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Problematizing enterprise culture in global academic publishing: Linguistic entrepreneurship through the lens of two Chinese visiting scholars in a U.S. university

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Abstract: The global spread of English has made it the dominant language in academic publishing (Hyland, Ken. 2015. *Academic Publishing: Issues and Challenges in the Construction of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press). Influenced by enterprise culture, scholars from peripheral non-Western countries face mounting pressure to publish in English (Curry, Marry Jane & Theresa Lillis (eds.). 2017. *Global academic publishing: Policies, perspectives and pedagogies*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual matters). The English academic publishing industry has also ballooned in China (Tian, Mei, Yan Su & Xin Ru. 2016. *Perish or publish in China: Pressures on young Chinese scholars to publish in internationally indexed journals*. *Publications* 4(2). 9.). In response to the Chinese government's commitment to developing world-class universities and disciplines to enhance the internationalization of its higher education system, local Chinese scholars are increasingly encouraged to produce research that has international impact, as well as to engage in international academic exchange and cooperation arrangements (Li, Yongyan & Guangwei Hu. 2018. *Collaborating with management academics in a new economy: Benefits and challenges*. *Publications* 6. 1–17). In seeking academic collaboration, a growing number of Chinese academics have participated in visiting scholar programs offered by western-based universities. In light of this emergent phenomenon, this study explores how Chinese visiting scholars, driven by an ethical imperative to enhance human capital at “neoliberal universities” (Holborow, Marnie. 2013. *Applied linguistics in the neoliberal university: Ideological keywords and social agency*. *Applied Linguistics Review* 4(2). 229–257), exploited language-related resources available to them to succeed in English academic publishing. Data, which include in-depth interviews, social media posts, journals, resumes and manuscripts that were in press at academic journals, were collected

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from two Chinese professors who took part in a one-year visiting scholar program in the U.S. university. Our findings revealed that under the mounting expectations to publish in English-dominated SSCI journals, our focal participants enacted linguistic entrepreneurial practices.

Keywords: English academic publishing, linguistic entrepreneurship, Chinese visiting scholars

1 Introduction

Over the past four decades, China's academic research culture, which was revived in the late 1970s after the Cultural Revolution has undergone considerable development (Horta and Shen 2020). Recognizing the political and economic value of scientific knowledge in the era of globalization, the Chinese government has launched a series of initiatives to transform the country's higher education system and build world-class research universities (Wang and Liu 2011; Xu 2020). To some extent, two projects – the strategic Project 211 and Project 985 – have been instrumental in enhancing the knowledge production capacity (Huang 2015) of its top universities. In 2015, the Chinese government issued a state education policy, detailing its plan to build world-class Chinese universities to enhance the international competitiveness of its higher education sector. The plan sought to have a number of universities and disciplines “edge up to the world's top-level” by 2020. By 2050, the plan envisioned China's top universities being among the best in the world (State Council document, 2015 November, English version; see also Zheng and Guo 2019). This policy can be viewed as a continuous effort to engage in the internationalization of Chinese higher education and upgrade domestic research capacity and productivity (Rhoads et al. 2014; Xu 2020).

Central to the pursuit of “world-class universities” is the question of what and who defines the world-class standing of a university (Rhoads et al. 2014). Increasingly, the world-class standing of a university is defined by quantifiable measures developed by global university ranking schemes, such as Shanghai's Jiao Tong University's Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) and the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking scheme (Rhoads et al. 2014). According to Ordorika and Lloyd (2015), international rankings are a manifestation of neoliberal ideologies. Universities that adopt the criteria and results of the rankings often compete for resources, students, talent, and knowledge production at a global scale, “despite differences in resources, stages of development, national histories, traditions, languages, and cultures” (Pusser and Marginson 2012: 106).

Given that research output constitutes an important part of the world-class standing of a university (Rhoads et al. 2014) and English has become the lingua franca of international publishing (McKinley and Rose 2018; O’Neil 2018), scholars have been under great pressure to increase their research output and publish their work in English (Zheng and Guo 2019). Such trend has also been observed in China. To boost research productivity, many universities have adopted an incentive-restrictive mechanism (Lei and Liao 2017; Quan et al. 2017) in that research requirements are often set for faculty placed on both teaching and research tracks. Furthermore, faculty research outcomes are not only tied to their career advancement, but they are also awarded material and monetary rewards to incentivize them to publish (Flowerdew and Li 2009; Li and Yang 2017; Qin 2010). Publications in internationally indexed journals, such as those in SCI, SSCI, and A&HCI matrices are accorded higher value than publications in domestically indexed journals (Tian et al. 2016).¹

Given the heavy emphasis on internationally indexed publications, some institutions and scholars have prioritized the quantity of publications over “the quality and the societal value of the research”, with some even compromising the research integrity of their work (Zhang and Sivertsen 2020: 2). Furthermore, a study on the early outbreak of Coronavirus in Wuhan, China, published by a team of Chinese scholars in an international journal has led to a widespread questioning among the public regarding the dominant status of English medium publications in China (Li 2020). Concerns were raised by the public about whether China-based scientific results should be published in international journals (Zhang and Sivertsen 2020). In response, in 2020, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology jointly launched a new policy that addresses the increasing “SCI supremacy” phenomenon in China (Lau and Liu 2020; Ministry of Education 2020; MOST 2020), with the aims of (1) moving away from metric- to qualitative-based research evaluation and funding systems; and (2) developing high-quality domestic journals that feature Chinese characteristics and have international influence (MOST 2020; Zhang and Sivertsen 2020).

The policy signals a move from a biased metric-based assessment towards a more comprehensive evaluation system that takes into account both quantitative and qualitative criteria. In particular, discipline or domain-specific evaluation is highlighted in the policy documents, which recognize that international publications should not be deemed as the most desirable research output across all disciplines. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Science and Technology has also made it

¹ The Thomson Reuters’ Web of Science generates journal bibliometrics such as Impact Factors (IF) and includes Science Citation Index (SCI) journals, Social Science Citation Indexes (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) journals.

clear that a departure from an SCI emphasis does not mean that SCI impact will be completely overlooked. On the contrary, scholars are encouraged to publish papers that are high-quality, innovative, and have societal value, so as to promote Chinese discourses in the global academia (MOST 2020; Xu 2020; Zhang and Sivertsen 2020).

