SMILES AND CHALLENGES: AN
ETHNOGRAPHICALLY-ORIENTED STUDY
INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF A PARTICULAR
GROUP OF THAI POST-GRADUATE
STUDENTS IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographically-oriented study was initiated when Thai post-graduate scholarship students reported a variety of academic, medical and social problems to staff working at an education office which monitors the welfare of Thai students studying in the UK. This study is particularly timely as there was little existing research into the experiences of Thai students studying outside Thailand.

Drawing on Holliday's (1999) notion of 'small cultures', the study highlights challenges faced by a group of Thai students as they study for a one-year Master's degree in the UK during 2011-2012. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and classroom observations carried out, with four Thai scholarship Master's students studying at different UK universities. To expand the breadth of the study, a questionnaire survey of sixty-four Thai scholarship Master's students studying at universities across the UK was administered. Additional background data were obtained from university teachers by means of semi-structured interviews.

A picture emerges of the complex challenges and pressures faced by overseas students on a one-year degree programme as they seek to adapt to norms and expectations in the UK. The study highlights the individuality of international students, and resists generalisations about national groups. The study proposes implications for the support of international students at universities in the UK.

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DEDICATION

To my parents Gwen and Jim O'Sullivan

Whose unconditional love enabled me to achieve my dreams.

❖

To my husband Dr Colman Cleary

My best friend. This thesis would never have been completed without

your constant love and support

❖

This thesis is for you with all my love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Baht   The basic unit of currency in Thailand

Karma   Belief that the effect of a person's actions determine his destiny and his next incarnation. Ref: http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=karma)

Kikokushijo   Japanese term meaning temporary sojourner /resident in a country

Mancunian   Describing a native of Manchester, UK

Pedagogy   The art or profession of teaching. Instructive strategies.

Plagiarism   Presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. Ref: University of Oxford
                https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1

GLOSSARY OF THAI WORDS AND PHRASES

Ajahn   A title, meaning Teacher. A title of address for high-school and university teachers

Farang   Westerner / foreigner

Jai   Heart

Khat jai   To displease [lit. to block a person's heart]

Khun   Term of address / title meaning 'your goodness'

Krengjai   Respect for those in authority. A reluctance to challenge those in authority and so save another person from 'losing face'. To give high priority to how another person feels or thinks about something [lit. to be respectful of another person's heart].

Luuk sit   Learning child /student

Naa   Face [body part]

Ow jai   To please [lit. to take a person's heart into consideration]

Sabaaj   To feel comfortable or relaxed (physically or mentally)

Sanuk/Sanook   Fun /enjoyment/entertaining

Thii tam thii soong   High place low place [ref to hierarchical system]

Wai   Thai greeting consisting of a slight bow, with the palms pressed together in a prayer-like manner.

Wai kru   Ceremony during which students pay respect to their teachers

ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN   Association of South East Asian Nations. A geo-political and economic organisation of 10 countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

CAE   Cambridge Advanced English [language test]

CPE   Certificate of Proficiency in English [language test]

DSS   Digital Speech Standard.   A proprietary compressed digital audio file format defined by the International Voice Association

EF   English First [an international education company]

ESL   English as a second language

FtF   Face to Face [Ref interview technique Ch 3]

GP   General Practitioner [medical practitioner / doctor]

HE   Higher Education. Third level education e.g. delivered by universities.

HEA   Higher Education Academy

HESA   Higher Education Statistics Agency

IELTS   International English Language Testing System

L1   First language; also termed home language, native language or mother tongue.

L2   Second language or any language learned after the mother tongue.

