [8] (p. 105) asserts that internationalisation of the curriculum needs to extend beyond “the exchange of culture and values, mutual understanding and a respect for difference” to higher levels of intellectual exchange. This means questioning the assumption that internationalisation

equates to multi-cultural practices, that is, creating a space where people from diverse cultural heritages meet, a meeting place of multi-cultures. Such an interpretation of internationalisation assumes that cultural identity is static, fixed, internally cohesive, and tightly bounded. It also assumes a stereotype that people belong to a single culture, so little attention has been given to the notion that an individual could be the product of many evolving, intermixing hybrid cultures. Moreover, it assumes that the language of communication across these multiple cultures is English, and that English is a politically and culturally neutral language [12]. In universities, internationalisation as multi-culturalism places the onus on the ‘international’ student to change and assimilate, so the flow of knowledge becomes one-way from the West to the Rest (see [12,13]). By contrast, the prefix *trans* signifies ‘across’, ‘beyond’, ‘through’, and ‘changing thoroughly’. Increasingly, scholars are using the prefix *trans* to write about *trans*-cultural and *trans*-language practices and suggesting that policies on internationalising higher education generally, and research education specifically, should be underpinned by theoretical assumptions informed by these concepts.

### *Trans-Language, Trans-Cultural Practices*

As the prefix suggests, *trans*-cultural and *trans*-language practices assume that cultures are not fixed, static, or tightly bounded. We use Garcia’s [14] (p. 45) notion of trans-language as being “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” to construct and co-construct meanings. For doctoral students, such a process extends beyond mere reciprocal exchange of ideas and implies communicative work, which provides the basis for change in research processes, practices, and systems of knowledge production, transfer, and acquisition. Theoretic-linguistic tools (e.g., concepts, metaphors, analogies, diagrams) [15] afforded also through multi-lingual efforts can allow students to unfurl their own culturally framed borders and identities. The second feature of internationalisation, *trans*-cultural practices, refers to the incorporation of cultural knowledge and theories from other intellectual traditions based on the assumption of an equality of intelligences.

Much has been written about the concept of culture, with some scholars even suggesting that culture has become a ‘zombie’ concept devoid of meaning because it has been used to explain all sorts of activities, events, and phenomena (see [7]). Indeed, Bauman [7] (p. 4) suggests that “because of historical circumstances ... the term ‘culture’ has been incorporated into three separate *univers du discours*”, and in each of these three contexts the term “orders a different semantic field, singles out and denotes different classes of objects, brings into relief different aspects of the members of these classes, suggests different sets of cognitive questions and research strategies”. The three connotations of the concept culture identified by Bauman [7] are: (1) culture as a hierarchical concept to distinguish between everyday and so called ‘cultured’, high-brow practices; (2) culture as a differential concept to distinguish between the different activities of groups; and (3) generic concept of culture as everyday way of life.

Despite the varied uses of the term culture, scholars such as Bauman [7] and Appadurai [6] continue to argue for the usefulness of the concept to the social sciences, with the caveat that the adjectival form, cultural be used instead of culture, and that the term be used to think about future practices rather than always dwell on the past or present. Appadurai [6] (p. 4) argues that no “serious contemporary understanding of culture can ignore three key dimensions: relationality (between norms, values, beliefs, etc.); dissensus within some framework of consensus (especially in regard to the marginal, the poor, gender relations, and power relations more generally); and weak boundaries (perennially visible in processes of migration, trade, and warfare now writ large in globalizing cultural traffic)”. Moreover, Appadurai [6] (p. 2) suggests that “for more than a century, culture has been viewed as a matter of one or other kind of pastness—the keywords here are habit, custom, heritage, tradition. On the other hand, development is always seen in terms of the future—plans, hopes, goals, targets.” It is therefore important to think about cultural practices as future oriented and to consider capacity building in research education as aligned to changing institutional cultural practices

so that supervisors and students aspire to enact different types of knowledge producing practices. Trans-language and trans-cultural practices provide important vehicles to reach such goals.