While some might interpret such a policy as China moving away from a “publish or perish” culture (see Lau and Liu 2020 in *Higher Education Times*), we remain cautious about this simplistic interpretation. For example, as Zeng (2020) pointed out, SCI/SSCI publications may still play an important part in the research evaluation system, as an equivalent domestic citation index system, which matches the same level of prestige and authority that the SCI/SSCI index systems command, has yet to be created. Furthermore, Zhang and Sivertsen (2020) questioned the initiative of “to publish more high-quality papers in domestic journals” in order to develop world-class domestic journals, noting that initiative does not necessarily apply to all fields or types of research. Hence, the difficulty of implementing the policy lies largely in finding a delicate balance between the goal of internationalization and catering for a local audience and community (Zhang and Sivertsen 2020). In addition to the aforementioned interpretations about this policy, we argue that building world-class universities and disciplines remains a crucial first step in China’s long term plan to internationalize its higher education sector. That means, as a key constituent of “world-class” university rankings, the market value of research is only expected to increase, rather than diminish. Therefore, by downplaying – and not erasing altogether – the SCI/SSCI impact, the new policy aims to draw academics’ attention towards the general impact of scientific research itself by pushing academics to generate high-quality, innovative, influential papers that both address domestic concerns and achieve global impact (Li 2020; Xu 2020; Zeng 2020). In short, the pressure to do research and publish is not alleviated; rather, one could argue that such pressure has only been amplified.

In light of the above policies and practices, the traditional role of a university faculty in China – who traditionally has focused on teaching – has correspondingly been redefined. In other words, faculty members are not only expected to teach well but also conduct high-quality research and contribute to elevating China’s intellectual presence on the global academic stage (Jiang et al. 2017; Rhoads et al. 2014; Xu 2020). For example, Xu’s (2020) study on the English academic publishing in the Humanities and Social Sciences in China revealed a shift in academics’ earlier emphasis on learning and applying Western theories and frameworks to sharing “China’s story” with the rest of world. To do that, publishing in English-medium journals, to a large extent, has become an ethical responsibility of being a good Chinese academic, despite having to grapple with the challenges of English academic publishing. Failure to overcome challenges is consequently viewed as a

shortcoming that the individual is expected to remedy on his own. Such a reality is well explained by Brown (2003), who rightfully pointed out that taking full responsibility of one's own success, failure, and well-being regardless of the constraints on the access or resources is the core of neoliberal subjectivity which, De Costa et al. (2016, 2019a) add, pushes individuals to constantly engage in self-improvement to enhance their value as linguistic entrepreneurs.

In recognition of the research audit culture (Welch 2016) in China, we explore how two Chinese university teachers, driven by an ethical imperative to enhance their human capital (Holborow 2013) negotiated neoliberal demands placed upon them to engage in English academic publishing during their one-year academic visit at a U.S. university. Drawing on the notion of linguistic entrepreneurship (De Costa et al. 2016, 2019a), this study aims to examine (1) the neoliberal subjectivity of two Chinese visiting scholars in response to the pressure of English academic publishing, and (2) how their language-related practices during their academic visit were entrepreneurial in nature.

2 Neoliberalism and linguistic entrepreneurship

According to Harvey (2005: 2), neoliberalism is a hegemonic discourse that “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”. This hegemonic discourse operates at diverse spheres of society and creates an understanding of the human subject “as autonomous, individualized, self-directing decision-making agent who becomes an entrepreneur of one self; a human capital” (Türken et al. 2016: 33). The entrepreneurial spirit embedded in neoliberal culture thus pushes the human subject to not only seek self-interests but also act as an entrepreneur who pursues the maximization of his self-value and capital to make him more competitive in the market, resulting in the promotion of discourses of self-management and self-development (Binkley 2011; Foucault 2008; Giroux 2002). As such, with responsibilities largely falling on the shoulders of individuals, Wendy Brown (2003: 42) powerfully pointed out,

“Neoliberalism equates moral responsibility with rational action; it relieves the discrepancy between economic and moral behavior by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences”.

Therefore, neoliberal subjects feel morally obligated to constantly work on the self and engage in useful activities that help enhance their human capital to succeed in

a neoliberal world order (De Costa et al. 2016, 2019a). In fact, education scholars (e.g., Giroux 2002, 2014; Olssen and Peters 2005; Ward 2012) have demonstrated in detail that the neoliberal ideologies and discourses, which often take the form of adopting corporate-style managerial structure, minimizing academics governance, and capitalizing research output, have also encroached upon higher education, resulting in the rise of the enterprise university, or what is commonly described as the “neoliberal university” (Ball 2012).

In a similar vein, the neoliberal values creep in language education has been examined by critical sociolinguists (Block et al. 2013; Gray et al. 2018; Holborow 2013) who have interrogated how language, especially English, has been increasingly viewed as a commodity (Heller 2010). In particular, given that English has been valorized as “the language of social mobility and economic gain” (Park and Wee 2013: 25) in today’s globalized world, investing in English language learning under the neoliberal regime is seen as an act of increasing human capital (De Costa et al. 2016; Holborow 2013). In addition to indexing social and economic status, learning and using English nowadays also carries a moral value in that it is closely associated with the idea of being “good” or “bad” neoliberal subject (Park and Wee 2013). As explicated in Gao’s (2018) study, Xu Xiuzhen, a tour guide in a rural Chinese village who engaged in self-directed English learning, was portrayed in the national media as a “good” citizen because she took up the responsibility of enhancing her economic value by learning English, in addition to several other foreign languages. Thus, a good neoliberal and entrepreneurial subject not only exploits languages as resources for profit but also internalizes this exploitation (De Costa et al. 2016).