MSc   Master of Science

MTL   Mother Tongue Languages

NHS   National Health Service

NNS   Non-Native Speaking

NNSTA   Non-Native Speaking Teaching Assistants

Nvivo   Qualitative data analysis software

OCSC   Office of the Civil Service Commission [Thailand]

OEA	Office of Educational Affairs [London]
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education: inspect and regulate services [including schools] that care for children and young people in England.
SAE	Standard American English
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration [part of UK Home Office]

MAP 1: THAILAND: SHOWING PROVINCES
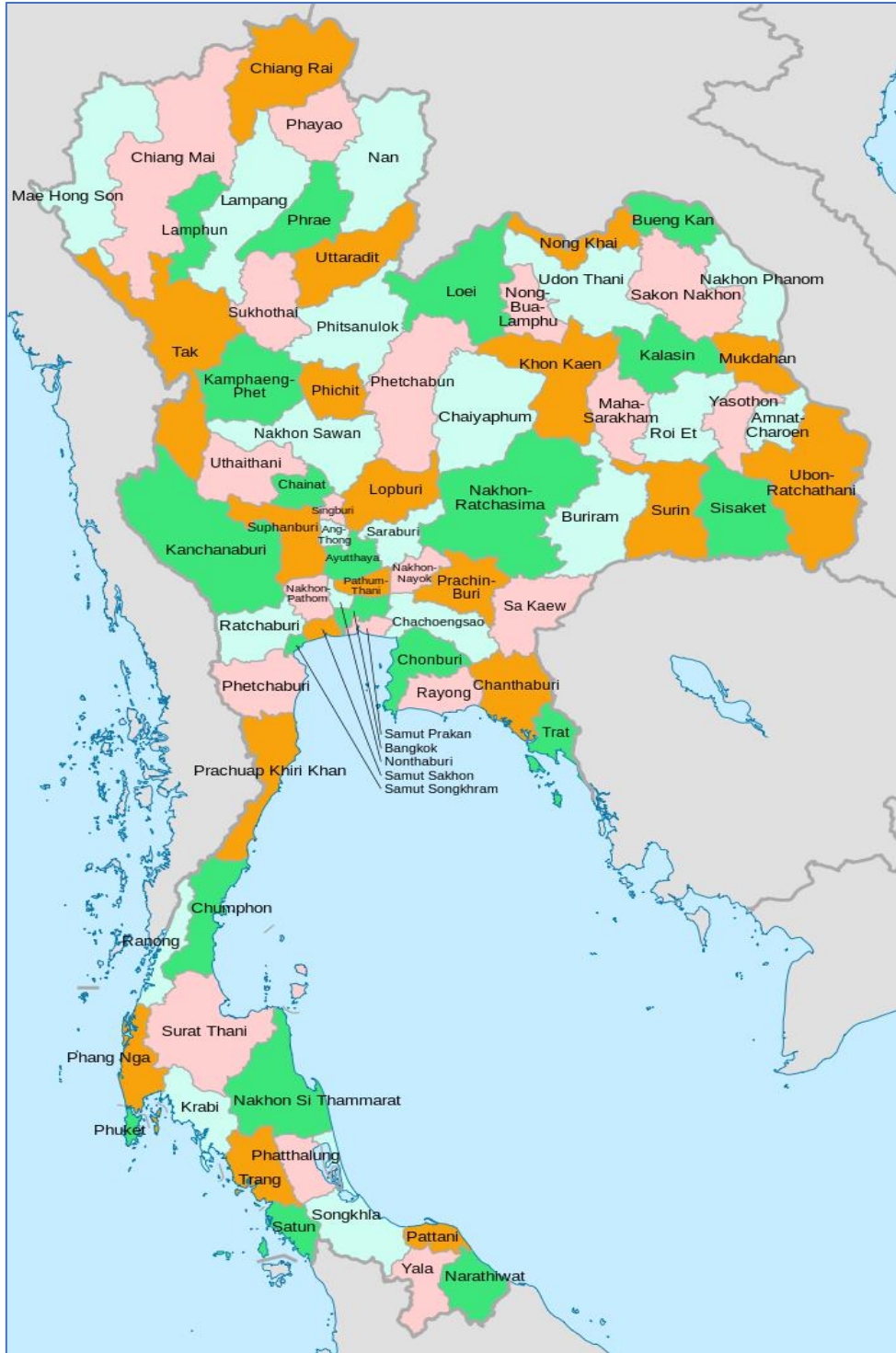
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinces_of_Thailand

MAP 2:   ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES

Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam,
Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos & Vietnam
Source http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_9XxJHCF3b_U/S1qI7QnGuoI/AAAAAAAAADQ/FjoLSru470E/s400/asean_map.jpg

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

'The United Kingdom houses the largest population of Thai expatriates in Europe and the two countries have had a relationship that goes back more than 400 years.' Thailand Tatler, (March 2012).