Trans-language and trans-cultural practices demand knowledge and agency of both students and supervisors. However, researchers (see [16–18]) claim that doctoral supervision practices often ignore the agency of international students and how they can contribute to knowledge construction. It is important therefore to consider how institutional cultures might be changed to enable international students to actively engage in knowledge construction. International students need to be considered ‘assets’, and supervision practices need to harness the knowledge and intellectual capital of these students [3]. In addition, doctoral education needs to integrate contributions from different cultures, philosophies, and languages through pedagogies of intellectual equality (e.g., [19–22]). Crossing the intellectual boundaries of the global social-historical-cultural disciplinary domains is no easy task and doing so stresses the merits of collaboration and cooperation between candidates and supervisors as well as the research community [23].

### 3. How to Practice Doctoral Education Differently?

Michael Singh and his colleagues Huang, Han, and Meng offer suggestions for doctoral education practices underpinned by notions of *trans*-cultural and *trans*-language practices. In what follows, we review key papers produced by Michael Singh and his colleagues Huang, Han, and Meng that we consider to be critical in shifting our own thinking on this topic along four perspectives.

#### 3.1. Rethinking Ignorance as an Asset Rather Than a Deficit

In thinking about how doctoral education programs in Western universities might incorporate the “language and intellectual heritage of research students from multilingual, multi-ethnic China”, Singh [24] introduces the notion of ignorance in pedagogy. He outlines four different ways of thinking about ignorance. First, “ignorance might be taken to mean the want or lack of knowledge, or of being uninformed” [24] (p. 187). This approach to ignorance assumes that careful teaching about other cultures will change irrational fears of other cultures. For example, supervisors might be encouraged to attend generic workshops on cultural awareness to assist them in their day-to-day doctoral education work with international students. Second, ignorance might be viewed as a stimulus or quest for learning, motivating people to acquire knowledge in order to move from ignorance to wisdom. Such educational journeys based on a desire to know more require courage and resilience as people move from the familiar to the unknown, and leave behind others not willing to take the journey. Third, ignorance can be defined as “integral to the structuring of knowledge”, in that it is a “form of knowing that actively resists certain knowledge” [24] (p. 188). Ignorance as a refusal or denial to know can operate at multiple levels. For example, privileged groups or classes of people may actively construct ignorance in order to maintain their power positions, fabricating stories about international students as passive, rote learners not capable of critical, creative thinking [11]. In addition, at an individual level of ignorance can equate with denial, that is, an active refusal to know. For example, individual supervisors might want to deny the changes taking place in the higher education landscape and actively refuse to attend workshops on internationalising education. Fourth, university teachers engaging with a wide array of technologies and dealing with a diverse student population might find themselves in positions where they might be increasingly uncertain if not ignorant. “The internationalisation of higher education transforms academics’ intellectual ordering of the world, rendering so many of our concepts null and void, and making us mindful of our cross-cultural ignorance” [24] (p. 188). Operationalising this mode of ignorance suggests that university teachers develop a broad vision of their own knowledge positioning, as well as that of their students, and allow themselves to be open to learning from the Other.

Michael Singh implores supervisors to mobilise these different accounts of ignorance in their pedagogic practices so that international students can articulate “their intellectual heritage in the contested field of Western educational research” [24] (p. 189). He proposes a set of seven principles

by which supervisors might do such pedagogic work [25]. First, the supervision team must design pedagogies based on an assumption of an equality of intelligences acknowledging the rich intellectual, cultural heritage that the international students bring into the pedagogic relationship. Second, the supervisory team might encourage and see what can be done with ‘intellectual reciprocity’ that is, generating pedagogic practices that see “the supervisor and students acknowledge their mutual ignorance, including mutual ignorance of research and supervisory practices, while recognising each other as intelligent beings” [24] (p. 195). Third, the supervisory team might engage with their own epistemic ignorance by enabling “their research students to use their multilingual communicative repertoire” so as to identify knowledge from their home country “that might be made a theoretically useful component in their educational research” [24,26]. Such an approach attempts an “epistemic point of intellectual engagement” rather than treating international students as an “empirical token” [26] (p. 36). Fourth, the supervisory team might encourage international students to relate what they have learnt previously in their home countries to their current research problem and new learnings. Fifth, the supervisory team might be attentive to the students’ desire and will to learn, and encourages risk taking, detours, and adventures into areas that might appear marginal in efforts to produce original knowledge. Sixth, the supervisory team creates conditions for the student and supervisor to reflect on their own positioning in the transnational field of knowledge production, dissemination, and consumption. Singh believes that an exercise in mapping “one’s ignorance and its changes over time” [26] (p. 35) might help in promoting self-reflection. Seventh, the supervisory team continually encourages students to demonstrate “the materiality of what they are learning” [24] (p. 197), for example, as research for critique being a foremost feature.

