Cut and Paste Pedagogy?: Academic mobility, teaching practices and the circulation of knowledge

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Abstract

Drawing on material from qualitative research with Chinese academics in a UK university and British academics in the Chinese branch campus of that university, this paper places pedagogy at the centre of geographical debates about mobility and the internationalisation of higher education. In particular, it moves beyond the usual focus on the mobility of pedagogy in schools or the teaching of international students in higher education to consider how pedagogic practices are embodied in mobile academic staff, within particular classroom and wider institutional environments. These individuals bring their prior experience of teaching and institutional cultures to a new environment where they come up against approaches and pedagogic practices which may clash with their beliefs about good teaching. This pedagogic dissonance may create feelings of frustration or insecurity, but may also provide opportunities for creativity and self-reflection. The paper focuses on three aspects of pedagogic practice: classroom interactions, language and assessment. The focus on the embodied nature of pedagogic practice extends geographical debates around academic mobility, hierarchies of knowledge, and the internationalisation of higher education.

Keywords: Academic mobility, China, pedagogy, transnational education

Introduction

The internationalisation of education encompasses the growing interconnections between education institutions and systems in different countries. These interconnections involve academic mobilities, which Jöns (2018a: 152) defines as 'spatial movements linked to universities, involving people and organisms, technologies and material things, knowledge and practices, imaginations and representations, communications and virtual information.' Gunter and Raghuram similarly stress that mobility in this context encompasses more than the mobility of people, as well as emphasising how mobility in all its forms is 'constitutive of knowledge systems' (2018: 192). As their research focuses on international study, they stress knowledge in relation to curriculum content, but other researchers have discussed knowledge circulation more generally (Jöns, 2007, 2009, 2015, 2018b; Madge *et al.*, 2015).

Research on the international mobility of people in the education sector has often focused on the movement of school pupils or university students (Brooks and Waters, 2011). This reflects the numerical importance of these flows, compared with staff mobility, but also the economic contributions that international students make to the host country. In terms of teaching and learning, research has often highlighted the challenges international students face in adapting to a new educational environment. As Madge *et al.* (2015) stress, 'international students' are also often framed as a problem because of their unfamiliarity with particular forms of learning. However, such discourses are challenged because they homogenise the experiences of thousands of students who have travelled across international borders to study, and also because processes of educational internationalisation have incorporated students and staff around the world into global networks of knowledge circulation. This includes students who are studying 'at home' (see, for example Gunter and Raghuram 2018 on South Africa; Leung and Waters 2017; Waters and Leung, 2013a, 2013b, 2017 on Hong Kong).

There has been less research, although this is increasing (Hutchinson, 2016; Leung, 2013, 2017; Yudkevich *et al.*, 2017), on the mobility of academic staff and their experiences and role in the processes of internationalisation. These people are vital parts of knowledge circulation networks, particularly through teaching delivery, but how their understandings and experiences of pedagogy are challenged or reinforced by their mobility and what this means for the circulation of knowledge, has had little attention (although see Tebbett 2019). Adapting teaching practices to different settings and student groups 'at home' should be part of good practice, so a form of cut and paste pedagogy when moving to teach overseas should be queried. This ability or willingness to adapt, however, needs to be considered within the wider institutional context and the subjectivities of the teachers and students.

This paper seeks to address the scarcity of research on academic mobility and pedagogy through research on two university campuses. The focus on pedagogy can also contribute to wider debates on the geographies of higher education. The curriculum content, forms of teaching and assessment, and teaching facilities are subject to institutional control, both directly in terms of university regulations, but also more broadly due to regulatory bodies and in some cases, direct government involvement. The nature and quality of teaching also contribute to the reputation of universities, feeding into the benefits of the institutional capital which students are hoping to gain through studying a particular programme. Teaching and learning are embodied practices, involving interactions between teachers and students in particular spaces. In all these dimensions, overlapping and intersecting bordering practices are taking place. Leung and Waters (2017) use this notion in relation to internationalisation of higher education in Hong Kong stating that, 'Education work, therefore, can be conceptualised fundamentally as border work' (2017: 1276).

In this paper we take up Brooks and Waters' (2018) call for an approach to examining education which brings together materialities and (im)mobilities to understand the spatialities of higher education. In doing this, we are not just discussing the experiences of the academic staff, but additionally focus on how knowledge and

pedagogic practice circulate and are shaped through the interactions in the classroom and wider teaching environment. We draw on Jöns' (2018) very helpful triadic distinction between materialities (such as books and classroom resources), immaterialities (including ideas, knowledge and feelings), and dynamic hybrids referring to people and the interactions between them.

The particular case study that we are using, of an international branch campus in China and its home institution in the UK, provides important insights into debates around geographies of education and mobility through examining the experiences of Chinese academics in the UK and British academics in China. This approach is innovative in that existing research tends to focus on either one campus or one country. In both cases the underpinning pedagogic principles and delivery mechanisms of the institutions are supposed to be the same, but the embodied nature of teaching and learning mean that the coming together of students and staff in particular spaces results in diverse outcomes.

After sections which outline existing research on the geographies of academic mobility and pedagogy, and the qualitative methodology adopted in this study, the paper is divided into three main sections. These address key elements of pedagogic practice which came out of the research: classroom interactions, language and assessment, providing grounded examples of particular pedagogic practices. The final section draws out conclusions from the case study, and the contributions that the paper makes to understandings of academic mobility, pedagogic practice in internationalised education, and the circulation of knowledge.