In this chapter I outline the journey from the initial concept and planning stages to embarking on the study of a cohort of Thai post-graduate students.

1.1   The focus of the study

The focus of this ethnographically-oriented study is to investigate under-explored issues relating to the experiences of a group of Thai post-graduate students as they study at universities in the UK.   The aim of the study is to research, by means of personal testimonies, questionnaire responses and lesson observations, the interactions of Thai students with their teachers and peers within the teaching and learning environment of a multicultural UK university.

The Thai students participating in this study were all studying one-year Master's degree courses at universities across the UK. They included 63 students who completed a detailed bilingual questionnaire and 4 students (2 male and 2 female) who provided in-depth testimony through discussions, face to face interviews and who I also observed in lessons. A salient point to emphasise at this juncture, which highlights the distinctive quality of this study, is that all the students in this study competed for, and were awarded, academic scholarships sponsored by the Thai government and some private companies in Thailand to

study Master's degree courses in various subjects at UK universities during the academic year 2011-2012. Once they successfully completed their studies these Thai scholarship students were required to return to Thailand to make a significant contribution to the development and progress of their country.

In addition, these academically gifted students also successfully achieved the raised English Language entry requirements for Tier 4 visa students which were introduced in 2009 by the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) so that international students might cope better with the academic demands and pressures of UK university degree courses. However, how would they cope when faced with the pressures of a one-year UK Master's course within a multicultural UK university environment?

This research study enables the Thai students to reveal the challenges and pressures they experience during the academic year. It also provides a valuable ethnographic resource for Thai scholarship sponsors, academics and practitioners within the UK and Thai education systems.

1.2   Context to the study: My background and current role

I believe it is relevant to include at this stage in the thesis details about myself which might influence my views, opinions and observations. I was born and brought up in the UK. As a UK-trained teacher, I have taught in both independent and state UK secondary schools for over twenty years. I am employed as an Education Adviser at an education office, based in London, which monitors the academic progress and welfare of scholarship and privately funded Thai students studying in the UK. The students under our care range from school age to doctoral researchers. Our work includes monitoring and supporting the students, and

acting as education guardian in compliance with the UK government Home Office Visas and Immigration (UKVI) rules covering younger international students studying in the UK. All but one of my work colleagues at the Education Office are Thai nationals. I know a few phrases of Thai but I am not fluent in the language. My colleagues are bilingual (Thai-English) which enables us to liaise closely with schools and universities helping to explain to parents and students complex and often confusing rules and regulations within the boarding school and UK education systems.

1.3   Identifying the problem

This section focuses on the contextual background and the reason why I undertook this research project. Links between Thailand and the UK stretch back over four hundred years [ref. Appendix 1]. Each year over six thousand Thai students study at UK universities of which over one thousand are Thai scholarship students (mostly at Master's and PhD level) who study across a wide spectrum of academic faculties. The sponsorship of these students constitutes a major annual investment of many millions of pounds sterling by the Thai government. These young people are expected to return to Thailand, after successfully completing their studies, to make a significant contribution to the development and progress of their country.

I was concerned in my professional role at the Education Office and as a UK-trained teacher that some Thai scholarship students, despite their previously high academic achievements in Thailand, were not settling as well as expected to their studies. In some rare but serious cases, students returned home without completing their studies. It was a cause for concern and the impetus for this research study. If some Thai students are unhappy, unsettled socially

or find it difficult to adapt to the culture of a UK university environment they may fail to achieve their full academic potential. They may take longer to obtain their postgraduate qualification and may also experience considerable stress and anxiety. Not succeeding in their studies impacts not only on the Thai scholarship students and their families but also on the scholarship sponsor.

