

Student subsidy of the internationalised curriculum: knowing, voicing and producing the Other

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This paper explores cultural production in online internationalised education. The analysis samples interactions in a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) unit offered online by an Australian university to a student group including enrolments through a Malaysian institution. Part of the curricular content was a consideration of how different cultural contexts shape management practices. The analysis highlights moments where ethnic/national cultures or cultural differences were invoked in texts to enrich this curriculum by design. In this case study, such ‘student subsidy’ was actively encouraged as a vicarious asset made possible with the internationalised student group. To this end, small mixed groups for assessable online discussion were allocated to precipitate such cultural interchange. The analysis displays who voiced what claims about whose culture, the grounds for legitimating such claims, and the kinds of cultural categories thus produced. The discussion then reflects on the degrees of insulation typically produced between cultural categories and how this failed to reflect or engage with the students’ interconnected worlds within the enterprise of online internationalised education.

Keywords: internationalisation; online pedagogy; curriculum; cultural difference; globalisation

Introduction

This paper is concerned with how cultural identities and cultural difference were produced in the design and conduct of a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) unit offered online to an internationalised student body, and the implications of this for the enterprise of online internationalised higher education. The focus here is on episodes in the conduct of the unit in which cultural identities and difference emerged in the instructional discourse, in other words, where cultural difference was invoked and treated as a curricular topic, as opposed to episodes of interactive trouble where cultural differencing arose as a pedagogical problem. There is a popular hope, often promoted in the marketing of online internationalised courses, that culturally diverse student groups will make a rich value-added learning environment in which students can contribute their personal knowledge of diverse settings. This paper uses Bernstein’s (1990, 2000) theory of pedagogic discourse and concepts from systemic functional linguistics to analyse what kinds of cultural claims were produced through an explicit design to harvest such ‘student subsidy’ of the curriculum.

The unit was offered by a public Australian university as a core semester-long unit in a 12-unit MBA programme in online mode using a popular courseware product, with no

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on-campus requirements. As well as 107 local and expatriate Australian-nationals (of whom 83 completed), 37 international students (of whom 29 completed) were enrolled in the unit through a partnership agreement with a parallel Malaysian institution. These students were not necessarily Malaysian citizens, but were located in Malaysia at the time of the unit. 'Online' delivery meant that the lecturer communicated with all students in this unit only through the web-based courseware in the many-to-many mode of 'discussion threads', or in one-to-one mode through the courseware email function. To enrol, students were required to have an undergraduate degree, plus relevant work experience in a managerial role. The unit was formally staged over 13 weeks with a mid-semester break of one week. However, interaction continued regardless, and the unit's website was 'alive' and busy over a period of nineteen weeks in total.

This particular unit introduced theoretical approaches to the management of organisational behaviour. The curriculum was structured in six modular topics, with particular discussion space devoted to each topic or a combination thereof. Part of the curricular content was a consideration of how different cultural contexts might impact on management practices. The pedagogical design of the case study unit, as outlined by the lecturer in interviews, generally promoted ongoing student subsidy of the curriculum through the sharing of personal experiences and insights wherever possible to exemplify, enrich or problematise theorisations offered in the curricular material. The lecturer was enthusiastic about the pedagogic value of online interaction and this was a prominent and overt aspect of his design, as proclaimed in his first announcement to the student body: 'In this course I emphasise the value of interaction via online discussion. We all have much to learn from each other ... By sharing experiences and views we can enhance our own understanding'. The unit's resources offered a variety of instructional sources and learning activities with which to engage. These included a textbook published in the USA, a compilation of other readings, module guides, online interaction tools with discussion 'zones' and, via these tools, the expertise of the lecturer and other students.

The assessment for this unit similarly reflected the value placed on the 'student subsidy' design. Students had to submit three assignments over the unit: a case study of problematic behaviour in a workplace; a hypothetical case study of managing a change programme in their organisation; and a self-reflection reviewing the student's own management behaviour across a number of dimensions. Before submission, the first two case-study tasks had to be shared and developed through small-group online discussions. Students were allocated to small groups that purposefully mixed domestic students with international students. Ten per cent of the student's final grade was a peer-assessment of their contribution to such small-group discussions. This paper selects textual moments from the small-group discussions around the second assessment task. In particular, it focuses on where this 'student subsidy' design precipitated a variety of exchanges about how different management theories and practices applied in different cultural settings. For example, the following extracts illustrate the type of exchange facilitated by this design (names have been changed), and how cultural insights could arise:

Hi Chen

Thanks! I agree – it all centres around communication. I think the management team needs to decide what the goals and vision are for the firm, and then document and advise all employees. From this the organisational chart can be developed, people can then see where they fit in, improving motivation and a sense of belonging – part of the team.

Alex

Hello Alex,

Agreed, understanding the firm goals or vision are very important in order to success. In Malaysia, we usually put a big banner or any sign board to convey the firm goals or vision in order to alert all the employees. For instance, QUALITY POLICY 'DELIVER GOODS IN EXCELLENCE PERFORMANCE' and etc.

cheers, Chen

The second comment offers insight into how a management practice is 'usually' enacted in the Malaysian context. Such statements are treated here as knowledge propositions constructing cultural categories to enrich the curriculum.

The research was conducted as a critical ethnography (Carspecken 1996) adapted to virtual interactions (Hine 2000). Following Hine's argument that virtual interaction can also be analysed as text, this paper uses the grammatical tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). SFL offers a grammar that explains not what language is 'correct' but rather, how language is used, examining what choices are made from the available network of linguistic alternatives to convey meaning and to negotiate relationships in particular contexts. Where Tomlinson (1999, 159) summarises the 'mediated interaction' of online communication as a restricted medium with 'a characteristically narrower range of symbolic cues than is possible in face-to-face interaction', SFL allows any linguistic text, online included, to reveal its intricacies and carefully nuanced tailoring to purpose, audience, communicative mode and context, that is, to reveal the relation between 'social and semiotic' (Macken-Horarik 2004, 5). Thus what seems a one-dimensional medium can be appreciated as a multi-dimensional relay of interpersonal, experiential and textual meanings via the available communicative means. Elsewhere SFL has informed critical discourse methodologies, and is particularly pertinent to environments that exist only through their linguistic manifestations. SFL has also been recognised as highly compatible with Bernstein's theory of pedagogy, each body of theory articulating with and illuminating the other (Hasan 1999). Following Carspecken (1996), the empirically available evidence of the online text is supplemented at times with the dialogic data of interview accounts, whereby the social actors could explain their dilemmas, reasons, and choices in their own terms.