Defined as “an act of aligning with the moral imperative to strategically exploit language-related resources for enhancing one’s worth in the world” (De Costa et al. 2016: 695), the framework of linguistic entrepreneurship lends its focus on agents’ neoliberal subjectivity, be it individual agents or institutional agents, allowing researchers to interrogate neoliberal ideologies through the lens of individuals’ language-related practices. In this study, we adopt the notion of linguistic entrepreneurship to examine how two Chinese university teachers participate in English academic publishing-related activities – and thus engage in a form of linguistic entrepreneurship – to increase their self-value and capital, and thus become a “good” university teacher.

3 English academic publishing in China

While the number of paper submissions to English medium journals from China has rapidly increased in recent years, due to the implementation of an incentive

mechanism (Lei and Liao 2017; Li and Yang 2017; Tian et al. 2016; Zheng and Guo 2019), the acceptance rates have remained at around 26%. By contrast, English-speaking countries such as the US and the UK maintained their acceptance rates at around 50% of submissions, respectively, between 2005 and 2010. This trend indicates that English academic publishing still poses great challenges for Chinese scholars. Previous studies (e.g., Canagarajah 2002; Hyland 2016) have investigated the difficulties peripheral non-English-speaking scholars experience in English academic publishing. While limited academic English literacies are often cited as the major cause, other impediments such as unfamiliarity with publishing practices, unequal access to resources (e.g., the latest studies), and lack of institutional support have also been found to be common challenges encountered by peripheral scholars (Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsdóttir 2017; Flowerdew 2000; Lee and Lee 2013). In addition, while the demands of doing research and publishing have increased significantly, Chinese university teachers haven't experienced much change in their teaching load, and actually, student enrollment in recent years have increased largely due to the massification of higher education movement (Rhoads et al. 2014).

Relatedly, research on the English academic publishing in China has also proliferated over the past few years. Of them, many of the studies (e.g., Lei and Liao 2017) conducted bibliometric analyses to capture the trends of Chinese scholars' English publications across different disciplines. Others investigated the strategies adopted to successfully engage in international scholarly publishing (e.g., Jiang et al. 2017) and Chinese scholars' collaboration with overseas scholars (e.g., Li and Hu 2018). Building on this body of work on Chinese scholars, this current study examines the experiences of two Chinese visiting scholars who participated in two different one-year academic visiting programs in a U.S. university. In particular, we explore how these two scholars, Huangxi and Fanwen, responded to the pressure of English academic publishing in China and how they engaged in the practices of linguistic entrepreneurship by exploiting language-related resources in order to enhance their English academic publishing knowledge and skills.

4 Methods

In this study, we adopted a case study design (Duff 2014) to guide our data analysis. We first conducted within-case analysis and then compared the codes across two participants in order to identify the main themes that guided two participants' linguistic practices in the US.

4.1 Focal participants

Huangxi.² In his late 40s, Huangxi worked as a full-time professor in the English language department at West Sea University, a top foreign language school in China. He obtained both his masters' and doctoral degree at a top foreign language university in China. Before he started to work as an assistant professor at West Sea University, he spent a six-month sojourn at a university in Australia as part of a visiting scholar program funded by the China Scholarship Council. In 2016, he was funded by the U.S. Fulbright program to do a one-year academic visit to a mid-western U.S. university. His research mainly focuses on pragmatics in English teaching. In the early stage of his career, Huangxi published several articles related to the teaching of English reading, vocabulary, and pragmatics in an EFL (English as foreign language) classroom context, mainly in domestic journals in Chinese. In addition to academic publishing, he also actively participated in various domestic and international conferences. For example, during the academic exchanges abroad as a visiting scholar, he attended the Australian Applied Linguistics Association conference and Association for American Applied Linguistics conference.

Fanwen. Fanwen was in her early 40s at the time of the study. She was working as an advanced associate professor in the English language department in a second-tier university in China, East Sea University. She earned a master's degree in English language and literature and a doctoral degree in Chinese linguistics and applied linguistics in China. Upon earning her doctorate, Fanwen was offered a tenure-track assistant professor position at East Sea University. After working at this university for several years, Fanwen did a second master's degree (in applied linguistics) at a university in Singapore. Later, funded by East Sea University, she participated in a visiting scholar program at a Midwestern U.S. University. Her research mainly focuses on second language writing. Similar to Huangxi with regard to academic publishing, Fanwen had published most of her papers in Chinese on the topics of English vocabulary learning and English writing development.

4.2 Data collection

The study was conducted over one year (2017 to 2018), that is, after both participants had completed their visiting year abroad. The first author met Huangxi and Fanwen during their U.S. visit during the 2016–2017 academic year. Over several meals and conversations with the first author, Huangxi and Fanwen shared their experiences of publishing in English-medium journals, along with the challenges

² Pseudonyms have been used for our participants and the institutions they worked at and visited.

of writing and publishing in English, and the mounting pressure of publishing in English they endured as research-oriented faculty in China. Over the one-year data collection period, the first author conducted two interviews with Huangxi and three interviews with Fanwen over WeChat, a Chinese social media platform. Huangxi was also an active WeChat user, and he had many posts (texts and pictures) in WeChat moments (朋友圈, 'a closed social network where users can share information with selected friends') during his stay in the US. Huangxi saw these posts as a way to document his academic journey. The first author was granted access to all these WeChat posts.

We also collected Huangxi and Fanwen's CV and publications in Chinese and English. In addition to her publications and CV, Fanwen shared with the first author the emails she wrote to two applied linguistics professors to obtain permission to audit their courses, and a journal she wrote reflecting on this one-year sojourn at the US university. Fanwen and Huangxi also sent us a few of their university policy documents, which detailed faculty members' responsibilities of teaching and publishing, as well as other documented incentives associated with scholarly publications. All data originally in Chinese were collected in Chinese and subsequently translated into English.