1.4   Relevance of the study

Investigating further, I researched relevant literature which addressed the international student experience. Literature suggests that a phenomenon some refer to as 'culture shock' can have a detrimental impact on some international students especially those whose first language is not English. Schmitt (2012: 2) warns that the application system to UK universities '…lacks any direct method for determining whether or not prospective students' previous experience of educational practice or culture has prepared them for the approaches to study required of students in British universities'.

Most international students successfully complete their studies in the UK and it remains a very popular destination but Welikala (2015: 2) notes that '…almost 24% of all the complaints received by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator during 2014 were from international students'. Scandrett (2011: 42) comments '…there is clearly a need for research into the challenges that international students face with a view to making recommendations that may improve these experiences'.

As a UK-trained teacher I was particularly concerned and wanted to find out why some talented Thai students may not achieve their academic potential and so I decided to investigate. Most research focused on Chinese students studying in Australia or North

America. As Yue and Le (2010: 1) state in their research, some students '…have difficulties in adapting to the educational system and the cultural discourse of teaching, learning, and living'. However, I found very few references or studies which specifically addressed the challenges experienced by Thai students at UK universities. This motivated me to investigate further.

Literature suggests that the nature of the international sojourner and their experiences both culturally and pedagogically are complex and diverse. Imagine a spider's web; superficially it may be perceived as one functional structure, but on closer inspection it discloses a complex labyrinth of intertwined strands each one, when teased out and explored, reveals itself to be closely inter-related and interdependent on the others. So, it has proved to be with this research study. International students are not isolated individuals. When they enter a new community of learning they bring with them a rich diversity of culture, pedagogy and knowledge. UK universities attract students and teachers from across the globe and both experience challenges such as cross-cultural communication, academic teaching and learning through a second language, differences in pedagogical experiences, stereotypic perceptions of cultural and social identities and these factors impact on all members of the learning community.

Higher education has become a global and financially lucrative industry. The effect of thousands of students transferring from one country to another to widen their academic knowledge affects not only the international student but the educational environment into which they transfer. A better understanding of the international student experience is therefore imperative if universities world-wide are to benefit from the cross-transference of

knowledge globally and facilitate the smooth transition into their learning community of students from different cultures and pedagogical backgrounds.

In addition to defining the focus of the study another key consideration at the planning stage was the readership of the research project and how my research would provide meaningful information and insight which was helpful to stakeholders. If the experience of studying in the UK impacts negatively on some talented Thai scholarship students, possibly preventing them achieving the top grades of which they are academically capable, then it is in the interests of all stakeholders, including the Thai government, UK universities and the students themselves, to identify and address these key issues.

When designing the study, I was aware that it was important for me to endeavour to view through the participants' eyes as well as observe through the lens of my own professional background. It was clear that the experiences of the Thai students would be complex and multi-faceted. Their realities and perceptions could be diverse depending on their personal background and responses to the situations and pressures with which they were faced. I therefore needed to clearly define the research parameters of this study.

My aim for this ethnographically-oriented study was to obtain first-hand testimony from Thai students which would lead to a greater understanding of the challenges they experience. However, UK universities are also key stakeholders with a vested interest in the success and well-being of their international students (who also provide a major source of their annual income) which is why I also included where relevant some background testimony of university teachers which provided depth of contrast and a different perspective of Thai students.

It is important to note at this juncture that my professional role within the organisation mainly focuses on responsibility for privately funded Thai students in the UK.   This separation of my working role and my research study was helpful in obtaining the trust and cooperation of the scholarship student participants and I was able to reassure them of confidentiality.