This paper is presented in six sections. Firstly, the macro context of cultural processes of globalisation is reviewed, to frame the theoretical focus on the production of cultural difference. Online internationalised education could be understood as both symptomatic of and contributing to such cultural processes. Secondly, a language of analytical description for boundaries, categories, pedagogical interaction and its legitimation, is built using a series of Bernsteinian concepts operationalised through the SFL concepts of modality and mood. Then processes for data selection and sorting by a typology of knowledge claims by their modes of legitimation are outlined. The findings are then reported under these four types of knowledge claim, with both typical patterns and aberrant claims described. The final section reflects on the typical kinds of cultural claims precipitated by the design, and the potential evident in the aberrant messages to inform better resourcing of internationalised curricula more in line with the globalised, entangled lifeworlds of all the students.

Cultural differencing under conditions of globalisation

Globalisation is popularly understood as the dissolution of boundaries between localities, and the de-anchoring of their previously nested cultures. Global flows of finance,

ideologies, people, knowledge and technologies are thought to render geo-political boundaries more permeable, cultural categories less clear and less separable, and any cultural stabilities/fixity more precarious. However, the international arena has amply demonstrated that despite these new more fluid conditions (Bauman 2000), cultural and political identities are equally being forged in newly imagined purities and recovered fundamentalist forms to be powerfully brandished and mobilised. This more complicated palette of cultural identity has replaced earlier relatively inert 'ascribed' categories with more highly charged, contingent and volatile allegiances (Bhabha 1996). Thus, as boundaries are dismantled, their materials (such as language, religion, lifestyle choices and ideologies) are often redeployed to construct new boundaries, reconstruct old ones, or meld new hybrid alliances (Holton 2000). Globalisation is therefore as much about the construction and maintenance of boundaries and categories as it is about their dissolution. Any continuity of cultural categories when deterritorialised across time and space is achieved through their reinvention and expression under new conditions. In other words, the same category and its attendant meanings are realised through different processes.

In the empirical conditions of accelerating globalisation and its 'altogether new condition of neighbourliness' (Appadurai 1990, 3), there is a heightened awareness and valorisation of difference as individuals, societies and locales are 'relativised' (Robertson 1992) in a self-conscious process of coming to know 'us' through comparison with 'them'. The notional difference between 'us' and 'them' becomes a necessary if imagined condition in the relational process of do-it-yourself identity: 'Identity, as it were, defines one's own difference from others, but such a self-definition inevitably entails the definition of differences that distinguish and separate others from the self-defining agent' (Bauman, quoted in Gane 2004, 35).

Knowledge of the 'Other', like a photographic negative, acts as the necessary premise for knowledge and construction of the collective 'self' image. Geertz (1986, 114), while documenting the 'paler' nature of cultural difference and its fracturing in current times, emphasises the continued usefulness of the rubric of difference *per se*, regardless of its content. Said's (1978) work on the power/knowledge nexus and regime of truth realised in the discourse of Orientalism highlights the self-interested cultural politics behind representations of the cultural Other. Other writers highlight the semiotic and discursive work that fixed, objectified difference does through the device of timeless essentialised stereotypes, that 'impute a fundamental, basic, absolutely necessary constitutive quality to a person, social category, ethnic group, religious community, or nation' (Werbner 1997, 228). Hall's (1996) description of newly minted ethnicities demonstrates that it is not any 'natural' attribute of the category that constitutes it, but rather its relation of opposition to an Other. 'The marking of "difference" is thus the basis of that symbolic order which we call culture' (Hall 1997, 236). This relational notion of 'differencing' as a process will be used here to capture the way essentialising difference is produced to distinguish 'self' in relation to 'Other'.

While the move to essentialise the Other or Self erases differences within a category, it also works to suppress any exploration of convergence and interrelation between categories. In contrast, Pratt, through her concepts of 'contact zone' and 'transculturation', has been particularly interested in spaces and modes of intersection: 'how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other' (1992, 7). Like Hall, she has explored the politics of representation, in particular in the 'contact zone', being 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other' (Pratt 1992, 4). She describes 'autoethnographic' texts as a form of mediated self-representation: 'a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them'

(Pratt 1998, 175). Thus even such self-representations are understood to be relational, historically contingent and politically strategic.

The online interactions in this case study took place in this larger context of de-anchored boundaries, heightened awareness and encounter with difference in conditions of globalisation, and growing appreciation of the social construction and discursive representations of difference in contingent identity processes. Thus this paper is concerned with how such knowledge of the cultural Other and the reflected Self was produced and legitimated in the pedagogic discourse of the case-study unit. It examines the representations made of Self and Other, and thus what kinds of boundaries such differencing was constructing where in the global ethnoscape.

Developing an analytic language of description

A theory of boundaries, categories and their maintenance

Classification, framing and insulation are Bernstein's (1971) classic concepts that help analyse how boundaries and categories are constructed, maintained and/or changed: 'Classification refers to *what*, framing is concerned with *how* meanings are to be put together, the forms by which they are to be made public and the nature of the social relationships that go with it' (Bernstein 2000, 12). The dimension of classification refers not to the content within knowledge categories, but rather to the nature of the relation between categories. Strong classification designates strict separation of categories, with resilient boundaries resisting linkage or overlap; weak classification designates more permeable boundaries with categories capable of being integrated and interrelated. A measure of category separation is captured in Bernstein's notion of degrees of 'insulation' maintaining the gap between categories. Framing refers to the degree to which roles within the categories of knowledge are restricted or controlled. Strong framing indicates a strict division of labour between teachers and students or other constituent roles in the maintenance of the knowledge category. Weak framing means roles are less defined, more interchangeable and open to negotiation.