### 3.2. Educational Research for Critique

Singh and Huang [27] discuss the reluctance of Western scholars to draw on non-Western knowledge as sources of critical theoretical tools. They also question the presumption that non-Western scholars have to draw on Western knowledge in order to develop critical theoretical tools, as if only the West is the source of criticality and critical theorising. Singh and Huang [27] (p. 204) propose that supervisors “describe and interpret the critical theorising developed by Chinese research students themselves in the course of their investigations into Australian education.” They suggest educational research for critique as opposed to a critical sociology of education. Educational research for critique aims to observe, analyse, and interpret international students’ engagement in critique and justification for their arguments. It does not construct Asian international students, for instance, as the deficit Other incapable of critical theoretical thinking, devoid of an intellectual heritage, and therefore in need of Western theoretical inculcation. Educational research for critique means that:

Western Anglophone educators come to know international students from Asia as critics, as having the same degree of critical capabilities that they assume themselves to have. This necessarily brings to the fore of Western Anglophone research, teacher education and universities these students’ argumentative capabilities and their bi- or multilingual competence [27] (p. 210).

### 3.3. Trans-Cultural Co-Research

Singh, Manathunga, Bunda, and Jing [21] (p. 55) develop a theory of trans-cultural co-research by which they mean collaboration across “theoretic-linguistic knowledge,...concepts, metaphors and images which Indigenous and other non-Western scholars introduce into research from their home cultures, or knowledge produced using linguistic or cultural elements of their home countries.” The aim of this approach is to creatively re-work and re-think entrenched education problems, and find alternative ways of researching these problems. An important methodological principle underlying this research approach entails both Anglophone research educators and international students “coming to know something unknown to both” (Rancière cited in [27] (p. 9)). This means asking the students to engage with the theoretical tools from their home country to analyse and engage in critiques of



education. The aim is to draw on metaphors from the home country, as well as the West, in order to build a theoretical repertoire. This implies trans-cultural co-research.

These principles present opportunities to use trans-language and trans-cultural practices as a vehicle, albeit there is a need to mediate the challenges of cooperative research interventions.

### 3.4. Co-Operative Experiential Inquiry as Doctoral Pedagogic Practice

Singh and Han [28] document their pedagogic journey as they incorporate Chinese intellectual heritage into a Western doctoral program. The pedagogic practice, including publishing papers about this pedagogic practice, is described as a 'research intervention'. Through this research intervention they challenge the idea that theorising only occurs in the metropolitan West, and urge readers to think about theory as ideas to think with, and produced by the majority across the world and not only the Western minority. Specifically, Singh and Han [28] (p. 409) urge doctoral supervisors to consider the ways in which Other knowledges are being marginalised in Australia through "the construction and perpetuation of Europe and North America as preferred sources for knowledge for theorising education." The marginalisation of knowledge produced by minority groups and people based in the geographic South (of the equator) can also be attributed to the politics of commercial publishing companies. These tend to be based in the North and are more inclined to publish knowledge that is likely to be consumed by affluent English speakers in the North. New publication models, including open-access publications and self-publication, are beginning to challenge these practices. In addition, there are increasing calls for publicly funded knowledge to be freely available to all and not hidden behind the paywalls of large corporate publishing companies.

In the next section each of the authors of the article talks about her position on educational research, the concepts and ideas they draw on, and how they might be woven with ideas of other co-authors to re-think and re-work educational issues.

## 4. Our Positioning within This Debate

Here we introduce ourselves, our cultural and linguistic heritages, and how we each engage with the principles of trans-language and trans-cultural practices proposed by Michael Singh and colleagues.