Once these important ethical issues had been addressed, I decided to undertake an ethnographically-oriented study focusing on a cohort of Thai Master's scholarship students studying in the UK during the academic year 2011 to 2012. The additional pressure of a condensed timescale would quickly identify key areas of concern

1.5   What is an international student?

Several definitions of an 'international student' have been published.   Barletta and Kobayashi (2007: 183) describe international students as '… individuals who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship in order to participate in international educational exchange as students'   They are also described as 'temporary sojourners'' (temporary residents) or 'kikokushijo' as referred to by Kanno (2003: 17). Although there are no fixed criteria for defining a 'sojourn' in terms of duration '…6 months to 5 years are commonly cited parameters. Consequently, student and business sojourners are usually more committed than tourists to their new location but less involved than immigrants and resettled refugees' (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001: 143).

The U.S. Census Bureau definition of Asians refers to '…a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, South-east Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Le and Gardner (2010: 255) utilized the term 'Asian' to '…reflect the contemporary designation of people from East, South and Southeast Asia' which they state is '…consistent with the U.S.

Immigration and Custom Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Information System's (2007) description of Asian international students'.

Such definitions illustrate the complexity of categorizing "foreign" individuals while failing to recognise and respect the significant racial, ethnic and cultural diversity that each foreign student brings to his or her new academic environment.   This adds to the challenges faced by universities catering for a wide range of international students.   The table below lists the top ten non-European Union (EU) countries sending students to study in the UK, seven of which are from countries in Asia [also ref. Appendix 2].

Table 1.1:   Top ten non-EU countries sending students to the UK

Top Ten non-EU sending countries	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
China (PRC)	89,540	87,895	83,790
India	18,320	19,750	22,385
Nigeria	17,920	18,020	17,395
Malaysia	17,060	16,635	15,015
United States of America	16,865	16,485	16,235
Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region)	16,215	14,725	13,065
Saudi Arabia	8,595	9,060	9,440
Singapore	7,295	6,790	6,020
Thailand	6,240	6,340	6,180
Pakistan	7,295	6,665	7,185

(Source: UK Council for International Student Affairs ref HESA 'Students in Higher Education 2013-14' [^]Table 17) http://ukcisa.org.uk/Info-for-universities-colleges--schools/Policy-research--statistics/Research--statistics/International-students-in-U

Thailand entered the top ten non-EU senders of students to the UK for the first time in 2014-15 which makes this study into the experiences of Thai students at UK universities so relevant and timely.

1.6   International student adjustment issues

Many international students enjoy the experience of studying at a UK university. Welikala (2015:1) notes that the UK is 'one of the top destinations for international students, holding around 12.6% of the global market for recruitment…with non-EU students representing 48% of the UK postgraduate Stem (science, technology, engineering and maths) courses'.

 Although the global movement of students brings benefits both to UK universities and to international students, the experience can impact negatively on the student and result in varied problems which have been recognized and investigated by researchers. The cross-national movement of individuals '…creates many cross-cultural issues such as homesickness, culture shock (and re-entry shock), discrimination, prejudice, learning difficulties, communication difficulties' (Barletta & Kobayashi, 2007: 183). These researchers describe culture shock as '… a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcement from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability, and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded' (ibid: 188).

International students may experience a variety of issues which can manifest themselves both psychologically and physiologically. The students '… may develop psychosomatic complaints such as sleeping disturbances, eating problems, fatigue, stomach ache, or headache caused by their anxiety and depression from their academic performance. Although these students tend to seek medical help for their physical complaints, their problems might be from psychological stressors' (Lin & Yi, 1997, cited by Barletta & Kobayashi, 2007: 186).

International students may have additional pressures related to academic performance '…academic objectives and goals distinguish students from other intercultural sojourners. Because students sojourn for the purpose of obtaining a degree, academic performance is a significant component of cross-cultural adaptation' (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001: 147). This observation is particularly true of the Thai students in this study who not only have to cope with the transition to a UK university but also the additional pressure of fulfilling the academic expectations of their scholarship sponsors.