Academic Mobility, Pedagogy and the Circulation of Knowledge

The increasing mobility of educational institutions, individual students and staff, and education policy, has created new forms of transnational education, but this does not mean that local context or place-specificity has been eradicated. This is even the case in branch campuses or educational franchises where a particular form of 'non-local', international education is part of the supposed appeal to potential students and their

families. Gunter and Raghuram (2018) stress the complexities of place and the need for transnational higher education providers in South Africa to be locally relevant. Leung and Waters (2017) make similar arguments in their work on British higher education providers in Hong Kong, stressing how, because education is a relational encounter (p.1276), the specifics of the people and wider context need to be acknowledged. For Jöns (2018) this intertwining of supposed global processes with local contexts is another reason for challenging simple binaries (in this case global/local) in understanding academic mobility.

Considering education work as border work (Leung and Waters, 2017) highlights how educational practices both reflect and reinforce divisions and hierarchies about what forms of knowledge are valued, how educational institutions should be run, and appropriate forms of teaching and learning. These hierarchies may be drawn on to promote particular institutions or programmes, but the boundaries may need to be more porous because of the particular context, such as a promotion of teaching using the English language when many students do not have sufficient English language skills (Leung and Waters, 2017: 1283). Leung and Waters have a brief discussion of the role of individual academics in the policing or challenging of the educational borders. In this paper, we develop these arguments more fully through a focus on academics' teaching experiences.

Research on the international mobility of students is being increasingly complemented by work on the mobility of academic staff. Mobility is seen as a key element of a successful academic career (Bauder, 2015) but takes many different forms, from very short visits for conferences, or sojourns as 'flying faculty' to long-term contracts at an overseas institution (Gunter and Raghuram, 2018; Jöns, 2018). Mobility is often driven by research ambitions (Jöns, 2007, 2009, 2015; Welch, 1997) or the lure of a permanent role with both research and teaching responsibilities.

Research has considered the motivations behind such migration, including improvements in career prospects and income (Leung, 2013, 2017) , as well acknowledging the obstacles faced in the immigration system, but also in adapting to

new educational environments (Cai and Hall, 2016; Hsieh, 2012; Hutchinson, 2016; Mizzi, 2017; Morley *et al.*, 2018; Pherali, 2012; Tebbett, 2019; Yudkevich *et al.*, 2017). This is the case even in the context of international branch campuses where the infrastructure is purportedly designed to reproduce the experience of the home campus (Liu and Lin, 2017; Wilkins and Neri, 2019).

Studies of academics' international mobility have focused less on the experiences of teaching in a new environment, and how assumptions about pedagogy and lecture room practice may be challenged. There is some research (such as Hsieh, 2012; Jiang *et al.*, 2010) which engages with debates around pedagogy in examining the broader experiences of Chinese academics in the UK. Tebbett (2019) is a notable exception to this trend, with her study of the role of migrant academic staff in the internationalisation of higher education in the UK. It highlights challenges faced by 35 academics from a range of countries, including the undervaluing of their knowledge and teaching skills.

Rao *et al.* (2018) highlight how values and approaches to teaching in higher education might clash with existing practices in new academic environments. While this is common in all moves between institutions, international mobility provides greater opportunities for what Rao *et al.*, drawing on the work of Postareff *et al.*, term 'pedagogic dissonance' (2018: 8). Postareff *et al.* (2008) investigate the self-reported teaching approaches of university staff in Finland using the distinctions of learning-focused strategies involving conceptual change and content-focused strategies stressing information transmission. This could be seen as a form of border work.

Examinations of the teaching in international contexts, has sometimes focused on the challenges of teaching students with different language skills and approaches to learning. While this is sometimes based on research with academic staff who have moved abroad, the focus is usually on 'international students' who have travelled to study in the UK, USA, Australia and Canada. Because of the numerical importance of students from East Asia in the flows of international students, research has tended to concentrate on this group, particularly students from China. This has sometimes been

framed in simplistic ‘Asian’ versus ‘Western’ forms of learning, where ‘Asian’ education is seen as teacher-led dissemination of knowledge, which students are expected to learn and repeat, while ‘Western’ pedagogy encourages students to think for themselves, question the teachers and develop their own understandings. For classroom practice, this usually translates as a distinction between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ learners; teacher-centred classes involve a transmission of information to students who are then assessed on their ability to repeat this information, rather than to challenge or evaluate it. Class participation is not encouraged (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Jiang et al., 2010) and independent learning is not expected (Yang *et al.*, 2019).

Such sweeping generalisations have been increasingly challenged, with acknowledgement of the diversity of students, educational settings and subject matter (Song and McCarthy, 2018). Additionally, as Madge *et al.* (2015) highlight, research setting out binary distinctions often frame ‘international students’ (usually meaning Asian, often Chinese, students) in Western settings as being a ‘problem’ or a ‘challenge’ because of their unfamiliarity with styles of learning, rather than being recognised as having agency and contributing to the circulation of knowledge in international education. These practices of ‘cultural othering’ are highlighted by Song and MacCarthy (2018) for both Asian academics and students in the context of Australia.

The experiences of othering are vividly demonstrated by many contributors to Hosein *et al*’s 2018 collection of personal narratives on teaching in international contexts. Most contributors to this book completed their school education, and often their undergraduate studies, in countries of the Global South, before moving to the UK for PhD study or an academic position. A number of the authors (Kum, 2018; Yeh, 2018) stress the upheaval of moving to a new country, and the confusion that comes from a different educational system, but also how their identity as an academic and good teacher was challenged (see also Razzaque, 2014: 107).

Such concerns about professional identity are less evident in work on academic staff from the Global North working in the Global South; instead common narratives are

about the frustration coming from the pedagogic dissonance experienced due to unfamiliar (and often perceived inferior) teaching and learning environments. This reflects an unacknowledged privileging of Northern experiences and a lack of self-reflection. A notable exception to this is Eric Blair's narrative about moving from teaching in the UK to Trinidad and Tobago (Blair, 2018).