At the time of our study, faculty members' teaching and research responsibilities at Huangxi and Fanwen's universities were codified and calibrated in points. Different amounts of points were assigned to different academic ranks. Faculty members needed to earn points commensurate with their academic rank by fulfilling teaching assignments and producing a certain number of scholarly publications. For example, Huangxi's university specified that a research-active assistant professor employed in a 4-year contract was expected to fulfill research responsibilities that were worth 1000³ points. Faculty earned the required points mainly through publishing their work in indexed journals. According to the university evaluation policy, a first-class publication in an SSCI, AHCI, or SCI journal with impact factor larger than 1.5 is worth 818 points. For publications in journals with an impact factor of between 1.0 and 1.5, authors are accorded 545 points. A second-class publication (272 points) was associated with an SCI journal with an impact factor smaller than 1.0, or domestic journals indexed by the Chinese Science Citation Database (CSCD) and Chinese Social Science Citation Index (CSSCI). In addition, financial incentives were provided. For example, a first-class

³ In order to protect participant's animosity, we didn't present the actual figures. But the ratio presented is a true representation of the actual figures.

publication is awarded 4000 US dollars. A second-class publication is awarded with 1400 US dollars.

Evidently, the internal university assessment system revealed that (1) domestic journals were much less valued and recognized compared to the international indexed journals; and (2) international indexed (SCI/SSCI, AHCI, CSSCI) journals were further categorized into different tiers based on their impact factor. Such a distinction is in keeping with Lee and Lee's (2013) observation that while scholars seem to have the choice to publish their work in either English-medium international journals or domestic journals, the options are "materially unequal, constrained by social stigma and prestige" (227).

4.3 Data analysis

Drawing mainly from the interview and social media data, we conducted the initial coding separately with our two participants. First, we coded two participants' responses, beliefs, and attitudes related to the English academic publishing pressure in China. Then, we paid close attention to the language-related practices and activities Huangxi and Fanwen reported participating in during their US academic visit. Initial codes were assigned to the practices and activities that were related to academic publishing pressure. Next, we coded these practices and activities in relation to their beliefs and attitudes towards the neoliberal demands of English academic publishing. That is, we tried to identify how their beliefs and attitudes shaped and informed their acts and practices during their academic visit. After repeatedly and recursively comparing the categories across participants, we identified a consistent goal that guided their language-related practices during their academic visit in ways that enhanced their chances of publishing in English-medium journals. We then came up with two major themes that featured two participants' navigation of linguistic entrepreneurship demands, namely (1) how the evaluation regime shaped their neoliberal subjectivities under the influence of the universities' evaluation systems, participants aligned themselves with linguistic entrepreneurial values; and (2) how the acts of linguistic entrepreneurship were embodied in their language-related practices at the U.S. University. Such practices included setting up self-directed goals, exploiting resources available to enhance their publication possibilities, and seeking collaborations with native English-speaking scholars.

5 Findings

Guided by our research concerns, we present the findings in two parts: the first part examines our participants' neoliberal subjectivity in response to the pressure of English academic publishing in China. We argue that it is important to contextualize our participants' entrepreneur-like way of thinking, as it deepens our understanding of their performed practices that were emblematic of linguistic entrepreneurship. The second part explores how they engaged in language-related practices, which constituted acts of linguistic entrepreneurship, during their U.S. academic visit as they sought to enhance opportunities for publishing in English-medium journals.

5.1 In response to the neoliberal “publish or perish” culture in China

5.1.1 Fanwen

We begin this section by sharing an anecdote of an exchange that took place between Fanwen and the first author. A few months after Fanwen returned to her Chinese university following her sojourn in the US, the first author interviewed her. The interview started with a casual greeting followed by a check in on the first author's publication status:

Fanwen: how are you? How many articles have you published so far?

The first author: [laugh] I was surprised that this is the very first question you asked me.

Fanwen: I asked because I care about you. I know how hard you were working on the manuscript when I was there. I hope you got it published already.

(Excerpt 1/interview/Fanwen)

Without knowing the intention of the interview, Fanwen asked the first author (a Ph.D. student back then) about her academic publications and considered this gesture a genuine act of caring. The fact that academic publishing has seeped into the discourse of greetings suggests that it was naturalized and normalized in Fanwen's everyday life. In addition, by linking the emotion of caring with producing English publications, Fanwen's comment also illustrated that English publications were seen as the good and desirable outcomes for academics.

Interestingly, working in a second-tier Chinese university and being a senior faculty member, Fanwen was fortunately under no institution-imposed pressure to produce publications for career advancement; as revealed in the interview, “I don't

have to publish in international journals in order to get promoted.” That said, the neoliberal evaluation regime adopted by most Chinese universities, coupled with the normalization of academic publishing pressure in the public discourse, gave rise to a culture that positions academic publishing – specifically English academic publishing – as “the right thing to do”. This reality emerged later in the same interview.

Nowadays SSCI publications in the field of English language education have been given increasing value. The evaluation system draws an obvious distinction among SSCI publications, CSSCI (Chinese SSCI) publications, and teaching. Everyone can teach and needs to teach, but publications, especially English-medium journal publications weigh more than teaching.

(Excerpt 2/interview/Fanwen)

As evidenced clearly in Excerpt 2, the “evaluation system” at Fanwen’s university assigned different weight to university teachers’ professional responsibilities: research was more appreciated than teaching, and English-medium journal publications are favored over domestic ones. Fanwen’s belief that “everyone can teach and needs to teach, but publications weigh more than teaching”, is not uncommon among university teachers in China. As the quality of teaching is not strongly considered when evaluating teacher performance, investment in teaching does not contribute much to their self-value or competitiveness in the local academic market. This line of thinking hints at a neoliberal reshaping of professional roles through the lens of entrepreneurship (De Costa et al. 2016). In other words, such an evaluation system coerced university teacher into re-strategizing and reprioritizing their responsibilities to optimize positive career outcomes. By doing so, university teachers become neoliberal subjects whose acts and thoughts align with entrepreneurial values.