Unlike the findings of Dhanasobhon, Hill and Lakey (1992) who focussed on fluency in English as a second language (L2), Barletta and Kobayashi (2007) found that length of stay did not necessarily minimise the effects of 'culture shock' '…these issues can manifest themselves in those who experience the culture and environment of foreign countries regardless of the length of the stay…. this stress can make it hard for students to concentrate on their studies while they worry about these matters' (Barletta & Kobayashi, 2007: 182 & 186). UK Master's courses usually last only one year compared to a two–year programme in many parts of the world. Although this may be an attractive option for students and scholarship sponsors, the tight timescale can put additional challenges and pressures on students. Thai Master's students in the UK therefore have a very short period in which to adapt to their new living and learning environment and achieve academically. It will be interesting to discover whether the short time-scale of a one-year Master's course may prove to be a key factor not only in fluency and confidence of using English language but also the impact of 'culture shock' on the Thai students in this study.

1.7   The complexity and imagery of culture

The concept of 'culture' has sparked great debate within the research community which I will address in more detail in Chapter 2.   Montgomery (2010: 7) states the '…complexity of the concept of culture is a maelstrom in terms of considering international students'.   Smith (2000: 4) cited by Montgomery (2010: 8) describes culture as '…an elusive concept that is both 'slippery' and 'chaotic'.   She continues by describing culture as '…viewed through the observable behaviour of an individual or group' however, warning of the temptation of 'cultural stereotyping'.   Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001: 145) state '… the greater the degree of cultural distance between participants the more difficult the interaction'.

As I discovered, most published research has concentrated principally on the adaptation of Chinese students attending Australian or North American universities. This absence of research into Thai students studying outside Thailand was also commented on by Dhanasobhon, Hill and Lakey (1992: 14) who stated that '…very few researchers have focussed on Thai students despite the growing numbers studying in the United States'. With particular reference to second language (L2) fluency, they note that the student's length of stay in the host society (in this case U.S.) 'plays an important role in determining his language fluency, interaction potential, mass media availability at home and acculturation motivation' (ibid: 14).   However, the students in this study had the restricted time scale of a one-year UK Master's course so it would be interesting to see whether there would be additional challenges in developing language skills and interacting with the host culture.

Chapter 2 introduces Holliday's (1999) 'Small Culture' paradigm and Blommaert's (2015) commentary on 'Culture and Superdiversity' which illuminate the arena of intercultural relationships within the classroom environment and socially. I also include Komin's (1991)

'Psychology of the Thai People' and Kanno's (2003) research into the experiences of four Japanese students in North America which provide a valuable insight into Thai / Japanese cultures. The work of Reyes (2009) and Lippi-Green (1994) highlight the diversity and influence played by stereotype in intercultural relationships. Building on the research of others in various contexts and learning from their experiences was invaluable and enabled me to refine the focus of my own research study.

1.8 Research question and methodology

Literature and the work of others enabled me to identify possible issues regarding cultural adaptation so I was then able to '…sharpen the focus [and] …choose the unit of analysis …to explore the problem' (Simons 2009: 28). The research question provided a framework to investigate the experiences of a cohort of Thai scholarship students as they studied for one-year Master's degrees at universities in the UK.

> How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
> while studying in the UK?

The Thai students who participated in this study were all recipients of scholarships from Thailand to study a one-year Master's degree in a wide variety of subject areas at universities across the UK. The study examines the testimony of two male and two female Thai students in their mid-20s studying for Master's degrees in different faculties at three UK universities during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Using investigative tools of recorded, semi-structured interviews throughout the year, classroom observations and field notes the study provides an insight into their challenges, fears and accomplishments as the year progresses. The study also incorporates the responses of sixty-three Thai Master's scholarship students from across the UK to an in-depth bilingual

questionnaire. I have also included, purely as general background information, semi-structured recorded face to face interviews with university teachers who comment on their experiences of teaching Thai students. Their testimony is especially relevant when comparing and contrasting their views with those of their Thai students and provides additional dimension and perspective to the study.