### 4.1. Account One: Minglin Li

#### 4.1.1. Cultural Background

Traditional Chinese conceptions of education have been the guiding principles in Li's education and academic career. She received her school education, undertook her undergraduate studies, completed her Master's degree, and had been a teacher educator in Chinese tertiary education sectors in a province that was dominated by Confucian scholars. She then had the opportunity, after 17 years of an academic career in Chinese universities, to complete her Ph.D research as an international student at an Australian university. Since 2010 she has been able to supervise doctoral students, both domestic and international, with other colleagues. The traditional Chinese education influenced by Confucian thinking is interwoven with the Western education she received, which has shaped her beliefs in what supervision means for both students and supervisors.

One distinct feature of the Confucian tradition of education is the deep reverence for education, focusing on both intellectual development and moral qualities [29–31]. Education is viewed as a process of accumulating knowledge through reading extensively the classics and authoritative works [30,32]; whilst teachers were described by Han Yu, a famous writer, thinker, philosopher, and politician in Chinese Tang Dynasty, as those who are able to impart knowledge and find solutions and answers to students' questions and doubts. Teachers, to transmit correct knowledge in an appropriate way, are expected to have already mastered a profound body of knowledge and be equipped with effective skills to impart that knowledge. As the maxim goes, "to give students a bowl of water, the teacher must have a full bucket of water to dispense" [33] (p. 98). Traditional moral education focused on

cultivating people's moral virtues such as kindness, altruism, loyalty, modesty, and conformity, which is still a major part of education in all educational sectors in China.

#### 4.1.2. Practices

As a supervisor, or co-supervisor of doctoral students, Li has been unconsciously transferring what she has attained from her Chinese education, such as her modest attitudes towards knowledge construction and accumulation. She strongly believes what the Master (Confucius) said: "When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers (one of them is bound to be good enough to be my teacher). I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them" (*san ren xing, bi you wo shi yan. ze qi shan er cong zhi, qi bu shan er gai zhi*). For Li, students and colleagues have always been a source of new knowledge, either Western or Eastern, and of various skills and strategies to construct new knowledge so as not to become an ignorant supervisor [24]. However, she has rarely considered what and whose knowledge she should impart as a supervisor. According to another prominent feature of traditional Chinese education, the relationship between a teacher and his/her student(s) is hierarchical but harmonious. Students are expected to show great respect to their teachers but not to challenge them. One Chinese saying clearly depicts this relation: "being a teacher for only one day entitles one to lifelong respect from the student that befits his father" (*yi ri wei shi, zhong shen wei fu*). Teachers are the persons who have absolute authority. Along this line, Li regards colleagues who are older and/or hold a higher position as superior and teachers from whom she is able to learn. These kinds of traditional values have placed her as a customary 'student', routinely conforming to authoritative Western knowledge, and always as a learner without giving much attention to ways in which her non-Western knowledge can also contribute to the Western/global knowledge.

In recent years though, she has been generously encouraged by the work of Singh [24,26] and his colleagues, and some other researchers (e.g., [24,26,34,35]) who believe that Chinese cultural heritage and Chinese scholars, as well as international students from other cultures, have the potential to enrich the body of Western intellectual knowledge. Shi [34,35] has challenged the culturally monological rather than dialogical and diversified West-centric perspectives, models, approaches, and issues relating to discourse studies, and argued for the reconstruction of Eastern paradigms in favour of multiculturalism in discourse research. He has then continuingly argued for a culturally conscious and reflexive approach to discourse studies—Cultural Discourse Studies (CDS)—by describing a Chinese approach to the discourses of human rights [36]. Singh and his colleagues, Huang, Han, and Meng have conducted extensive research (e.g., [25,27,28]) describing how Chinese linguistic and cultural knowledge could be drawn on to develop theoretical tools in doctoral studies. For example, Singh and Han [28] provide evidence of how Chinese ideas such as the four-character *chengyu* as Chinese intellectual heritage could contribute to the theorisation of a research student's research thesis, and how some structures, such as *Dijin*, *Pingxing*, and *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (see [28] (p. 400), for their detailed meaning), in Chinese writing have been used by Chinese researchers as strategies to "enchant and empower their scholarly writing" [28] (p. 400). Their research has encouraged Li to reflect on her experience in learning to write argumentative essays. In addition to *Dijin and Pingxing*, *Duizhaoshi* could also be an interesting way to make an argument and draw a conclusion. The structure of *Duizhaoshi* is quite similar with that in English writing. When writing an argumentative essay following *Duizhaoshi* style, a viewpoint is proposed which is followed by reasoning with evidence that suggests the viewpoint is true. Then a counterargument will follow which is against the viewpoint or against some aspect of the reasoning.