Research, often drawing on personal narratives, has examined the potential advantages that non-Western academic staff can make to the experiences of students in Western settings because of their perceived different life experiences (Alberts, 2008; Tebbett, 2019). 'The pedagogical value of places "not here" must be acknowledged' (Enriquez-Gibson, 2018, p.138). These hierarchies of valuing certain forms and experiences of pedagogy underpin some of the border work that Leung and Waters (2017) highlight in their Hong Kong study.

Recognising the interactions between students and staff, brings to the fore the embodied and affective nature of teaching and learning (Probyn, 2004). Freedman and Holmes (2003) represents an early engagement with the role of the teacher's body in experiences of teaching and learning in a classroom setting. However, the breadth of the collection meant that there was little coverage of international mobility and pedagogy other than Whitfield's chapter on teaching in China (Whitfield, 2003). Since then, there has been a growing literature focusing on bodies and the implications on what goes on in classroom or other spaces of education (e.g. Perumal, 2012; Mulcahy, 2012). However, the embodied nature of teaching and learning remains understudied, something which Brooks and Waters (2018) include in their call for greater recognition of the materialities and mobilities in education; 'In some cases, analyses of the body can shed light on pedagogical encounters' (2018, p.41).

This resonates with Jöns' categorisation of 'dynamic hybrids' in research on academic mobilities; classroom encounters between teachers and students include the material bodies of the participants, but also the meanings associated with particular bodies (particularly due to gender, race or age) and the forms of interaction. Assumptions about authority, expertise and knowledge, are often read through embodied practices.

Within transnational education, this may be particularly important as a marker of authenticity. As Whitfield observes when reflecting on her experience teaching English in China, 'The students needed my white face and so-called authentic English to inspire them' (Whitfield, 2003, p. 103). The importance that immobile Hong Kong students place on the physical presence of UK-based faculty at their graduation ceremonies for UK-awarded degrees suggests similar assumptions about particular academic bodies (Waters and Leung 2013a, 2013b).

Existing research (such as Gunter and Raghuram, 2018; Waters, 2017) has highlighted the potential tensions between mobilities and emplacement within education, particularly transnational education. This paper engages with these tensions and seeks to address gaps in the current literature about academic mobility and pedagogy by exploring the embodied teaching experiences of Chinese and British staff in the UK and China respectively.

Methodology

This paper draws on research conducted by Tianfeng in a UK university (4 months) and its branch campus in China (3 months) during 2013-15. She is a Chinese national who has significant experience of university teaching in China, as well as studying in France and the UK. This meant that she was seen as an 'insider' by all participants, but that this insider status worked across a range of identity positions (see below). The research reported in this paper was part of a larger PhD project focusing on academics' daily working experiences in transnational educational spaces (Liu, 2016). As part of its mission to reproduce the UK campus educational experience in China, student-centred practice, such as critical thinking and active learning, has been promoted by the Sino-British university in China. At the time of the research, approximately 75-80% of the students on the Chinese campus were Chinese nationals, with the remaining students coming from more than 30 countries. In terms of mobility, in both the UK and Chinese case, our research is engaging both with the international mobility of academic staff, and students, as well as student mobility and immobility within national borders.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 members of academic staff (30 Chinese nationals in the UK and 30 British nationals in China). Participants were recruited through a range of channels including the university website, personal networks, websites such as LinkedIn and academia.edu, and snowball sampling. The overall sample consisted of 44 men and 16 women, reflecting the gender balance of Britons and Chinese academics on the respective campuses. The participants came from a range of disciplines and career stages. Among the Britons, 90% had not worked in China before the current job, but 75% had worked in more than three countries. Of the Chinese participants, 85% had been educated in the UK or another Western country, but only 50% had experience of working outside China. All of the participants were on permanent or fixed-term contracts, i.e. there were no 'flying faculty' who come in to teach or research for a few weeks. All participants engaged in some teaching, although eight participants in the UK and two in China were employed on research-focused contracts. Three participants in the UK and four in China were employed as language teachers. Throughout the paper pseudonyms are used.

Leung (2015) highlights the fluidity of identities through which participants categorise and engage with researchers, going beyond simple identifications of co-ethnic or shared gender identities (see also Mohammad, 2001). Tianfeng's ethnic and national identity, as well as factors such as her migration history and professional experience all shaped her interactions with participants, although she was differently positioned within the UK and in China. For Chinese participants, interviews were conducted in Chinese. Because of Tianfeng's background, many participants were keen to share their experiences of working in the UK, assuming that she would understand the challenges of moving between academic systems (see also Ho, 2009 on her work with Singaporeans in London where her own Singaporean nationality facilitated participation and shaped responses). In China, interviews were conducted in English, but again Tianfeng's transnational experience opened up spaces where participants were keen to discuss their perspectives on life in China, seeing her as a potential cultural translator. For further details of the negotiations around positionality within this research see Liu (2016).

Interviews were semi-structured, using a general thematic guide for each session, but flexible enough to follow interesting lines of discussion and participants' own questions. The focus of the broader project on understanding daily working experiences, and the semi-structured interview approach that was used, means that we were not seeking to provide a representative sample. The flow of the conversations also means that the same topics were not covered in all interviews. The two campuses in this study are part of the same university, but the nature of a branch campus in terms of its profile, location and relatively recent establishment, means that its appeal to mobile international academics is likely to be different than for the long-established home institution in the UK. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using open coding.

Participant observation also played a significant part in understanding everyday life on campus. Tianfeng lived on or near the campus in both locations and spent a significant amount of time hanging out in the social spaces used by academic staff, as well as attending lectures and other academic activities. In China she also contributed to some teaching sessions where she taught alongside one of the participants. This provided a particularly rich opportunity to see the importance of bodies and pedagogic practice in classroom dynamics.