5.1.2 Huangxi

In comparison to Fanwen, working at a top-tier foreign language school in China, Huangxi was under enormous institutional pressure to yield publications in English-medium journals, despite his senior position. The university policy required both research-oriented and teaching-oriented faculties to publish. Similar to the evaluation system at Fanwen’s university, English-medium publications were favored significantly over domestic ones, with monetary incentives provided. Different from Fanwen, Huangxi’s senior faculty position rendered more pressure to publish in internationally indexed journals. As Huangxi explained in the interview, “the higher your position is, the more you are expected to publish. Otherwise, your students or other people would have doubts about your

credentials as a professor”. This statement reveals that publications in China have been given so much value and power that they are conceived as a barometer of professors’ credentials.

In response to the pressure to publish in English imposed by both institutional policies and societal expectations, Huangxi internalized the pressure of doing and subsequently publishing research, which he interpreted to be a key quality of being a good university teacher. In one of his WeChat posts, Huangxi shared a blog article about university faculty members’ engagement in doing research, written by a Chinese professor in mathematics. In this blog article, the author emphasized two significant roles of being a top-rate teacher: to teach and to do research. He pointed out “a teacher, especially a university teacher, without sufficient disciplinary knowledge, or a certain amount of research experience, ... [cannot be] a top-rate teacher”. This quote was highlighted in Huangxi’s WeChat post. Additionally, in the same interview, Huangxi commented on the evaluation mechanism that pushed teachers to yield publications.

The university hopes to push teachers and professors to read and write scholarly articles, to enhance as well as expand one’s knowledge base through such an evaluation mechanism. The ultimate goal is to improve teaching in general. The [state] policy is well-intentioned. It’s just that some professors and universities focused too much on competing quantities of publications and chasing prestigious journal publications.

(Excerpt 3/interview/Huangxi)

Excerpt 3 and his WeChat post showed that Huangxi perceived academic publishing as a responsibility one needs to shoulder in order to become a good university teacher. Huangxi believed that as a “top-class” university teacher, one needs to have “research experience” and “read and write scholarly articles”. Excerpt 3 also revealed that Huangxi co-opted a policymaker/institutional perspective and provided a rationale for devising and implementing the evaluation mechanism in Chinese universities: to improve teaching quality. By linking research demands with teaching improvement, Huangxi sought to justify the academic publishing pressure imposed on teachers. Furthermore, by stating, “the policy is well-intentioned”, and identifying some individual scholars exploited the policy to an extreme, Huangxi was arguing that individual teachers should be responsible for themselves when negotiating academic publishing demands. That is, while it is important to generate publications, it is also an individual teacher’s responsibility to balance teaching with research, without sacrificing the former for the latter. In light of this observation, we argue that on the one hand, the emphasis on improving teaching afforded Huangxi space to develop some degree of resistance towards the “publish or perish” fever at a personal level. On the other hand, without really challenging the neoliberal values that underlie the research

evaluation system, Huangxi's effort to balance meeting the publication requirement and attending to teaching was not quite sustainable.

During his academic visit in the US, Huangxi set the goal of "finishing three paper revisions and half of a book manuscript" as well as seeking publication opportunities with local professors. In the meantime, he did not let go of his advising duties. When he met the first author for a Christmas dinner, he told her that he couldn't take a break over the holiday, because he needed to provide feedback on his master students' theses. As noted in his WeChat post, "we should pay attention to both research and teaching. We just need to work harder." This narrative of "working harder" was prevalent in Huangxi's social media posts. For example, in another post, he described how hard-working the graduate students and faculty members were in the applied linguistics doctoral program at his host US university.

These graduate students and faculty members work so hard everyday ... One faculty member ate some bread during the class break. That's her lunch. Now I know why she has so many SSCI publications. (Excerpt 4/Wechapt post/Huangxi)

In this post, Huangxi noticed that a faculty member was having lunch during the class break. He then ascribed her prolific SSCI publication record to her "hard work", i.e., maximizing her time efficiency at work. The narratives surrounding "working hard" reveal an entrepreneurial logic of exploiting one's time and managing one's use of time to increase productivity. As Walker (2009) rightly pointed out, under a neoliberal regime, effective use of time becomes a moral issue, "time not spent on producing can be thought of as time-theft" (p. 499). Huangxi thus embraced such an entrepreneurial value and worked hard to manage the responsibilities of being a good teacher who not only publishes in SSCI journals but also teaches and advises the students.

More importantly, Excerpt 4 also showed that Huangxi viewed SSCI publications as representing personal career success. As Brown (2003) and Giroux (2014) pointed out, with responsibilities falling on individual's shoulders, a neoliberal subject often feels morally compelled to improve him/herself to maintain market competitiveness. In a similar vein, Huangxi felt morally obligated to work harder to improve his skills and knowledge of English academic publishing. The formation of such subjectivity, however, masked the inequalities in relation to access to institutional resources that were needed by Huangxi to succeed; after all, he was still expected to mentor his advisees even though he was on sabbatical. Upon reflecting on this one-year visit, Huangxi disclosed that he "was always writing papers and grading students' papers in the apartment or the library by myself. Sometimes I felt really lonely and isolated." Based on this insight, we argue that

Huangxi's feeling of loneliness and isolation revealed the affective and emotional qualities of neoliberal subjects that are often overlooked in the literature and that warrant further investigation.

5.2 Practices of linguistic entrepreneurship: Strategic management of language-related resources

Central to our discussion is the overarching neoliberal ideology that underlies the English academic publishing and its influence on our participants' thoughts and actions. As presented in the first section, the circulating neoliberal ideology that also operated at a personal level led Huangxi and Fanwen to normalize and internalize English academic publishing pressure as the "right thing to do" in China. In the following section, we presented that Huangxi and Fanwen agentively engaged in activities during their academic visit to develop skills and knowledge that facilitate English academic publishing. Specifically, their acts of linguistic entrepreneurship were manifested through setting up self-directed goals and exploiting language-related resources to enhance publication possibilities.