#### 4.1.3. Implications

Researchers in the book "*Of Other Thoughts: Non-traditional ways to the doctorate. A guidebook for candidates and supervisors*" have demonstrated that Western academics can learn non-Western theoretic-linguistic knowledge [37] although they are reluctant to draw on non-Western knowledge [38]. These researchers have inspired Li to reflect on her 'one-way' learning journey—to conform to Western

notions of scholarship [38], or to assimilate and conform to Western knowledge [4], and consider how opportunities could be offered for mutual benefits made possible by welcoming and sharing culturally different perspectives and knowledge constructions [5]. As Singh et al. [21] put it, the challenging questions are how a pedagogy of intellectual equality that involves international students as active agents can be activated, and how theoretic-linguistic knowledge from one culture can be transformed into other documented and validated theoretical concepts and modes of critique. This would be a new project for Li in the future as a higher degree research supervisor—trying not to be an ignorant supervisor whilst encouraging international students to involve themselves in ‘two-way’ learning practices, by sharing their prior knowledge and skills gained in their own countries and contributing to their higher degree research studies to produce new learning.

#### 4.2. Account Two: Parlo Singh

##### 4.2.1. Cultural Background

I grew up in North Queensland, Australia, and my own education was in government funded state schools, as well as at home and in the local community. I learnt to speak, read, and write in Punjabi at home and the main mode of communication in the home was Punjabi. At school, I learnt to speak, read and write in English and the main mode of communication at school was English. Indeed, during the sixties and seventies teachers actively discouraged the use of languages other than English at school. This was despite the fact that the schools I attended included students of a wide variety of cultural and linguistic heritages: Italian, Chinese, Eastern European, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Irish, Anglo-Saxon, German, and so forth. Like many of the girls I studied with in the 1970s in rural Queensland, Australia, I entered into a career in teaching and then completed postgraduate and doctoral studies.

The first doctoral student I supervised was Karen Dooley at Griffith University who was awarded her Ph.D in 2001. The thesis was titled: ‘Adapting to Diversity. Pedagogy for Taiwanese Students in Mainstream Australian Secondary Schools.’ Dooley had been an early childhood teacher working in Queensland schools, and spent a year teaching in a school in China, participating in a guest teacher program administered through the Australian State Government education system, through funding received through the Australian government trade department. The aim of the program was to promote Australia’s economic ties with China through an education and cultural exchange program. Teachers from Australia spent 12 months in China as guest teachers, helping teach English as a second language, and teachers from China spent 12 months in Australia, helping to teach Mandarin in primary schools. During her time in China, Dooley had learnt some Mandarin and became increasingly interested in exploring issues of cultural identity and schooling, and so decided to work on a data set generated from my Australian Research Council Discovery project titled: ‘Constructing “Australian Identities” through language and literacy education in schools, communities and workplaces (A79601654)’. We both viewed theory as a set of resources to think with and about social and educational issues, and consequently turned to many sources for building theoretical work. These sources included: novels written by Chinese diaspora authors; postcolonial literature [39–44], as well as education sociological work by Bourdieu [45], Bernstein [46,47], and others. Interestingly, as I look back at the thesis now, there is no reference to all the novels that we read together, and yet our study of the novels by Chinese diaspora authors heavily influenced the way we thought through the educational problem. My bookshelf contains traces of the thinking work undertaken during that doctoral supervision period and beyond [48–51].

##### 4.2.2. Practices

In terms of supervisory practices, I can attest to adopting many of the principles of conscientious ignorance outlined by Singh and colleagues Huang, Han, and Meng. The doctoral education journey was a ‘learning together’ journey. While Dooley was not an international student, she had experiences



of being an international student/teacher on a guest teacher program in China, and wanted to explore what it meant to construct inclusive pedagogy and curriculum for recent immigrants from Taiwan in Australian secondary schools.