Classroom interactions

The classroom is a key space of teacher-student interactions in most universities, with these encounters framed by wider institutional norms and expectations around quality education. These values can be seen as part of academics' bordering work, drawing both on their own training and experience, and the institutional requirements. However, the classroom is also where the mobility of people (both students and staff), material items, such as textbooks and computer technology, and intangible norms and values, come together. This section considers how academic staff reflected on their pedagogical experiences in the classroom.

British academics in China

Teacher-centred or student-centred teaching are often seen as two opposing elements of pedagogical practice, with individual teachers, subjects or educational systems tending to favour one over the other. While in reality, a mixture of the two may be implemented, in general the UK educational system at both school and university level tends to favour a student-centred teaching approach. This is seen to encourage student participation in class, alongside independent and critical thinking. It is also part of the branding of the branch campus and its 'British' education.

Arriving in China with experience and training in what is seen as 'active learning' as the route to good student attainment, many Britons found that their students were unwilling or unable to engage in the classroom activities that went beyond taking lecture notes. The idea of classroom passivity was stressed by many respondents as demonstrated by Lisa and Rupert:

> *Most of my Chinese students are passive learners.*
> (Lisa, English tutor, in China for 1 year)

> *We always say Chinese students are quiet and uncommunicative in class.*
> (Rupert, professor, in China for 3 years).

Mark, for example, described his first year students' misunderstanding or rejection of active learning:

> *I have found that most of my first year students did not understand my style of teaching at the beginning, because it is different from what they had in high school. Some of them felt a little bit lost, and they turned to me for help. I remember there was a girl in my class, one day she said to me: 'Mark, I know you are a good teacher, but I do not think I can learn much from you!' I asked her why, and she said she could not get used to my teaching method, which gives lots of time for self-learning and practising. She told me: 'if we can learn by ourselves, why we*

> *need a teacher?' She believed that what she can get most out of a teacher is well-structured knowledge through well-organised lectures rather than the cultivation of independent learning and critical thinking. Honestly, I do not think she knew what critical thinking is; it is not in most Chinese students' blood. (Mark, English tutor, in China for 5 years).*

Here Mark is highlighting the tensions between what he sees as the expectations of his Chinese students who have come through the Chinese high school system with its focus on teacher-centred, knowledge-dissemination approaches, and his training in student-centred teaching. The 'cultivation of independent learning and critical thinking' underpins his pedagogical approach, with his belief that students should be able to evaluate information and apply their knowledge. In his final comments, he moves from commenting on the individual student, to a generalisation about Chinese students: 'it [critical thinking] is not in most Chinese students' blood.' By referring to these skills in relation to 'blood' he is not implying that a lack of critical thinking is an outcome of genetics, but rather that it is deeply embedded in students' understandings and experiences of education.

In Mark's account it is interesting to note that a student has challenged his teaching style so directly, albeit after stressing that she acknowledged that he was a good teacher. One of the explanations given for students being seen as passive and unwilling to talk in class draws on Confucian ideas of harmony, human collectivism and the hierarchy between teacher and student (Wei, 2014). Causing offence through disagreeing with a teacher, could be seen as meaning the teacher 'loses face' (Getty, 2011). By raising concerns about her ability to learn due to Mark's teaching style, the student is not confirming to prevailing ideas about harmony and hierarchy, while at the same time Mark's interpretations of her concerns are rooted in those same ideas.

Students' focus on teacher-delivered content may mean that not only are they unwilling to contribute to classroom discussions, but that they behave in a way which may seem strange to British academics. For example, many students used their smartphones to

take photos of the teaching materials and lecture notes in order to save time, and to ensure they had the content if they found listening and taking notes in English difficult. For Leah, students' photo-taking was somewhat disconcerting and contrasted with her experiences in the UK:

> *You know the first thing that I really cannot get use to is that my students always taking photos in class. I was a little bit shocked at the first time because I thought they were taking photos of me, but then I found that just for copying my presentation slideshow. I really cannot understand this, students in the UK do not do this very often. This does affect my mood for teaching. (Leah, English tutor, in China for 1 year).*

She interpreted it as the students' focus on content, but there are also possible language difficulties (see below). While such practices are not common in UK lectures, this may reflect the availability of lecture material in hard copy handouts, or online in virtual learning environments, rather than a difference in students' approach to lecture content. The materiality of the smartphones and how they are being used in the classroom, does not reflect the norms and expectations that Leah had regarding classroom behaviour.

Because of their commitment to active learning, and the university's mission to deliver a UK-style educational experience in China, participants often persevered with in-class discussion groups, even when they did not necessarily deliver the desired outcomes. After two years in China, Lucy was still facing challenges in the classroom, and seemed not to have experimented with different methods:

> *One of the main problems I have found in my teaching is that my students, well 90% of them are Chinese, have problems when I was conducting group discussion. I asked them to move the desks together so they can chat with each other face to face. But, the biggest headache for me is that they often chat in Chinese rather than using English. Because they did not really discuss when I asked them questions after the discussion, they often depended on the 'good' student to answer the questions*

> *for the group. It is a little bit waste of time (Lucy, lecturer, in China for 2 years).*

Here Lucy is changing the material arrangements of the classroom by moving desks to create what she sees as a facilitating environment for group discussions, but the students do not respond in the way that she intended. Lucy is keen to highlight the profile of her students to explain her difficulties in introducing classroom activities. Stressing that the vast majority of her students are Chinese, she complains that in group discussions they often speak in Chinese, but that they also tend not to complete the discussion task set. For Lucy this seems to reflect the unwillingness or inability of Chinese students to engage in developing their own ideas; instead they prefer to 'chat' and rely on one or two classmates whose nationality is not mentioned. She mentions that this is a 'waste of time', but she seems to persist because of her own beliefs regarding 'good teaching', and the broader institutional expectations of the university regarding 'British' education. She is seeking to maintain that boundary through her classroom practices, despite evidence that it is not working in her classroom.