Roles are framed by influences both external and internal to the pedagogic setting. Thus the externally strong framing of roles in this case-study unit, with highly qualified staff who specialised in the area of study selected to teach students who were similarly selected carefully on the basis of their educational qualifications and work experience, could co-exist with an intentionally weak framing of roles within. By his account, this lecturer chose to avoid any 'guru' status in order to promote student subsidy of the instructional discourse. This design extended to him purposefully withholding from participating in much online discussion. The interlocking concepts of classification/framing/insulation help display how categories require ongoing maintenance, and how any achieved insulation 'creates not only order but also the potential of change in that order' (Bernstein 2000, 26) because the relations of symbolic control that promote the 'thinkable' equally have to work to suppress and disallow what is 'unthinkable'. This analysis is concerned with what types of cultural identity were promoted as 'thinkable' in the unit interactions, and what types were disallowed by how the student subsidy encounters were designed.

Voices and messages in pedagogy

Further, Bernstein (1990) distinguishes between the voices and the messages enabled by the 'relay' of the pedagogic device. The 'voice' is the category of subjectivity offered, from

which to legitimately speak. The ‘message’ is what is actually spoken, and what meanings are thus carried. The distinction, which could be understood as the distinction between the design and the actual conduct of pedagogic interaction, allows for subsequent negotiation of the initial system of categories:

The positioning of the subject creates the ‘voice’ of the subject but not the specific message. The ‘voice’ sets the limits on what can be a legitimate message. To create a message beyond those limits is to change ‘voice’. Such a change entails changing the degree of insulation, which initially was the condition for the speciality of the original ‘voice’. (Bernstein 1990, 28)

Bernstein relates the concept of ‘voice’ to classification, and the concept of ‘message’ to framing. This distinction caters for the generative potential of pedagogy to produce or suppress the ‘yet to be thought’ (Bernstein 1990, 182).

In this case-study unit, the internal framing in the small group discussions was purposefully weak, with all members expected to contribute. The design for ‘student subsidy’ offered the students cultured ‘voices’ from which to speak knowledgeably about the contexts with which they are familiar, as indicated in the lecturer’s early posting: ‘It will be wonderful for students in this course to gain from interaction with managers operating in different countries and different cultures’ (A111). The students were thus considered legitimately resourced and positioned to produce instructional knowledge about cultural contexts on two grounds: firstly, lived experience ‘speaking as’ a member of a culture; or secondly, personal experience working with and ‘speaking of’ members of another community. Both voices are reliant on an implicit claim to authenticity and authority through personal lived experience.

Legitimizing claims

Employing a classification and framing analysis to the ‘epistemic’ and ‘social’ relations embedded in pedagogic discourse, Maton (2000, 86) offers a further analytical facet in his distinction between two co-existing modes of legitimation for knowledge propositions: the knowledge mode (KL), premised on ‘procedures specialised to a discrete object of study’; and the knower mode (KR), premised on ‘personal characteristics of the subject or author’. The knowledge mode knows and represents the object of study through specialised procedures and expert discourse, but is potentially available to anyone willing to undergo induction into such specialised practices. In contrast, the knower mode is legitimated ‘by reference to what one is or was’, the subject being a member of the category. This latter category clearly relates to the ‘speaking as’ voice outlined above, but I would argue also applies to the ‘speaking of’ position, as the legitimacy resides within the knower through their accrued experiences and thus superior insights.

The treatment of cultural difference as a topic in the case study unit’s textbook exemplifies the knowledge mode. The book devotes three and a half pages to Hofstede’s framework for typifying the work values of different national cultures. This framework is premised on the specialised procedures of large sample surveys and offers a conceptual vocabulary of five dimensions on which cultures typically differ. The textbook also outlines a follow-up study, the GLOBE (the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) research programme, which reproduced and built on Hofstede’s framework, again legitimised through the specialised procedure of large-sample survey techniques. As Maton (2000, 86) points out, the two modes of legitimation are not opposed, but ‘are always and

everywhere co-existing and articulating within languages of legitimation'. Thus the fact that the curricular materials offered 'knowledge mode' accounts, while the pedagogic design invited supplementary 'knower mode' accounts through student subsidy need not be surprising. Can it, however, be problematic when the accounts differ in their claims?

By asking what kinds of cultural categories were produced in the enacted student subsidy, it is possible to capture cultural categories in the making and how these micro-practices may be shifting or challenged in times of accelerating globalisation. Does the internationalised curriculum/pedagogy emerge as a vehicle of cultural reproduction, reproducing and legitimating 'fixed' retrospective subjectivities, or does it offer moments of openness, whereby new 'yet to be thought' expressions and forms of local/global identity can be expressed and valorised? Moore and Muller critique 'voice discourse' which they associate with standpoint epistemology, progressive pedagogies, and the 'celebration of difference and diversity' (1999, 190). In contrast, Arnot and Reay argue that pedagogic voice research 'allows new and important insights into the dynamics of classroom communication – the interface between regulative and instructional discourses and the methodologies of framing' (2004, 1), and 'the social relations of knowledge production' (2004, 10). Similarly, Diaz (2001) unpacks how voice precedes and constrains pedagogical participation. Within this conceptual frame the design of student subsidy can be understood as enabling certain meanings, subjectivities and practices as legitimate and 'thinkable', casting the students into cultured roles from which to speak. Following Arnot and Reay, rather than condemn in principle this mode of legitimation, I am more interested in exploring what kind of knowledge and meanings cultured 'voicings' brought to this pedagogical table.

Analysing the language of cultural categories and claims

The analysis can now be refined to ask which voices offer what propositions about whose culture; on what grounds they legitimate their knowledge; and how strongly classified and framed the constructions of cultural categories are in the message. Building from Christie's linguistic translation of pedagogic discourse as realised, and made empirically available, in the intertwining of instructional and regulative registers (Christie 2002), it is argued that mood and modality choices offer some direct, simple linguistic indices of the relative strength of classification and framing of cultural categories in the student subsidy propositions.

Modality refers to grammatical choices that realise 'the area of meaning that lies between yes and no – the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 618), being the expressions of usuality and probability in propositions offering information ('modalisation'), or of inclination and obligation in proposals proffering goods and services ('modulation'). This analysis is particularly interested in the former, that is, modalisation in knowledge propositions. Modality can be expressed through numerous grammatical resources within a clause including modal adjuncts (*perhaps, usually*), modal finites (*could, might*) and phrases (*in my opinion*), lexical choices (*suggest*) and through grammatical metaphor across clause complexes (*It is possible that...*). Modality choices can also be described in terms of their value (median to an outer value of high or low); and their polarity (positive/negative). Any expression of modality, regardless of how extreme its value, entertains a degree of uncertainty.