One of Dooley's key contributions is theorising ambivalence by synthesising the work of Homi Bhabha, Ien Ang, and Basil Bernstein. According to Dooley [52] (p. 42) ambivalence "refers to the tension between the diachrony of rational (or non-stereotypical) knowledge about the native with its pressure for change, and the synchrony of the fantastic (or stereotypical) with its static, essentialist knowledge of the native". The concept of ambivalence is useful for thinking about tensions:

...between the diachrony of historical knowledge and its impetus for tolerant, anti-racist changes, and the synchrony of fantastic, essentialised knowledges and their inputs for the stasis of intolerance and racism. Interactionally, structural ambivalence in favour of the celebration of cultural diversity and the imposition of intolerance results in the types of communication breakdown that occurs with the question, 'Where are you from?', a question that is sometimes criticised as 'racist' because it suggests Asians do not belong in Australia, and sometimes defended as genuine, personal interest [52] (p. 43).

However, Dooley [52] pointed out that it is necessary to examine structural and interactional ambivalence operationalised within education policy documents and classroom curriculum and pedagogy. Here she turned to the work of scholars writing about pedagogic discourse and classroom communication [47].

Is it possible to suggest that this thesis did not engage with trans-cultural and trans-language practices? I would suggest that the author's use of literature in diverse disciplinary areas ranging from novel study, cultural studies, sociology of education, social psychology, and drawing on the work of diasporic Asians, as well as Anglophone writers does meet this criteria. I would also argue that it is important not to essentialise knowledge in the body of the knower, given the rapid movement of people across increasingly porous national borders.

#### 4.2.3. Implications

Fast forward to the present. I am now increasingly supervising international students from mainland China with colleagues who have recently migrated to Australia from China. In addition, field work conducted in China by these international students is often supervised by colleagues in a Chinese university. We draw on literature from colleagues who studied in the West at the same time as I was completing my own doctoral studies, and who have now returned to their home countries [53,54].

### 4.3. Account Three: Sarojni Choy

#### 4.3.1. Cultural Background

Choy has been engaged in trans-cultural practices from early childhood, albeit not in an academic sense, yet this has instinctively influenced her approach to doctoral supervision. She grew up in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual remote village setting in the Fiji Islands. Her upbringing and education was influenced by British governance of Fiji between 1874 and 1970. Essentially, she is the product of many cultures. Her cultural immersion was further fortified at the University of the South Pacific where she studied with students from eleven regional countries. Later, as an employee there she interacted with staff and students from the region as well as other countries across the world. Choy also lived among many international doctoral students and their families in the United Kingdom. An appreciation of the Asian (continental) cultures and values was enriched through her work in the Pacific and the South East Asian region for many years. For Choy, trans-cultural practices that Singh, Manathunga, Bund, and Jing [21] describe were never both-ways—they were always, and continue to be, multiple-ways. It is this richness surfacing from multiple ways that foregrounds her approach to trans-language and trans-cultural practices during supervision of international doctoral students in Australia.

Much of Choy's multicultural knowledge and what it meant to 'be' a community member was gained from experiences in her community. Understandings of trans-language and trans-cultural practices were acquired through engagement in the process of 'talanoa' (open respectful discourse without concealment). In Fiji, it is not unusual for communications in three languages at the same time, given that the majority of the population understand the contextual meanings of the borrowed vocabulary from the main languages for clarity around a point of discussion. As such, she sees no harm in using English as the main medium, but invites international students to contribute key terms from their languages to co-construct meanings.

Choy's ethnic cultural appropriation has a huge influence on her approach to trans-language and trans-cultural practices with doctoral students. At an early age she learnt about culturally appropriate conduct such as individuals having a 'place' to speak, engage in discussions or debate. This was a form of 'island diplomacy' that was not taught, but rather practiced and learnt by observing, mimesis, following and being guided (sometimes reprimanded) by elders to be able to maintain harmony and community spirit, never questioning its rightness or otherwise. In following this custom, one may know more, but must know when to speak while engaging in the equivalent of the Samoan 'va' (see Refiti [55], the Fijian version of 'bose vaka ni turanga' (invitation to respectfully speak as a leader where each is regarded as worthy of contributing to the discussion). The practice is similar to the dialogue forums held by communities in many Nordic countries. Such a system works in the Fijian context where there is community structure and relationships have significance.