5.2.1 Huangxi

5.2.1.1 Choosing the Fulbright program

Huangxi mentioned in the interview that he was decidedly intentional in choosing and applying for the Fulbright program. He was well aware of the affordances it offered:

It [Fulbright program] allows me to communicate with professionals who share similar academic interests. My plan is to meet some of them, and we can collaborate on yielding publications in international journals. (Excerpt 5/interview/Huangxi)

Being a Fulbright scholar entails privileged access to the resources and opportunities to work with his US faculty host and the latter's colleagues. With a host professor assigned to socialize him into an academic community, Huangxi was able to take advantage of the resources (e.g., audit courses) and more conveniently seek academic collaboration opportunities.

Given the access and resources, Huangxi agentively undertook a great deal of learning during the academic visit, such as auditing graduate courses, attending workshops, talks, student presentations, and symposia. These activities contributed to the enhancement of his English academic publishing in two ways. First, resources such as graduate courses, talks, and presentations that are directly related to his research interests greatly aided and inspired his research ideas. For

example, Huangxi commented on the language assessment class he audited, “when the professor talked about assessment-related research, I would think about whether I could apply some of the research ideas or findings to the Chinese context”. This suggests that Huangxi’s learning was reflective and deliberate in nature as he consciously thought about what he learned in class and considered its applicability to his research context. Second, attending these activities helps familiarize Huangxi with the discipline-specific discourses and practices. As pointed out by Hyland (2016: 67). Learning “a series of socially situated, discipline-sensitive practices” constitutes a significant part of English academic writing.

5.2.1.2 Negotiating challenges of English academic publishing

While both Huangxi and Fanwen were relatively well-published scholars in Chinese academe, publishing in English-medium academic journals still posed challenges for them. As a domestically trained Chinese scholar, Huangxi’s challenge of English academic publishing lay mainly with English academic writing. Therefore, his exploitation of language-related resources was mostly realized through learning about academic English writing and seeking co-authorship opportunities for peer-reviewed publications.

I’d never had systematic English academic writing training when I was a student. But if you want to publish in *their* journals, you have to know how *they* write academic papers. So, I made a great effort in looking for books, manuals, academic writing handbooks about how to publish in English journals. I tried my best to alter my Chinese way of writing academic papers and adjust myself to the English academic writing model. (Excerpt 6/interview/Huangxi; *emphasis added*)

As observed by Huangxi, learning “how they write academic papers” involves not only learning English academic writing techniques and rhetorical strategies, but also altering his “Chinese way of writing”, that is, re-socializing himself into English academic writing discourse. In addition, by distinguishing between “their journal” and “my Chinese way”, Huangxi sketched out two exclusive academic writing discourses that had little in common. From an English academic writing discourse perspective, Huangxi’s “Chinese” way of writing was not well recognized or valued, prompting him to try “his best” to alter his Chinese way of writing and adjust to English academic writing model. While trying his best to learn about English academic writing, Huangxi still self-doubted his English academic writing competence. In the following excerpt, Huangxi described his experience of asking an English-speaking scholar whom he met during his academic visit in Australia to help with his English manuscripts.

My host professor in Australia University, Tom, helped me proofread my English manuscripts for five or six times. Every time I finished a manuscript and I would send it to him before submitting to any journals. I think asking a native speaker of English to proofread your manuscript is a must. As a non-native speaker, your English academic writing couldn't really reach the level of native speaker scholars. Tom once told me directly, 'your writing does not accord with internationally accepted normative practices. You have to revise.' This is an issue that has been bothering me for a long time. It's difficult. (Excerpt 7/interview/Huangxi)

As shown in the above excerpt, Huangxi believed that asking an English-native speaking scholar to proofread his manuscript before submission "is a must". Apparently, he considered "nativeness" as the benchmark for English-medium publications. This view aligns with what McKinley and Rose (2018) reported in their evaluation of journal guidelines, which they noted, many journals required the use of correct, error-free, good English. Some of the journals explicitly "suggest" non-native writers to have their manuscripts "checked" by English native speakers before submission. Such guidelines, according to McKinley and Rose (2018), were informed by an ideology that considers nativeness as a yardstick for clarity of the submitted manuscript, rendering L2 writers deficient.

In addition, Huangxi's response to Tom's comment about his English academic writing also underscores the implied meaning of "nativeness", that is, he believed native speaker scholars have a better mastery of English academic discourses and practices. By saying "this is an issue that has been bothering me", Huangxi indicated that he considered his own English academic writing as non-standard or not native-like.

5.2.1.3 Seeking collaboration opportunities

Another way for Huangxi to enhance the possibilities of publishing in English is to seek collaboration with native scholars. Within the applied linguistic program at his U.S. host university, Huangxi found a professor who worked in a similar research area and reached out asking for feedback on one of his manuscripts.

We met three times, had coffee. She helped me with my manuscript and provided some feedback, mainly about the language issues. I cannot believe that she actually read my manuscript and gave me feedback. Professors here are often crazily busy. We didn't get to discuss research too much. She is just too busy. (Excerpt 8/interview/Huangxi)

Huangxi was aware that it was not common practice for professors to read visiting scholars' research manuscripts and give feedback. Nevertheless, he was willing to run the risk of being rejected and asked for help with his manuscript. The active risk-taking and self-mediated learning that Huangxi displayed can be viewed as being emblematic of his linguistic entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, Huangxi's entrepreneurial efforts did not pay off. His original intention was to discuss his

research ideas with the professor and ask for further research collaboration. Instead, his request was misconstrued as a call for feedback on language-related issues.

Recognizing the difficulties of initiating research collaboration, Huangxi tried another strategy, that is, offering authorship in exchange for more detailed feedback on his manuscripts. For example, Huangxi reached out to Tom, his former Australian host (Excerpt 7), with the offer but was rejected. In the interview, Huangxi said, “I asked Tom to be the second author, but he was very clear that he wouldn’t, because he didn’t contribute anything to the study.”