Some departments on the Chinese campus have included classroom participation in formal assessment to encourage more active engagement. Giving marks for classroom participation received positive feedback from academics in the economics department, and some participants from other departments expressed their feelings:

> *In the economics department, if you are active you can have 20% more on your final mark. I think they are doing that particularly for students who are not so active in class. They designed this particularly for Chinese students. It is a smart move. Their students reacted much better in class. I wish our department would have this regulation someday (Paul, lecturer, in China for 2 years).*

For Paul, he sees giving marks for participation something that would address some of the frustrations he has with students in his own classes. As with other participants, it is the Chinese students who are identified as 'the problem': 'They designed this particularly for Chinese students.' While Chinese students make up the bulk of the

campus' students, so a focus on this group makes numerical sense, the repeated trope of the passive, silent and mark-focused Chinese body in the classroom, is problematic.

The examples from Mark, Leah and Paul all demonstrate their frustrations due to the pedagogic dissonance they experience in the classroom and how this is framed as a problem with the students not behaving appropriately. There is a clear attempt by the academics to maintain what they see as the distinction between good or appropriate teaching, and education that does not meet the appropriate standards. This commitment to border work unsurprisingly brings disappointment, but it also inevitable when place-specificity is not considered (Gunter and Raghuram, 2018).

However, an awareness of diversity, and a flexibility in pedagogical approach was apparent in the interviews with many participants. Earlier in the paper we quoted Rupert saying:

> *We always say Chinese students are quiet and uncommunicative in class.*

But following this statement he continued:

> *It is partly true, but not exactly like the stereotype in many cases. For example, there are about six Chinese students who always answer questions in my class. They usually speak English at the highest level; they are the smartest as well. Many international students in my class rarely talk during class. I think the activeness depends more on their personality and academic proficiency rather than nationality (Rupert, professor, in China for 3 years).*

For Rupert, recognising the diversity of his students, seeking to understand their educational backgrounds, and being flexible in his teaching practice, were all key to making a successful transition to teaching in China. This frequently involved significant amounts of preparation:

> *Teaching in here* [China], *you need to devote yourself to the understanding of your students, and make changes to your teaching method throughout time. For me, the first semester is the most challenging period, because you need to have plan A, B, and C when you prepare your class. If plan A is not working for your students, you have to quickly switch into an alternative one. It would get better on the following semesters. I think teaching experience is vital in this case, you learn through your teaching (Rupert, professor, in China for 3 years).*

In reality, a 'good' teacher, regardless of location, would adopt a reflexive approach to their teaching, adapting to the students you have in the classroom. Many British academic migrants stated that understanding how the Chinese students' 'old habitus' operates is a necessary condition to make sense of their pedagogical practice and make it function effectively in their class. For example, Carl noted that his Chinese students are not automatically active, but are actually good at answering questions if you ask them by their name in class:

> *Maximal participation and interaction are very important in my class. This is what we do in the UK. Chinese students are not very active in class compared to my students in the UK, so my solution is to ask their name to answer questions directly, and you might find they actually know more than you expected (Carl, professor, in China for 3 years).*

In other words, for Carl, his students may appear passive in their reluctance to answer questions unprompted, but they are actively learning and able to apply knowledge. They just need some encouragement in expressing their opinions in the classroom. This is a small-scale example of the kind of border work that academics conduct in the classroom, engaging with the diversity of students they are teaching, and responding to the immaterialities of prior experience and cultural expectations.

Chinese academics in the UK

In contrast to the British academics in China, for Chinese academics in the UK, they are not being employed to transfer an 'authentic' foreign university experience to a different context, but rather work within a well-established UK-based institution. In this sense, these Chinese academic bodies are not usually seen as embodying the particular pedagogical values and approaches of the institution, but rather their difference may be acknowledged and drawn on by particular groups in the student cohort.

Chinese academics may also draw on their own experiences to provide academic and social or emotional support to international students, they perceive as sharing those experiences:

> *We* [Chinese people] *always say customers are 'god' in business, while in UK University I have got the impression that our students are 'god' for us, unlike in China where teachers are 'god' for students. It is not easy for those kids to leave their home at such a young age, and the majority of them might be spoilt kids coming from rich families. When they come to the UK, it is hard for them to understand my lectures. They might give up easily; their parents might spend their money in vain. Although a teacher in the UK does not have the responsibility for securing his/her students' educational success, I still try my best to help them out (Gaoyuan, Language teacher, in the UK for 3 years).*

Gaoyuan draws on the differences between the perceived hierarchies in the Chinese and UK education systems, with teachers holding greater status in China, while it is students who are prioritised in the UK. However, later in the interview he states that 'a teacher does not have the responsibility for securing his/her students' educational success', something that potentially contradicts the earlier statements, and also broader trends in UK higher education to use student attainment, employment and income, as indicators of good teaching and student support (Derounian, 2017). Gaoyuan identifies that for many of his Chinese students, leaving home and having to deal with a new educational system is often very difficult, and they have the added burden of the expectations that accompany significant parental expenditure. For this reason, Gaoyuan seeks to provide

them with additional support. Here we see how Gaoyuan is engaged in a process of what Tebbett (2019) calls ‘double-being, double-thinking’ acknowledging that the international mobility on the part of both himself and some of his students means that he has an understanding of what they are experiencing, while at the same time, being aware that the wider institutional practices and expectations of a British university separate him from the students.