#### 4.3.2. Cross-Cultural Research Practices

To promote equality of intelligences, at commencement Choy reminds international higher degree research candidates that they are partners on a journey of learning; they are co-learners with their supervisors. They share what they have read on the thesis topic, about research generally, about knowledges gained from their countries of origin or from any international research they engage in. She explains the doctoral journey as one that will commence with close guidance and 'hand holding', but with the expectation that it will gradually evolve into one where the student leads the way. Certainly after data collection, she expects students to lead the construction of new knowledge.

As a way of acknowledging their equal intelligence and intellectual reciprocity, induction programs are routinely organised to empower and encourage students to acknowledge their own intelligences and strengths to equip themselves to cross boundaries. That passage between scholarship and research in their country and the university where they undertake higher degree research studies takes time. It is challenging especially for students from Asian and Pacific origins who believe they have come here to be 'taught', shown how to and told what to do to successfully complete their studies. Surprisingly, many students show little understanding of what it means to be a doctoral candidate. Getting accepted for enrolment itself is an extraordinary experience. The supervisors are seen as the knowledge bearers and the experts, persons not to be questioned, but followed. In the beginning the concept of equal dialogue is foreign and challenging to many students, but particularly to international Asian students. Asian and Pacific students' understanding of their teachers' roles is culturally bound (see Li's account earlier in this paper). Their self-confidence is often low. A reminder of how far they have come, what they have learnt, positions them for the rest of the candidature and helps to re-build their self-confidence. Recounting her own journey also provides students with an example they can easily relate to. She openly acknowledges that there are things that students know and things that she knows, and that together they can integrate their collective knowledge to learn from the Western literature. They come to new understandings and create new knowledge. She sees her role mainly to verify and validate interpretations of theoretical concepts and modes of critique in ways to meet the academic rigour expected of doctorate candidates. This approach facilitates the knowledge construction process, the start of epistemological cultural inclusion, and the act of making knowledge count in order to advance intellectual equality.

She finds international students often struggle with equivalent words because in the English language they have limited vocabulary to give precise meanings that can be expressed by them in their non-English vocabulary. Allowing students to use a multilingual communicative repertoire releases some of the tension. A typical conversation about struggles with using their cultural, language tools may start with:

Student: "I don't know how to explain in English, but in Chinese we say..., do you know what I mean?"

Choy: "Yes, in Fijian we have a similar expression which means...Is it similar to what you mean?"

Here the student uses the Chinese term and explains the contexts in which it is used and Choy uses her languages and together, they transcend the epistemic boundaries [24]. They then discuss the specific interpretation for the thesis topic. There is often delight in students' response when they find out that even as an experienced academic Choy also has difficulties in translating and integrating different languages, philosophical ideas, and theories. She invites students to share their knowledge and experiences because she too wants to learn so that together they can move from unknown to known [24]. These instances demonstrate a sense of equality in intelligence.

#### 4.3.3. Implications

Choy does not believe that supervisors need to learn a new language to internationalise the doctoral curriculum, and to engage in trans-language and trans-cultural practices. Necessarily, English can remain the common medium of conversation, but when seasoned with words and phrases from other languages it brings out more meaningful interpretations. Through a series of questions and answers, development of multiple ideas, and graphic representations articulated in English, students can draft a set of understandings that they then take away to mull over and produce their own writing. Such a process may take several iterations until they have actually deciphered the meaning in English, de-muted their theoretic-linguistic tools, and mobilised their respective contributions. They start as ignorant, as indeed they are from the perspective of the researcher, because she does not know the context behind where their knowledge was produced. However, through translation they can begin the process of understanding how knowledge was created and how it evolved.

Needless to say, this is a very slow, yet transformative process. Choy creates an awareness of richness that lies in a multilingual communicative repertoire that can be used to reconcile different complementary and competing knowledges to enrich their own as well as 'others' knowledge. She reminds students that they have a moral responsibility for integration between and across different systems and languages because this is how they can contribute worldly orientations to research. For her, it is about creating that 'hunger' that leads them to hunt, gather, and construct new knowledge, but also acknowledge those knowledges which are already known but expressed differently in different cultures.