Excerpts 6, 7, and 8 draw a clear picture of how Huangxi actively engaged in a series of academic activities to improve his English academic writing competence and to enhance chances of publishing in English. These endeavors also signal his enactment of linguistic entrepreneurship in pursuing English academic publishing. In recognition of the dominant status of English in the academic publishing industry, Huangxi was willing to learn how to navigate the publishing game (Flowerdew 2000) and also abide by the rules of this game. Huangxi’s acts, such as asking for proofreading help, reaching out to native English scholars, offering authorship in exchange for feedback, align with entrepreneurial values of being strategic and flexible and a risk taker as well as an openness to reinvent himself to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to adjust to changing social conditions (De Costa et al. 2016). Furthermore, such practices are powerful illustrations of how the valorized status of English in academia not only positioned native English-speaking scholars as the experts, but also greatly shortchanged non-native scholars when it came to academic publishing. Therefore, Huangxi’s experience of pursuing English-medium publications also points to the enduring central-peripheral unequal power dynamics between English-speaking writers and L2 writers (Flowerdew 2000; Xu 2020). In light of this, we argue that the neoliberalism in academic publishing works to further normalize and naturalize this ideology among L2 writers like Huangxi who complied with “the publishing game” and positioned himself as a deficient non-native speaking scholar in English academic writing.

5.2.2 Fanwen

5.2.2.1 Exploring resources outside VSP

Different from Huangxi, and funded by her university, Fanwen applied for a different visiting scholar program (VSP) affiliated with the same US university. Unlike the Fulbright program, which is research-oriented and funded by the US government, the VSP program is open to professionals at various career levels and did not have specific educational background or language proficiency

requirements. The program focused on developing general English language and cross-cultural communication skills. As an advanced scholar with a TESOL background, Fanwen described the resources and courses provided by the VSP program as “not enough”, and felt that it did not meet her expectations of coming to the US, which she explained was, “to learn about the latest findings and future trends and directions in the field of second language writing.” Therefore, soon after Fanwen arrived at the university, she conducted a thorough check on all the resources related to second language writing at her host university, as shown in the following excerpt.

After I got here, I started to do some online searching about applied linguistics-related courses provided, and professors who share similar research interests. My goal is to learn about the latest findings and the future trends and directions in my research field ... I valued this academic visit opportunity so much. This is a great opportunity for me to keep up and to recharge myself ... I went to almost all the events hosted by the applied linguistics program that are open to the public. I audited two applied linguistics-related graduate courses as well. (Excerpt 9/interview/Fanwen)

Fanwen considered this academic visit a great opportunity to “keep up” with the latest research trends and to “recharge”. This deliberate act of actively digging resources and opportunities demonstrates an entrepreneurial spirit of self-improvement (Türken et al. 2016). Comparing herself to other visiting scholars, Fanwen commented, “many of the visiting scholars in the VSP program just went to the classes offered by VSP and didn’t seek any other opportunities outside the VSP program.” This comment indicates that Fanwen celebrated her entrepreneurial practice of taking the initiative to search for self-improvement opportunities and making the best of the given condition.

Coincidentally, Fanwen’s self-directed goals also made visible the inequalities embedded in the scientific knowledge production between the center and periphery countries. That she selected terms such as “*cutting edge*”, “*trends*” and “*directions*” suggest that Fanwen perceived the U.S. mainstream academic community as playing a leading role in producing scientific knowledge, thereby underscoring Hyland’s (2016) description of “the local as global” phenomenon often associated with Anglophone centers of research.

Regarding the exploitation of resources, Fanwen acted differently from Huangxi. With a yearlong systematic training on English academic writing during her master’s program in Singapore, Fanwen did not find English academic writing as challenging as her Chinese peers. The main difficulties she encountered lay with her university’s limited research-related resources and her limited access to the state-of-art research discussion and dialogs shared among privileged scholars in the center countries, a shortcoming that has been observed by scholars such as Hyland (2016).

5.2.2.2 Exploiting library resources

Fanwen appreciated and benefited greatly from the comprehensive electronic journal databases at her host US university library. Upon her arrival, Fanwen was under great pressure to finish a paper revision. Therefore, having access to the relevant literature helped her enormously with the revision process, and the paper was eventually accepted by a journal for publication.

Because I got major revision comments from reviewers, I have to make a series of changes to the literature review, methods, findings, and conclusion sections ... being able to access and read the latest studies in the field really helped with my paper revision. The reviewers were satisfied with all the changes we made, and our paper finally got published. (Excerpt 10/interview/Fanwen)

As shown in the above excerpt, Fanwen pointed out that being able to access the current literature on her research topic largely contributed to the successful publication of her paper, which was written in English. Working at a second-tier university in China, Fanwen had limited access to internationally indexed journal databases, noting that only a few first-tier universities or foreign language schools would purchase access to major international electronic journal databases. Therefore, while Fanwen was able to exploit the U.S. university resource to enhance her academic publishing, this incidence also revealed the conundrum faced by many Chinese scholars: the mounting pressure of publishing in English-medium journals vis-à-vis the limited access to contemporary research published in such journals.

As rightly pointed out by Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsdóttir (2017), for peripheral scholars to learn the norms and conventions of global academic publishing, adequate access to resources (e.g., materials, current literature, research facilities) is essential. In this case, while many Chinese scholars are subjected to the same “publish or perish” culture that compels them to produce publications written in English for career upward mobility, they are disadvantaged compared to scholars in center countries because of their limited access to resources essential to producing such publications. In a similar vein, Gonzales et al. (2014) also reported such a lack of institutional support and interrogated it within the framework of neoliberalism. They pointed out that university faculty, under the influence of neoliberal ideologies, is expected to “carry more, to do more with less, to be more creative without support” (p. 1106).

5.2.2.3 Accessing applied linguistics-related course resources

In addition to taking advantage of electronic journal databases, Fanwen also made strategic moves to access applied linguistics-related course resources that dovetailed with her research. She targeted a prestigious scholar Dr. L in her field of

research. As stated in the interview, Fanwen believed that attending Dr. L's class would allow her to read and discuss the latest studies and new findings in her field and also participate in dialogs with Dr. L and the graduate students who share similar research interests. However, different from Huangxi whose Fulbright scholar identity afforded privileges to audit courses, Fanwen thus had to be strategic in approaching the professors to gain class audit permission.