While institutional academic support may be available for international students, Chinese participants pointed out that actually the support provided by the university in the UK is more focused on language ability and personal difficulties rather than pedagogy and course structures. As a result, many international students experienced moments of crisis in learning. In this situation, the co-ethnic migrant teacher could be regarded as the students’ ‘comfort zone’, as they share a common cultural background and common experience of learning in a new academic culture (see accounts by Enriquez-Gibson 2018; Weikala, 2018). As such, Chinese academic migrants’ capital accumulated from their past learning or teaching experiences functions as a valuable resource to help international students in reducing stress and adapting to the new location:

> *Normally, I would not treat certain groups of students specially. But, as you know, there is only a year for those master students, which means international students do not have enough time to adjust to the new environment. They might begin to do a project in their first week, however the huge difference between the UK and Chinese academic regulations made them feel lost. So, usually we have an introduction course for international students to let them know the major differences. Native students can choose to skip it (Qi, Professor, in the UK for 20 years).*

The particular challenges faced by many Chinese students when faced with an assignment which requires originality and independent thought, rather a set of instructions, are recognised by Yituo:

> *We have assignment books in China, which tell you what to do and how to do it, while here* [in the UK], *when you do a project*

> *you first need to have an original idea or concept, no one will tell you that. I find local* [British] *students follow you quickly and actively, while Chinese students are slow in catching up. Chinese students are more dedicated to the project details rather than having a clear concept of the blueprint. Both the Chinese and the UK educational system have cultivated me, so I know exactly the source of my students' difficulties. While, you see, local academics cannot boil down to their bullet points very easily, because they have not been in their students' places. I think it is an advantage of me being a foreign teacher here, especially when the university is eager to meet the needs of the international students (Yituo, lecturer, in the UK for 2 years).*

Like his British counterparts in the Chinese campus, Yituo makes simple binary distinctions between 'Chinese' and 'local' (meaning British) students, stressing the active nature of local students' learning. However, rather than bemoan the supposed inability of Chinese students to approach the assignment in the 'correct' way, he draws on his combined experience of being educated in the Chinese and UK systems, to provide targeted and appropriate support. In his interview he directed criticism at British academics who were unable to adapt their teaching style ('cannot boil down to their bullet points') to the particular student needs, as well as highlighting the absence of material items ('assignment books') which could provide support.

As the university has become more internationalised, understanding the international students' needs is of paramount importance. The examples from the three Chinese academics highlight the possibility of regarding such academic migrants as 'potential resources' for providing support that enables students to engage fully with the 'host' academic setting.

Moreover, for those Chinese academics that teach subjects in relation to Chinese language or culture, their cultural capital accumulated in China or by their relocation experiences is activated. Echoing Whitfield's perspectives on the role of her 'Whiteness' in teaching English in China (Whitfield, 2003), Yi's students responded to him

differently when he was lecturing on a subject relating to China, regardless of his significant UK teaching experience and research expertise:

> *If you ask in what way my Chinese identity helped me in my teaching, I would tell you that it helped me in many aspects. I once did a lecture about Chinese architectural history; I noticed that my students were really focused on what I was saying and they were always nodding when I was illustrating my key points. I felt that I had been giving some kind of authority towards that subject (Yi, senior lecturer, in the UK for 15 years).*

How the academic subject shapes mobilities has been hinted at by Gunter and Raghuram (2018) and Jöns (2018). For language tutors this may be more apparent, but here Yi who teaches in social science, is demonstrating how his experiences of teaching as an internationally-mobile academic in the UK, is also framed by how the materiality of his appearance as a 'Chinese' person affects how students respond to him.

This discussion of classroom interactions highlights the nature of pedagogic dissonance which academic migrants may experience in moving to a different educational environment. While all interviewees drew on a distinction between 'Asian' or 'Chinese' educational traditions and those of the 'West' as a starting point to explain the dissonance, many also recognised the heterogeneity of the student body and the need to go beyond simple dichotomies. In their role as teachers, their ethnic or nationality markers, affected how they were perceived by students. This was especially the case for Chinese academics in the UK who had to negotiate not only the different notions of respect for teachers compared to the situation in China, but also their categorisation as 'other'.

Language

The language of instruction in both the UK and Chinese campuses is English. This can be seen as a very clear 'border zone' (Leung and Waters, 2017: 1283). In China, this is part of the framing of the branch campus as an authentic British university experience in Mainland China. However, attempts to deliver teaching in the same way when the

vast majority of the class will have English as a second or third language, creates challenges for the teaching staff which are entwined with the tensions around different teaching styles discussed above.

While high levels of English fluency may not be widespread in the classroom, English language abilities varied greatly. For example, Eva, an English tutor, observed that:

> *All my students at undergraduate level that I have are Asian: 95% Chinese, 5% from Hong Kong, Singapore or Indonesia. Definitely, students from outside of Mainland China have higher levels of English. But some Mainland Chinese who lived in the US for years, for example, can speak better English, so it is hard to say (Eva, English tutor, in China for 2 years).*

Many academic staff acknowledged the potential links between English language proficiency and ability to navigate a more student-centred teaching approach:

> *Generally, international students' English level is higher than local students. They are freer to talk in class, express their opinions and they know how to make an argument (Jack, English tutor, in China for 8 years).*

Here Jack is making a distinction between the English language skills of international students, largely from elsewhere in Asia, and Mainland Chinese students. As Leung and Waters (2017) suggest in relation to Hong Kong, immobile students may have lower levels of English proficiency than mobile ones. Linguistic ability often gives students more confidence to speak in class, but Jack links these skills to a willingness to express opinions and develop critical arguments.

The diversity of English language abilities in the classroom not only affects the staff, but the experiences of the students. For students with better English, their learning and classroom experiences are reportedly undermined by the co-presence of students with much weaker English language skills.