This linguistic ability to scope and scale the degrees of certainty, or the 'space between yes and no' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 147), will be used as a textual gauge of classification and insulation between the cultural categories proffered in the student subsidy propositions regarding cultural groups and their attributes. The sequence in Figure 1

C++	Australians drink beer.
C++	Australians always drink beer.
C+	Australians usually drink beer.
C-	Australians sometimes drink beer.
C--	Australians might or might not drink beer.
C-	Australians occasionally drink beer.
C+	Australians seldom drink beer.
C++	Australians never drink beer.
C++	Australians don't drink beer.

Figure 1. Reading strength of classification through modality.

exemplifies a range of simple modalisation in hypothetical statements regarding the cultural category of 'Australian', arranged on a gradient from a very strong classification (C++) at positive and negative poles, to a very weak classification (C--) at the median.

Across this range, the defining attribute (drinking beer) becomes increasingly fuzzy and the boundary around the category of 'Australian' less determinate to the point of being dissipated or equivocal. The C+ generalisation would be considered the typical, default expression of cultural categories, patterned but not prescriptive, unlike the bald C++ statement which amounts to an inflexible stereotype. The analysis is also alert to additional means for producing degrees of classification in the data, such as the homogenising use of 'they' and the de-historicising use of the timeless present tense for verbs (Fine 1998).

The second linguistic index, Mood, refers to grammatical choices that can constitute meaning as a statement (declarative), a question (interrogative), a command (imperative), or varieties thereof. These choices will be informed by, and contribute to realising, the tenor of any textual interaction, that is, the social relations to be constructed and performed. It suffices here to distinguish between the typical and non-typical grammatical structures used to perform the 'speech functions' of making a statement and asking a question. Egins (1994, 153), in her summary of Mood patterns, suggests the typical Mood for statements is a declarative (*Australians drink beer*), while the non-typical Mood is the tagged declarative (*Australians drink beer, don't they?*). Similarly, the typical Mood choice for questions is interrogative (*Do Australians drink beer?*) while the non-typical is the modulated declarative (*I don't know if Australians drink beer*). Both of the non-typical choices mitigate the interpersonal impact of the speech function. The sentences in Figure 2 exemplify a range of Mood choices around a hypothetical proposition concerning the cultural category of 'Australian', and offer an interpretation of how these differently frame the social relations of the knowledge involved. The framing is graded from strong (F++), where the roles enacted are markedly differentiated, to weak (F-), where the relation is framed as one between peers.

To summarise how these textual dimensions will be read, strong classification in the pedagogic message is indicated by the absence of any mitigation or by high-value modality in propositions about cultural groups and their attributes. Strong framing in the pedagogic messages is indicated by the mood choice of imperatives or declaratives that tell it how it is, indicating undisputed control of the knowledge, and by marked interrogatives that defer to the other's control of the knowledge. Similarly, weak classification in the message is indicated through compromising degrees of probability or usuality expressed through median value modality choices, and weak framing in the voicing is indicated by appeals

Imperative	<i>Never drink wine with Australians!</i>	F++	Highest power move – knowledgeable speaker is in position to tell others what to do.
Declarative	<i>Australians drink beer.</i>	F+	In control of this knowledge.
Tagged declarative	<i>Australians drink beer, don't they?</i>	F–	Seeking reassurance – other party can equally contribute to knowledge.
Interrogative	<i>Do Australians drink beer?</i>	F–	Doesn't know, but can legitimately ask and initiate the topic.
Marked interrogative	<i>I don't know if Australians drink beer.</i>	F+	Not in control of this knowledge – defers to other person's control of knowledge. Ruling self out of knowing.
Silence*	...	F++	Lowest power move – not entitled to contribute.

Figure 2. Reading strength of framing through mood.

Note: *See Pedro (1981) regarding silenced students. Silence in online mode is more problematic as it does not necessarily denote presence and is not available for analysis, but has been included here as a possible response.

through interrogatives or tagged declaratives that invite others to contribute, confirm and help legitimate original propositions.

Data selection and sorting

The data presented below were selected from the 696 postings in the second small-group discussions, involving 79 students in 15 groups, with four to six students per group. Thirty of these students were enrolled through the Malaysian partner institution. Students were asked to prepare a brief case study outlining a workplace issue. They were to include a set of questions that engaged with the theory provided in the unit, to provoke discussion within their group over a two-week period. As these questions were required as part of the task, analysis of their mood has not been included here. The lecturer purposefully mixed domestic and international students within each group, to achieve his design of student subsidy. Thus the pedagogical strategy 'voiced' the interaction so that students were differently positioned to speak as representatives of, and authoritative informants on, their cultural experience. The selections for this paper are extracts where the subject matter of the posting invoked cultural, national, or ethnic categories and offered instruction on their attributes. Given that one of the curricular modules assessed through this exercise had dealt with the management of cultural diversity in the workplace, some of the students' case studies raised such issues as their core problematic. Elsewhere, the topic of cultural differences/attributes emerged as an additional contextual consideration in the discussion.

Relevant passages were identified and sorted according to what sorts of knowledge claim were being made:

- Knower mode A (KRA) – speaking as a member of the group thus described with insider knowledge.

- Knower mode B (KRB) – speaking of the group described, as an outsider with relevant experience.
- Knowledge mode A (KLA) – speaking of a group or cultural difference as the object of specialised study through recourse to models, concepts or referenced texts.
- Knowledge mode B (KLB) – speaking of the received idea of generic, non-specific cultural difference between groups as an established fact, which could potentially be either a problem, or an asset in the case study.

The last category emerged from the data, where ‘cultural difference’ was mentioned without any specific attributes or experience being attached to the groups involved, but rather as a fact of life, often with the associated concept of ‘culture shock’. Some postings contained aspects of more than one such coding and were analysed together to gain some sense of how the knowledge moves worked together. Some claims were difficult to categorise given no grounds for legitimation were evident in the text. For example, the claim that ‘Russia has a very family oriented approach to work’ (2L26) includes no reference to whether the writer has personal experience of this attribute, or whether this knowledge has been condensed from other sources. Such ‘disembodied’ propositions were categorised as KLB, on the assumption that they emanate from a ‘cultural difference as a fact of life’ discourse. Such claims may have emanated from KLA or KRA sources, but without the explicit reference, they are not calling in such legitimation.