I heard lots of failure experiences from other visiting scholars who sent requests to audit courses in other departments. So, I did some preparation before reaching out to the professor. I first downloaded and read her CV, and read some of her articles. When writing the email, I emphasized on how her work is related to mine and how her courses would benefit my research. I also pointed out that my teaching and research experiences in China would contribute to the class discussion (Excerpt 11/interview/Fanwen).

Fanwen's strategic overtures (e.g., downloading and reading faculty CVs, reading their publications, composing convincing emails) illustrated her entrepreneurial orientation, in which she carefully identifies goals that she must achieve (i.e., access to Dr. L's class and keep up with the research trends in the field) and takes calculated steps to enhance her chances of achieving that goal. Fanwen's strategies paid off. She was able to audit Dr. L's class for one semester and later her active participation in class discussion was also highly appreciated by Dr. L.

Another thing worth meaning is that Fanwen later proudly shared with the first author that she was the only VSP scholar that year that was successful in gaining permission to audit applied linguistics-related classes at her host university. That Fanwen felt proud of and satisfied with her success of searching and exploiting opportunities outside the VSP program suggests that Fanwen identified herself as being a good visiting scholar who made thoughtful and careful use of the resources made available to her, compared to other VSP scholars. This pride and satisfaction as a good visiting scholar, thus, added to the moral value of her entrepreneurial acts.

6 Discussion and conclusion

As Olsson and Sheridan (2012) noted, in peripheral countries, one's proficiency in English has become an important part of being a "good" scholar or researcher. Similarly, Rose and McKinley (2018) highlighted that English has played a key role in the internationalization of universities in peripheral (i.e., non-English dominant) countries. Our study illustrated how the neoliberal push towards the internationalization of Chinese universities has coerced faculty to act like entrepreneurs by aligning with entrepreneurial values and subscribing to the

practices of entrepreneurship. The evaluation regime, as evidenced in participants' university policies, (1) led to the commodification of scholarly research and publications, (2) attached higher economic and symbolic value to English publications, and (3) weighted research productivity higher than teaching quality. Having individual faculty compete for promotion opportunities and material rewards based on English publications, the evaluation regime, therefore, transformed the pressure of producing English publications into an individual responsibility. At the same time, the regime also created a powerful social imaginary of a good university teacher in China. As a result, individual faculty felt morally compelled to work hard to meet the criteria of being a good university teacher.

Guided by the notion of linguistic entrepreneurship, we presented our participants' engagement in the series of learning activities during their U.S. academic sojourn in relation to their self-embracing entrepreneurial values. Our findings revealed that the pursuit of publishing in English is seen as the "rational" and "right" thing to do in order to maintain a competitive edge or to earn the respect and trust as a professor (Huangxi). In addition, engaging in research and English publishing was also re-described as a significant quality of being a good and "top-class" university teacher, as shown in Huangxi's data. Therefore, being a rational, responsible and autonomous neoliberal subject, both participants showed great keenness in exploiting self-enhancing opportunities during their academic visit. For Huangxi, in order to enhance his English academic publishing capacity, he not only made a continuous effort to master English academic writing, but also actively reached out to native English-speaking scholars to seek feedback on his manuscript and also seek co-authorship opportunities. Similarly, Fanwen's investment in enhancing her chances of publishing in English is manifested in her exploitation of the electronic journal databases resources as well as strategically approaching the prestigious scholar in the field in order to audit her course. We argue that linguistic entrepreneurship was embodied in their learning activities. That is, Huangxi and Fanwen's practices sketched out two responsible and autonomous entrepreneurs who strategically managed the use of linguistic-related resources and took advantage of learning opportunities to improve their English academic publishing in a competitive academic world.

In addition, our data also revealed that in the negotiation of English academic publishing demands, many of our participants' practices contributed to the reproduction of the hegemonic discourse associated with English as the dominant publishing language. For example, Huangxi asked native scholars to help with proofreading and offered co-authorship to native scholars in exchange for feedback. Fanwen's exploitation of the library resources also demonstrated the inequality in resources and access that exists because of the center and periphery divide (Canagarajah 2002; Hyland 2016). While Huangxi's effort in seeking a more

balanced and reciprocal relationship between teaching and doing research can be seen as an act of resistance and renegotiation of the “publish or perish” culture, the data also showed “working hard” in achieving both could lead to increased workload and pressure, which might result in teachers’ emotional burnout (De Costa et al. 2019b).

Moving forward, we argue that it is crucial to interrogate the neoliberal ideology that underlies English academic publishing regime and work to unmask the unequal power relations between the English language and other languages as well as between scholars from the center and peripheral countries. To do that, inspired and informed by Flores and Rosa’s (2015) interrogation of the appropriateness-based model, we argue that at individual level, it is of vital importance that we develop critical awareness towards the use of language (Alim 2005; Fairclough 2014). By encouraging scholars to critically reflect on their use of language in relation to the maintenance or reinforce of the existing power relations, critical language awareness can provide spaces for scholars to develop discourses and spaces of resistance. Moreover, Flores and Rosa (2015) remind us of the significance of challenging and critiquing the neoliberal regime that operates through institutional and state policies, as they rightly pointed out, “it might be misconstrued as suggesting that individuals can control the production and perception of their language use and should, therefore, appropriately deploy their linguistic repertoires based on the context in which they find themselves (Flores and Rosa 2015: 154). In addition, from a publishing perspective, editors and the publishers of academic journals should also critically examine their journal guidelines on language requirements (McKinley and Rose 2018). Instead of focusing on using error-free and standard English as a yardstick, McKinley and Rose (2018) encourage English-medium journals to adopt flexible journal guidelines that emphasize the clarity of language rather than the nativeness of language. Such a practice that foregrounds intelligibility helps challenge the ideology of nativeness and standards in publishing and can create more equitable academic outcomes for scholars from the periphery.

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