For British staff in China, Chinese language expertise is not needed for teaching, although fluency in the local language can bring great benefits to communicating with

staff and colleagues, as well as insights into cultural norms and worldviews in the host society (Blair, 2018; Shin and Gress, 2018; Whitfield, 2003). Chinese academics in the UK, in contrast, have to have the English language skills to enable them to teach and conduct research (see Gimenez and Morgan, 2017 for a discussion of the role of English language in career progression for academic migrants in the UK). For some, working in a second or third language creates obstacles, but they work effectively in an English-language setting.

Classroom observations revealed the strategies that some Chinese staff adopt when working in English. This includes putting a significant amount of text on Powerpoint slides which both helps students who do not have English as a first language and also reduces concerns that some Chinese academics had about students not being able to understand their accent. Another strategy adopted by one academic was to stop and ask the students if he had written or read some words in the 'correct way'. This provided a special moment of 'switching roles' in class, a form of how 'teaching benefits teachers as well as students' (教学相长). This is a responsive and flexible pedagogical approach which is shaped by the people, objects and ideas in a particular classroom setting and the wider institutional environment.

In their engagements with students, while Chinese academics in the UK are acutely aware of the need to communicate clearly with students whose English is not that strong, their awareness of students' difficulties does not result in them using Chinese for communication. Juan describes how her position as an academic at a UK university is the thing that should be acknowledged, rather than her nationality or linguistic skills, in her interactions with Chinese students:

> *Among undergraduates 15%-20% are Asian, while 80% of Master students are from Mainland China. Sometimes my Chinese students come to me during course gaps and ask questions in Chinese. In this case, I always told them to use English; because when I am working I am a teacher in a world-leading UK University rather than a Chinese person that they can make friends with. I am more strict with my Master students,*

> *as the majority of them are Chinese, I ask them use English all the time, especially when they are doing group discussion with their Chinese classmates (Juan, lecturer, in the UK for 10 years).*

This contrasts with the approach of some staff teaching in UK transnational education settings in Hong Kong, where some local academic staff used Cantonese to communicate with students as the language border zone was 'challenging [the] smooth transfer of knowledge' (Leung and Waters, 2017: 1283). Because Juan is teaching within the UK, and to a group of students who mostly have English as a first language, challenging the language border is less possible than in the Hong Kong example. English language skills on the part of both staff and students are part of the embodied nature of the teaching and learning experience. For British academics, teaching a student cohort with a diversity of English language competency provides a challenge, while for the Chinese academics, their own English language skills can provide a sense of insecurity in the classroom. Acknowledging their status as linguistic 'other' in the UK is used by some Chinese academics to both directly confront their possible language errors in the classroom, but also to encourage their Mandarin-speaking students to improve their English.

Assessments

Assessment forms an important part of teaching practice in higher education. Formal assessments are required to produce final marks and degree classifications, but assessment is also a way in which students can get feedback on their work to inform their studies, and staff can also use assessments to reflect on their teaching and what students may or may not have learned during a course. Assessment comes in many forms, and in the UK there has been growing pressure to introduce more diverse forms of assessment to reflect a diversity of students, but also to link assessments to more applied or 'real world' situations. Assessment therefore involves both material objects – exam papers, laboratory practicals, online assessments - as well as underpinning values about what assessment is for and what makes a good assessment, and the people setting and taking the assessments.

While pedagogically there is a great deal of debate around assessments, for many students, it is the mark awarded that is the key focus in an assessment. Rather than seeing education as an opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge, British academics in China perceived their students as being only interested in getting a high mark in the assessments:

> *The only time that they* [Chinese students] *work extremely hard is before examinations, as the Chinese proverb says: Never burning incense when all is well, but clasping Buddha's feet in an emergency. Haha…you see, this is my biggest problem: the driving force of pursuing knowledge in the academic field is not strong enough that you need to push them to make them 'run'. (Lucy, professor, in China for 2 years).*

This then fed into students' reluctance to contribute to class discussions or to do preparatory work:

> *One of my students told me that the reason why she did not participate in the class discussion is because she did not prepare the reading before class, and why she did not prepare is because she knows this discussion would not be assessed. (Nick, senior lecturer, in China for a year).*

Many students are pragmatists. They know why they are at the branch campus university and how they can get the 'most' out of it. As the university advertised, you can get the 'authentic British education' in China for 'half-price' compare to pursuing the study in the UK (see Waters, 2012; Waters and Leung, 2013a, 2013b). Simon summarised this when he said:

> *One of my students told me that he only needed to get the degree as soon as he could, and then he could be introduced to one of his father's friends' companies. For some of my students, how you get the degree is not that important as long as you get it eventually (Simon, lecturer, in China for 4 years).*

For many students, therefore, getting good grades and then a British university degree is the crucial aim of Chinese students' university life. They know that this can give them a better chance to find a decent job, while simply being active in class, which usually is not part of their assessment, does not lead to this.

One sensitive issue pointed out by participants was that it was not only the learning environment, but also the outcome and quality of the study, which are not comparable to the home institution. Due to the pressure of strategically promoting the university in China, staff felt they needed to lower their academic requirements for their students:

> *This leads to another problem, by the end of the semester: for 'strategic' reasons, I sometimes have to let those 'bad' students pass the final assessment, although I know they are not good enough. If I do not let them pass, it would affect students' rate of employment, then the university's reputation would be affected, and it would be difficult to recruit more students in the future. You see what I mean, the degree looks the same, but I have to say, it is actually different from the one you get in the UK. (Mark, English tutor, in China for 5 years).*

The criticisms of UK academics of their students in China are often based on a sense of superiority that the focus on grades, rather than developing knowledge and skills, is something that would not be found in the UK. This suggests a form of border-drawing where 'good' education sees learning as positive in its own right, whereas on the other side is a more instrumental view. However, there is growing concern among academics in the UK than students are becoming more instrumentalist in their approach to study, not least because of the massive debt burden that they face since the introduction of tuition fees.