The passages were then analysed to characterise mood and modality choices, and elicit any patterning of classification and framing thus achieved within and across the mode types. In addition, attention is paid to aberrant cases from which issued the ‘yet to be voiced’ expressions of cultural identity, producing categories and boundaries that did not cohere with how the voicing had been set up. Postings are reproduced verbatim with identifying codes that refer to the group and the chronological order of the posting, hence 2L26 refers to the 26th posting in group L for the second small-group discussion task.

Findings

Knower mode A: Speaking as ‘us’

Across the set of group discussions, there were 48 postings that made Knower A mode propositions, informing other students about a cultural group of which the writer is a member. This membership supplied the grounds of legitimation for the proposition. These propositions characterised cultures of Asia (three), Australia (14), China/Chinese diaspora (five), Malaysia (15) and Papua New Guinea (12), one making claims regarding both Asia and China, thus counted twice in this breakdown. The Papua New Guinea claims were made by the one student, a temporary Australian resident, enrolled as a domestic student, for whom cultural difference between a PNG enterprise and its international management was the core problematic in her case study.

The *classification* evident in these propositions through the grammatical device of modalisation was typically of moderate (C+) strength, expressed through wordings such as *generally, many, tend to*. Other propositions produced a stronger sense of classification (C++), firstly by marking the high degree by wordings such as *very obvious, especially, never*; or by the absence of any modalisation in the proposition. Some KRA claims were legitimated by explicit reference to the author’s local situated context as grounds for their opinion, though this was more the case for the students in Malaysia: ‘Here in Malaysia...’. These grammatical patterns suggest that the interpretation of culture as homogeneous

located national identities was widely operative, as speculated on, and promoted, by the design for student subsidy. Many students occupied the cultured 'voices' offered in the design and played the legitimated interactional game of constructing strongly classified cultural types in their messages.

Through such propositions, attributes were associated with the various cultural categories with high degrees of probability/usuality. The Asian culture was portrayed as respectful of elders, traditional, religious and superstitious. The Australian culture was portrayed as 'friendly and easy going', motivated by material success, resistant to change, used to job security, susceptible to the 'tall poppy syndrome', with highly regulated industrial relations. Business in China was portrayed as state dominated with reduced competitiveness while Chinese people were portrayed as secretive and competitive. People in Malaysia were similarly portrayed as secretive and competitive, passive 'timid' workers, and highly regulated in the workplace. Papua New Guinea culture was portrayed as strongly determined by traditional *wantok* relations of collective reciprocity and clan allegiance, non-competitive, with risks of violence and corruption but capable of providing skilled workers in enterprises of international standard.

One trend confined to the KRA postings regarding Malaysia and China was frequent mention of reform efforts instigated by their governments in response to global economic flows, and shifting parameters for workplace practices. Such accounts also typically described characteristic resistance to such change: 'In the Malaysian context, even with this "open door" avenue, it has been observed that not many employees make use of it' (2M21). This patterning acknowledges the tension between change and changelessness which could be read as an argument for the resilience of cultural attributes in the face of change, thus inferring strong classification.

It is telling to note where the heuristic oppositions between 'us' and 'them' were drawn, that is, which categories were constructed in opposition to what 'Other'. The generalised accounts of Asia drew a binary opposition between East and West. Similarly, national accounts of Malaysia and China were often compared to, or contrasted from, accounts of Australia, though some postings distinguished between all three or more settings. In contrast, the account of Papua New Guinea consistently opposed the indigenous tradition of *wantok* culture to a dis-located notion of 'internationalist' culture, represented by the global corporation. Accounts of Australia were typically produced to describe an Australian practice to inform the case study of an international student, thus in opposition to China, or Malaysia.

The discussion now turns to *aberrant cases*, that is, propositions/messages that did not fall into the general patterns described above. This set of aberrant messages worked to problematise generalisations that conveyed fixed homogeneous notions of national attributes by introducing fracture lines and dynamism, qualities that orthodox 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1983) and essentialised representations suppress.

Firstly, with reference to the archetypal portrayals of cultural groups, there were messages that introduced challenges to such static homogeneous categories of national culture, but with statements equally assertive in their expression of modality. The earlier classifications of categories are challenged in two ways – by diversity within, and by change over time. For example, an Australian student outlined his case-study problem of managing 'great' cultural difference and 'non-conformity' within an Australian business. Another domestic student reinforced this portrayal of 'Australia as mixture', building the account with high-value modalisations ('really', 'I am sure', 'often') (2J35). In a similar vein, a Malaysia student moved from a KLB cultural-difference-as-fact-of-life proposition to a KRA statement with no modalisation that cultural difference is the Malaysian way of life:

For my opinion, different culture background team (on-premise & retail) are very hard to cooperate, as different background will easier caused misunderstanding ... In our country (Malaysia) that consist of different culture background we realise the important of tolerance as if we not tolerance between different races, our country will collapse. (2N27)

This student produces the KRA statement to back up and legitimate his KLB prediction, demonstrating how the different modes can work together, and not necessarily against each other.

In another group, a domestic student made a statement about the changing nature of 'Australian culture': 'Does the root of the problem lie with a changing Australian culture? ... People do not interact as they used to' (2L79). The statement works as a strong classification with its relative absence of modality, apart from 'general', but the category constructed works in opposition to the Australian culture of the past, so the boundary drawn is a diachronic one between 'us then' and 'us now'. Another domestic student moved to agree (2L81), but where the first student builds an account of cultural shift in attributes, the second student's account works to weaken the classification ('diminishing', 'increasingly individualistic', 'still there ... not as overtly or as strongly').