These brief accounts of her approaches to trans-language and trans-cultural practices did not come naturally, but rather ensued from her own experiences and challenges. Like Huang [27], she too believed that culturally theoretical knowledge had a place within particular cultural contexts. She too had not consciously thought of integration, but now realises that it sometimes happens organically when one is multicultural and multi-lingual. Her approaches align well with some of the principles suggested by Singh [24]. Choy concedes she is ignorant about certain aspects, but is open to learning as she interacts with students and academics. Her experience shows that engagement in trans-language and trans-cultural practices has to be genuinely invitational, not just a process that students and supervisors are expected to follow. She continues to explore ways to advance trans-language and trans-cultural practices because she values its currency and portability across discipline, and intellectual and institutional boundaries as she pursues more enriched pedagogies to advance internationalisation of higher degree research programs.

## 5. Valuing Trans-Language and Trans-Cultural Practices

In this section we summarise the strategies and pedagogies to endorse trans-language and trans-cultural practices. We advocate extending beyond *bi*, *inter*, and *multi* to *trans*-cultural and *trans*-language practices, thereby giving a future oriented focus to research supervision. We anticipate the reach of such communicative work to range beyond mere reciprocal exchange of ideas to co-construction of new knowledge and research practices. In this way, supervision no longer follows a master-apprentice model, rather one where both become learners and begin from the unknown to new knowings using scaffolding as a pedagogical strategy. The focus shifts to what can be learnt from other theoretical and linguistic bases, not just to learning about them. That is, where students and supervisors are encouraged and challenged to use their theoretic-linguistic tools and engage in a dualistic model of teaching and learning that will reach several 'me too' moments such as what Ranciere [56] (p. 87) speaks of: "Me too, I have the capability for using my intellectual heritage to produce knowledge that contributes to informed intellectual debates internationally." Other 'me too' moments could include "Me too, I did not know that. Thank you for sharing your new thinking. It links with what I understood to be..., but now I can see there is an alternative or more augmented way of looking at ..." There are merits in supervisors also viewing themselves as customary students and acknowledging that they do not yet know everything that is the essence of being a researcher—one who needs to continue finding new knowledge, contributing to and extending one's disciplinary knowledge. This practice demonstrates not just equality of intelligences, but also intellectual reciprocity. As supervisor and student, we encourage each other to start from where each is—the Chinese concept of "*yin cai shi jiao*" (teaching by starting from a student's critical capabilities) [27] (p. 204)—to extend ordinary everyday critiques and cultivate appreciation of multilingual capabilities.

To construct new theories, for instance, Western examples of theories and philosophies could be used to seek ways of thinking and understanding common concepts, identify similarities, differences, and novel perspectives. This needs to be a guided process that is also invitational, allowing students to incorporate their cultural knowledge and theories. Cognitive questioning techniques are necessary for students to learn conventional research practices, as well as generate new ways to conduct research that is appropriated for different cultural contexts. They can appraise relationality [6] and review the norms, values, and beliefs from different cultural lenses. The supervision process can accept and invite challenges to ideas because research production relies on collective experience regulated by norms of communication and argumentation [23]. However, all these processes need to consider that research emerges from within a discipline and also contributes to extending the discipline, but that the research process is ultimately embedded in practice. Importantly, students need to understand the situatedness of their research in their cultural or national contexts. Parlo Singh asserts that supervisors should not "essentialise knowledge in the body of the knower" because people travel across borders and are influenced by new learnings, therefore students need to be trained to re-conceptualise basic ideas as appropriate in different contexts.

International research students can be encouraged to use their own analogies, metaphors, and so on to explain their thinking. We stress that this is a joint quest for the students and supervisors because the exchange is about both groups examining their mutual ignorance [26]. Integral to the quest is demonstrating the equivalence of knowledge by opening the space for reciprocal input and acknowledging that Asian international students have the capacity to engage in critical and reflective thinking. We advocate the blending of Western and Other modes of theorising and critique and suggest that supervisors facilitate these processes.

A final point we stress is that the merits of *trans*-language and *trans*-cultural practices demand new learning by supervisors. A cultural change in supervision practices will take time. Not until *trans*-language and *trans*-cultural practices become a normative practice (not just a reflection of socio-cultural diversity, but also of epistemological and linguistic diversity) can the intellectual capital of international students be truly celebrated.

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