Assessment issues raised by Chinese participants in the UK focused particularly on the challenges they faced in marking long written assignments in English. This is both a linguistic challenge and, at times, also contrasts with their previous educational experience of more objective, knowledge-testing assessments in the Chinese system. In

the Confucian tradition, teachers need to be role models for their students (Zou, 2014), so for Chinese academics, it would be unacceptable to perform poorly in any practice of teaching and learning. For this reason, they need to find a way to 'hide' their 'disadvantage', and manage the boundaries of what is seen as good academic practice in their institution.

For example, Hua, reflecting on the large number of similar undergraduate essays which have to be marked within a set timeframe to meet the university's deadline for returning student grades, reveals that,

> *So, after reading for example 50 essays, you may find out that your brain stopped working, and it is really hard to judge which one is better, especially when you only have 10-20 minutes to read a 3000 words essay. As a result, in order to differentiate their grade, you end up focusing on those distinctive errors, such as reference and key words, rather than content. (Hua, Senior lecturer, in the UK for 18 years).*

Focusing on distinctive errors may make marking more efficient, but it is hard to predict the impact of such practice on the quality of teaching and learning, as essays are usually set to assess not only content knowledge, but also the ability to develop a reasoned argument. For Hua, the approach to marking was a response to the workload, but it could also draw on familiar pedagogic practices and forms of assessment from China. This reworking of assessment principles which participants had experienced and used in China enabled many participants to complete their marking tasks. For example, Xueke, a language teacher, stated:

> *In order to save time, when I am checking their assessments, I am always looking for key words. Normally, if the key elements that I told them in class are there, the mark will not be low. I think my Chinese education experience does have something to do with it, That is what we called: scoring points (Xueke, Language teacher, in the UK for 2 years).*

Rather than using the 'point scoring' approach for essay assessments suggested by Xueke, some participants changed their assessment format based on their previous experiences of working in China. This change demonstrates the complexities of mobilities and materialities that come together in particular educational settings; when a group of academics from different academic cultural backgrounds come into continuous contact with a different academic culture, there can be subsequent influence not just upon their original teaching and learning patterns, but also the local teaching and learning practices. Wu provided an example:

> *I find a way to solve the problem* [of large marking loads]*: for the first year students, I ask them to answer 3 specific questions in relation to my lectures in each semester and each question should be answered in about 400 words. That is to say there is a standard answer for each question, you can get higher marks if your answer is close to the standard answer that I had been prepared. Compared to a 3000 word essay, this method saved tremendous time and made my students more serious in class (Wu, Reader, in the UK for 20 years).*

Attempts to address marking loads by restructuring assessments, could also lead to innovative formats that are welcomed by both staff and students.

> *For postgraduate students, the multiple choice questions are not suitable for them. So, I figured out another solution for the assessment: I just let them to do an A2 sized poster in groups, including a designed work and 500 words comments in academic style. I received lots of positive feedbacks from my students, they suggest it is a good combination of theory and practice. It is also good for me because I do not need to spend endless time on reading essays (Li, lecturer, in the UK for 7 years).*

This demonstrates that the academic capital that has been accumulated in the original academic culture of migrants could be the base of new pedagogies that are acceptable

for migrant teachers and their students, regardless of background, as well as maintaining the border of 'quality' education for the institution. This could also have benefits to non-migrant academics, as being exposed to different teaching approaches, particularly in a cross-cultural setting could contribute to their professional development (Kinchin *et al.*, 2018).

Conclusions

Drawing on material from qualitative research with Chinese academics in a UK university and British academics in the Chinese branch campus, this paper has sought to extend existing understandings of pedagogy and the internationalisation of education. In particular the foregrounding of pedagogy addresses a significant gap in research on academic mobilities. This has been done through an examination of the embodied experiences of academic staff, highlighting their reflections on teaching, and their strategies for addressing challenges. This focus on specific experiences is important as the paper has sought to contribute to the wider literature on the internationalisation of education and the place-specificity of educational experiences (Gunter and Raghuram, 2018).

The paper responds to Brooks and Waters' (2018) call for a bringing together of materialities and mobilities in studies of education, and in particular has drawn on Jöns' (2018) call for triadic, rather than binary classifications in understanding academic mobilities. The paper focuses on the mobility of academic staff who have moved for academic posts, rather than as visitors or conference attendees. This means that they are more likely to be embedded in the institutional expectations and norms, than temporary sojourners. The paper has used Jöns' classification of materialities to highlight the role of particular material (such as textbooks and phones), immaterial (pedagogical values and previous experiences) and dynamically hybrid entities (staff and students) to elucidate the impacts of forms of internationalisation of education in particular contexts.

A key argument in the paper is that pedagogical practice is based on particular norms and values which are part of the border work (Leung and Waters, 2017) that institutions demand to maintain standards and reputation, particularly within an increasingly globally-competitive higher education sector. Maintaining the border can be frustrating for individual members of academic staff, who may express this frustration by mobilising homogenising discourses about particular groups of students. However, the paper has also demonstrated how individual staff may engage with the diversity of students, sometimes drawing on their own experiences as an international migrant. This may involve some flexibility in border practices, but participants were clear that, from their perspective, in most cases the border standards were maintained. However, for some participants, certain elements of their practice, particularly around assessment and marking, had changed in a very negative way due to institutional pressures. This reveals how the pedagogical dissonance felt by individual academics fits within the wider institutional structures around quality and standards which are then mobilised to attract students who are promised a particular form of education within a highly-competitive sector.

Greater internationalisation of education involves a multiplicity of mobilities, encounters between different people and expectations, and the mobilisation of a range of discourses based on underlying values and assumptions. This paper has demonstrated the importance of a focus on pedagogy in understanding these processes.

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