Secondly, in reference to the oppositions produced, in contrast to national cultures as the base unit, one Malaysia student's case study drew a comment from a second Malaysia student that constructed a strongly classified boundary of difference ('especially so', 'generally') between West Malaysians and East Malaysians: 'Although both are Malaysians, attitudes are quite different' (2B8). The first Malaysia student replied, offering a markedly weaker classification of the categories ('slight', 'not ... major', 'just as'), disputing the attributes assigned, and suggesting that the opposition may better be explained as Malaysian versus Singaporean, or regional versus capitalist urban. His final closing expressed solidarity, rather than difference, again working to weaken the earlier classification:

I believe that if East Malaysians have the opportunities to reach out to the smaller towns in West Malaysia ... they will still find that many West Malaysians are just as friendly and easy going. Have a nice day fellow Malaysian. (2B7attach)

This exchange is informative in a number of ways. Firstly, it shows how contingent and arbitrary the selection of an 'Other' is, yet how constitutive any such distinction is in shoring up a positive identity for 'us'. The attribute of 'friendly and easy going' echoes exactly the attributes claimed in a KRA mode proposition about Australian culture elsewhere, undermining the distinctiveness of both claims. Secondly, both postings in this exchange fracture the homogeneous national category that had been allowed to flourish elsewhere in the student subsidy accounts. They fracture the category with diachronic and synchronic differencing, with allusions to 'big corporations' and 'education' shifting lifestyle preferences, suggesting influences beyond the national arena. Thirdly, where Malaysian politics officially allocates its citizens to one of a number of ethnic/religious categories, it is telling that these are not the categories produced in these accounts, rather it is geographical and lifestyle distinctions that are made. Finally, both contributors are speaking from a KRA position, so they have equal claim to legitimacy and the exchange is between peers similarly located in the voicing. In a parallel move, a domestic student made a KRA move that disputed another student's KRA depiction of the 'tall poppy syndrome' as highly likely in Australia, by reducing its likelihood to a very weak classification: 'There is as much room for elitism and there is for the tall poppy syndrome' (2H26).

These sets of aberrant KRA messages have broken ranks with the legitimated game of predictable national cultures, to produce equally assertive 'yet to be voiced' accounts

that unsettle conventional categories, introduce complexity, dissent and uncertainty. Significantly, these problematisations emerged in dialogue between members of the same voice, suggesting that one can produce a simpler, more essentialised auto-ethnographic 'self' for consumption by 'them', than one can for 'us'. It should be noted that this complete reading of the second group postings is itself an aberration and misrepresentation of the participants' experience. Though all postings were accessible, students were not expected to read the complete set, as they were only required to participate in their own small group. Thus the pattering, complexity and multivocality of representations described above was probably only minimally experienced by the students. Rather group members' accounts often served as sole representative of their voice membership, so much of the diversity, fracturing and challenge produced was in effect lost as a curricular asset in this design.

In terms of framing the social relations of the KRA knowledge propositions, the very dominant pattern was the use of declaratives (F+) to make statements. The social relations of such 'cultured' knowledge was frequently reinforced with some meta-textual comment (e.g. 'To answer your doubts', 'For your information') that positioned the writer as legitimated knower. Beyond a few exceptions using imperatives and interrogatives, the strong framing evident in the high usage of declaratives with which to deliver KRA propositions suggests that the internationalised student group felt comfortable occupying the voices allocated to them via the design for student subsidy.

In the data, a stronger endorsement of the cultured voicing design became evident through the use of marked interrogatives (F+), that is, declaratives carrying the meaning of not knowing. These emerged where the activity called for students to work across notional boundaries between cultured voices to make suggestions and comments on each other's work. The relativisation produced by the 'student subsidy' design made this boundary crossing risky for the students. To manage this risk, students frequently mitigated their offers of advice with pre-emptive disclaimers, respectfully protesting their lack of relevant knowledge, and possible inappropriateness of advice, for example, 'Please understand that our cultures are very different and my suggestions may not be appropriate in your world' (2K46). Such a move of deference to the legitimated knower was common where students offered suggestions or asked for more information when working across voice category boundaries, but was not used in exchanges within voice categories. These presage statements worked in two ways. Firstly, as a textual device, they modalised any subsequent knowledge proposition, weakening its claim by pre-emptively suggesting it may be culturally biased or distorted, for example, 'my views may be biased towards the Malaysian environment' (2G5). Secondly, the deference shown to the addressee produced a stronger framing in the social relations of knowledge, between the addressee's position as knower-about-such-matters, and the writer's self-effacement as a possible knower. These moves amounted to requests for KRA knowledge, overriding any KLA mode of knowledge offered in the textbook's treatment of cultural difference.

Knower mode B: Speaking of 'them'

As described above, there was a propensity to deny knowledge of the cultural Other and to show respectful deference when making any suggestions that crossed into such territory. These trends make the KRB propositions 'speaking of' another cultural group based on personal experience, interesting in themselves. Though anecdotes of working in 'indigenous' settings cropped up in the open threads, there were only three such propositions drawing on first- or second-hand experience in these small-group discussions:

Based on my knowledge of migrant Chinese where poverty is a problem... (2L30)

However, nothing can prepare an African for the Danish winters or an unfortunate racial remark, and nothing can stop a Japanese gentlemen from bowing, or an Arab from having trouble dealing with the openness of his female colleagues ... It's a culture shock. (2I14)

I have also heard that in PNG payback murders are accepted ... I hear that bribes are a natural part of PNG business (correct me if I'm wrong). (2L60)

In terms of classification, the first two of these postings displayed high-value modality, and thus strong (C+) classification of cultural attributes: (very, we can all see, so, nothing can...), with the unmodalised (C++) assertion in habitual present tense of 'culture shock'. Similarly, they both use declaratives (F+) throughout which reinforce their experience as legitimate grounds from which to speak of such matters. The third KRB claim however differs, in that it chooses to project the claims through the verbal processes of 'I have ... heard' and 'I hear that...'. This choice makes the experiential legitimacy of the claim reside in the domestic student's act of hearing, and produces the claims about the Other as once removed verbiage, that might or might not be true in fact. Thus the device of projection effectively problematises the claims, while the claims themselves could be worded with absent or high modality (C++): (are, natural). The student then defers to the KRA knowledge of the student from PNG ('correct me...'), with an imperative (F++) which alludes to her more legitimate status in these knowledge relations. This KRB claim is an instance of 'boundary crossing', of offering knowledge about the cultural setting of another student's case study. However, unlike the marked interrogatives that deny knowledge described above, this student has ventured to contribute some additional insight, while being careful not to challenge the authority of the KRA knower. This strategy gives some insight into the delicate politics of knowing and producing the Other in their presence.

Knowledge mode A: expert knowledge

The curricular materials had presented Hofstede's framework as an expert resource for knowing the Other. Concepts from this framework and other aspects of the MBA curriculum made their way into the instructional register of 14 postings in the second group discussions. For example:

This means that as influential as organisational culture is in shaping employee behaviour, national culture is even more influential ([textbook reference]). (2A13)

Others struggle with cultural dimensions especially when their national culture differs notably to the local culture, for example, a male manager from a high power distance (Pakistan, Mexican) has trouble coping with staff of a low power distance culture. (2I4)

In such postings, students used the analytical concepts, often with the imprimatur of scholarly references, to frame and legitimate their comments. With this recourse to expert knowledge, the majority of the KLA claims displayed high modalisations (C+) (given..., surely, considerable, heavily), and the suggestions made on such bases were often also high in modulation (should, must, need to), in comparison to the more hesitant, tentative suggestions introduced by the marked interrogatives associated with KRA claims.

The majority of such claims were presented in declarative mood (F+), though two used interrogatives (F-) to probe contextual specifics, for example:

Do any of the employee involvement programs mentioned in Chapter 7 of the text have relevance to your situation and culture? (2K12)

The general patterning suggests that knowledge mode resources could provide a strong sense of authority with which to know the Other, and enable students to ‘boundary cross’ more confidently. On closer analysis, there was often an implicit synthesis made between a theory or concept in KLA mode, and its application to a particular setting through KRA or KRB mode propositions. For example, the following claim inserts a KRA mode characterising Australian culture as ‘friendly and easy going’, into a KLA claim about culture as an explanatory variable:

Various researches indicate that national culture has a greater impact on employees than does their organisation’s culture. Australian employees at a Smith facility in Brisbane, therefore, will be influenced more by the local friendly & easy going culture. (2A13)

Thus the generic theory was often reliant on more haphazard experiential knowledges in the instructional register for its animation and elaboration.

As an *aberrant* case in this KLA category, the following posting by a Malaysia student used KRA knowledge to critique the KLA representation of Malaysia and seriously mitigate the KLA claim, pulling it back to merely ‘prototypical’, a ‘signpost’ of ‘limited’ value:

To state that my case study is heavily bound in national culture would be to stretch Gert Hofstede’s model of organizational culture theory a bit too far. I consider Hofstede’s model as a prototypical model but paradigms have shifted and times have changed. It would benefit more if we could study the individual particularities of the case as distinguished from the other rather than rely on generalized ideas and models as guidelines. Better still to refer to generalized models as signpost, and only as signpost, to give us an overall picture but only to that limited extent. To generalize the situation on national culture is to make attribution errors or stereotyping. A country as racially diverse as Malaysia with different languages and religions co-existing will only produce diverse cultures and also organizational cultures. (2K39)

In contrast to the strong classification offered in the Hofstede model, at least in its interpretation, this student argued for a highly problematised, weak classification of the category, ‘Malaysia’, being constituted more by its complex diversity than by any stereotypic characterisation. The emergent ‘yet to be voiced’ order in this message presents a serious critique of much of the other activity, whereby students had co-operated with the national/cultural voicings and offered their representations of homogeneous national/cultural categories. Like the aberrant cases of KRA mode propositions described above, this message potentially undid much of the instructional work achieved through the device of student subsidy. The particular challenge of this posting lies in its charge of redundancy levelled at the KLA knowledge: ‘but paradigms have shifted and times have changed’. This student offers what could be considered a report from the front, alert to forces of change and fracture lines under pressure, which are glossed over in the static, academy-endorsed KLA accounts.

Knowledge mode B: cultural difference as a fact of life

In the group discussions, 20 postings drew on a generic discourse of cultural difference as a fact of life (KLB), without recourse to expert, specialist knowledge (KLA), or experiential modes of legitimation (KRA, KRB). Such a discourse had been validated by the curricular material’s treatment of culture as an objective given, usually interpreted as located and

national, and thus as a contextual variable to be taken into account when devising management strategies. For example, the following posting does not specify any particular cultural group, but rather a general statement regarding managing cultural diversity as an organisational asset: 'The company seek out diverse national culture because of the alternative strengths those staff bring to the workplace' (2A14). Other KLB statements presented cultural difference in the workplace as a potential problem: 'I accept that culture is an important consideration as it can work for U or agst U' (2L70).

Such generic KLB claims did not produce specific cultural categories, but rather described the presumed gap between. Thus modality used in these propositions refers to the degrees of insulation invoked between notional cultural oppositions. An analysis of the modality suggests there are two types of claim. Firstly, the 'factness' of cultural difference (C++) was marked by the absence of modalisation, cultural difference being an independent variable, while the actors therein are marked by high modulation or obligation, for example: 'As a CEO, you must adapt the style to different national culture' (2A14). Secondly, there were modalised claims arguing the importance and value of cultural difference. The modalisation (*likely, attempt to, can*) in this second type made the insulation weaker and more contingent, and difference something to be strategically maximised or minimised.

In terms of framing, the majority of KLB propositions were typically made through declaratives (F+), telling the facts, or putting forth an argument in a didactic fashion. One student used imperatives (F++) to exhort another student to take up certain strategies, showing a strength of conviction:

Allow them to fully experience the wantok culture, perhaps assign them to a group of employee's during their stay so that they have the first hand exposure necessary to create a full understanding of the cultural excentricities. (2L25)

One aberrant case used interrogatives to argue for a strategic weakening of insulation, in the face of another student's continued insistence of strongly insulated cultural difference between the culture of Papua New Guinea and the international corporation that had taken over the Papua New Guinea-based enterprise:

How abt trying to see the perspective from an international angle. U mentioned somewhere that the wantok culture is slow in moving. Now if your hotel's customers are from the various countries, wld such guests accept the way services are being performed in a laid back manner? (2L63)

Using interrogatives (F-) to purposefully change the frame of reference, this message tips on its head much of the established understandings of cultural difference as residing in the location of the enterprise. This international student has provocatively argued the case for weakening the insulation, and for the enterprise to accommodate and adapt to the variety of its international clients. There is still the presumption of cultural difference as an inevitable fact but it is a malleable difference that can be mitigated, a variable that can be exploited commercially.

To summarise the analysis across the four modes of knowledge, the cultured voicing of the student subsidy design promoted and legitimated KRA 'speaking as' mode propositions in particular, and students confidently made such claims using typically strong classification and strong framing. This evident 'comfort zone' was, however, matched by the emerging 'discomfort zone', evident in the proliferation of marked interrogatives claiming lack of relevant knowledge of the Other when students attempted to cross a boundary to make

suggestions on each other's cases. Thus when it came to knowing the Other, students were enabled in some ways, and disabled in other ways. Similarly, KRB 'speaking of' mode propositions were rare in this second group discussion, where they had been more common in the early open discussions. This may indicate a growing circumspection, self-consciousness and uncertainty, when it came to knowing the Other. Such problematisation may not necessarily be a curricular weakness. It could indicate perhaps a growing awareness of the 'otherness of others' (Beck 2000, 100) and a loss of the certainty of former essentialised notions. In contrast, KLA modes of expert knowledge produced strongly classified and framed propositions, suggesting that the textbook's curricular content had resourced the students to make confident claims and suggestions on such theoretical bases. KLB claims that constructed generic cultural difference as a fact, or a variable to be proactively managed, were common. Students typically expressed these confidently with strong classification and framing, given the 'common sense' assumption of cultural difference endorsed in the voicing design.

Cultural productions in student subsidised curriculum

The patterning suggests that the majority of student messages articulated with a metaculture that made homogeneous, essentialised national cultures thinkable and comfortable. 'Metaculture' refers to shared understandings and applications given to the concept of 'culture' and how 'substantive culture will be invoked and applied to "practical action"' (Robertson 1992, 41). The idea of 'culture' in these typical messages was an objective, knowable factor embedded in locality. There was an expectation that the Other could reasonably be known to validly inform management practice, and the curriculum was accordingly resourced with cognate KRA mode claims and KLA claims referencing the textbook's treatment in this vein. By naturalising the attributes associated with a cultural category as timeless and fixed, the typically strong classification constructed cultural categories as insulated and mutually exclusive, masking historical and current interdependencies, penetrations and 'polythetic resemblances' (Appadurai 1990, 20).

It seems ironic that most of the students could maintain such an unreconstructed metaculture in the face of accelerating globalisation, well exemplified by their own online interactions and their many accounts of industries penetrated and shaped by global influences. This irony suggests 'a certain kind of wilful nostalgia' (Robertson 1992, 31) sustaining imagined national communities as a form of cushioning denial of the changes under way. Such were the meanings promoted by the design. Whether or not these legitimated meanings reflected student's lived realities is another matter: 'pedagogic discourse creates imaginary subjects, we should not overestimate the fit between pedagogic discourse and any practice external to it' (Bernstein 1990, 198). By adopting the allocated voices, and playing by the design's rules, the students have produced meanings for consumption within this specific pedagogic setting. Had the groupings or voices been allocated in different ways, different messages and identities may well have been displayed. This is where the enterprise of online internationalised education could engineer a vibrant and challenging alternative to tired, increasingly specious paradigms, one that provokes students to speak from 'glocal' positions – both local and global at the same time – to reflect the 'empirical condition of complex connectivity' (Tomlinson 1999, 32) and constant boundary crossing in which they are engaged.

The analysis also explored aberrant cases that challenged these predisposed patterns and messages. These aberrant messages gave different accounts of cultural categories, with notions of dynamism, fracturing and diversity within, or impinging external contingencies.

Such accounts shifted boundaries, or weakened the degree of insulation. It was shown that such problematising challenges more likely came from within the same voice category where peer dialogue was possible. Other aberrant messages adopted different framings, changing the social relations of knowledge, challenging the voicing's privileging of KRA mode. As Bernstein notes, where the message raises the 'yet to be voiced', this changes the voicing and the insulation between its categories. However, such efforts to unsettle voicing categories were sprinkled across the corpus, of which students only sampled their own group's postings. Thus the potential for a cumulative effort to challenge the instructional register's metaculture of homogeneous national/cultural categories would not necessarily have become evident to the student.

More active moderation and provocation by the lecturer could have gained more instructional mileage from such aberrant contributions. For example, the lecturer could explicitly invite debate around KRA and KRB knowledges in order to scrutinise or challenge KLA knowledge and foundational assumptions of KRB knowledge, then, with scholarly treatment push through to clarify some revised KLA stance. Rather than allowing students to remain in their cognitive 'comfort zones', a moderator could invite students to engage with the messiness, uncertainties and discomforts associated with increasing diversity. The typical KRA messages became a 'comfort zone' which in turn made KRB claims uncomfortable and difficult to make. The point here is how the design, by producing such comfort zones, did not really help students engage in an increasingly entangled globalising world, and merely served to reproduce rather tired insulated versions of culture.

The 'yet to be thought' message from the Malaysia student that 'paradigms have shifted and times have changed' also prompts timely reflection about the curricular resourcing of internationalised programmes, as enterprising opportunities arise in new locations. Knowledge mode resourcing, such as the textbook, that fails to cater for local particularities on top of notionally international generalities places more reliance on students to resource the localised aspect of the curriculum through student subsidy. However, by their allocation across different groups, the international students in this case-study unit were placed in a position of being the representative 'voice' of such knowledge, and not its beneficiary. Same voice groupings or multi-staged encounters might produce more enriching and challenging student subsidy dialogues.

Student subsidy design in the internationalised curriculum undoubtedly enriches students' interactions. In this study, seven self-selected students (six enrolled domestically, one internationally) were interviewed by email after the completion of the unit. All interviewees expressed an appreciation for the 'added value', 'insights', 'perspectives', and 'dimensions' they gained from the staged encounter with difference in their small-group discussions:

Especially within management where globalisation is becoming the norm. We as managers need to have an awareness of different country cultures, rites and rituals to trade. This forum provides an opportunity for a better understanding to take place.

This article has aimed to delve deeper to offer a detailed account of how and what versions of cultural difference were produced in an online internationalised curriculum employing such student subsidy design. The intention of this design was to promote cultural differencing as a curricular asset, and in its conduct, to voice, produce and know the Other. This paper has offered a detailed analysis of a simple, well-intentioned pedagogical design that has become popular in the constructivist orientation of much online learning design – encouraging students to pool their experiential insights to mutual benefit. The analysis

shows that such unexamined design warrants closer scrutiny in terms of what kinds of knowledge the design precipitates, how it positions students, and how the knowledge thus produced might or might not cohere with the intellectual and professional projects under way. ‘Student subsidy’ should not be considered a replacement for thoughtful resourcing of the curriculum with knowledge mode materials, but thoughtfully designed ‘student subsidy’ can work as an important check, balance and probe for the critical evaluation and testing of knowledge mode claims.

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