The level of commitment to a new and unfamiliar environment is a key point to make at this juncture and may have a profound effect on the extent to which the transient Thai postgraduate students in my study embrace and participate in their academic and multi-cultural surroundings.

1.9   Multi-perspective challenges of this study

The study presents the testimony of Thai participants but perhaps it also challenges me. Perhaps I need to re-examine my own perspective as a UK-trained teacher; how I personally view international students and even more challenging, how to objectively examine the experiences of Thai individuals within a UK learning context from their perspective.

Mannay (2010: 92) comments on insider/outsider boundaries and whether an 'outsider' has a mandate to research the experiences of others. She counters this argument by stating '…such epistemic privilege can be dangerous [producing] a false binary, which silences the multifaceted nature of identities, lifestyles and perspectives'. This is a challenge but as Mannay (2010) remarks '…insider /outsider discourses are important because they place the researcher at the centre of the production of knowledge' (ibid: 93).

 Hellawell (2006: 487) also considers the standpoint of the researcher in terms of 'insider' vs 'outsider' and comments that some researchers favour the positionality of the 'outsider'

as '…observing from a considerably more favourable analytical vantage point than the insider'. In his view '…ideally the researcher should be both inside and outside the perceptions of the 'researched'' (ibid: 487). Blackledge and Creese (2010: 89) describe how researchers 'navigate these positions' and state that '…processes of self-representation in research are crucial to ongoing data collection and perpetuation of trust and confidence … they involve the researcher in a dynamic interplay of individual identities as they skilfully position themselves in relation to the researched' (ibid: 86).

Holliday (1994: 6) states, that a researcher, will 'automatically be influenced' by their cultural background and this is 'unavoidable'. He explains that 'there can be no such thing as an impartial view from any side' and comments '…the ethnography which I advocate, acknowledges the bias of the investigator as natural as long as this bias is realised and accounted for' (ibid: 6). I take heart from Holliday's advice when he comments that the advantage of being an 'outsider' is that one '…might see more clearly that which insiders hold tacit and never appreciate' (ibid: 6).

1.9.1 The 'Western' perspective

Before continuing, I wish to address the use of the terms 'West' and 'Western' within this thesis. Tymoczko (2014: 15) comments '…there is an obvious difficulty with the terms 'East' and 'West', both of which imply perspective and position'. She poses the pertinent question; 'East or West of what'? She notes that '…in Chinese tradition, China was the 'Middle Kingdom''. She explains that the Chinese viewed India as 'the West' yet the British viewed India as part of 'the East'. Tymoczko finds '…using the discourses of centre and periphery problematic' and sees '…knowledge as ultimately local, with life being lived and experienced in a multicentred manner' (ibid: 16). Tymoczko notes that at present when

'…Western ideas have permeated the world and there is widespread inter-penetration of cultures everywhere, the terms West and Western have become increasingly problematic' (ibid: 15).

Reflecting on this issue, I therefore wish to clarify the usage of the term 'Western' in this thesis. Like Tymoczko, I shall capitalise the word '…to indicate that the term refers to a concept, not a direction' and I shall use the term 'Western' not in an essentialist way but '...to refer to ideas and perspectives that initially originated in and became dominant in Europe' (ibid: 15). However, as Tymoczko (2014) explains, these ideas have spread globally and '…in some cases, such as the United States, the Americas in general and Australia, these ideas have become dominant' (ibid: 15). In places, I shall also employ the Thai word 'farang' which translates to 'Westerner' or 'foreigner' but without the essentialist association.

International students are an attractive financial commodity and provide a substantial income to UK universities. Universities have a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that they are treated fairly and that their needs are met to enable them to fulfil their academic potential. I believe that my research will not only shed light on the experiences of Thai students and assist policy-makers at UK universities but will also provide relevant and pertinent information which will impact on the broader international student experience. I hope this study inspires further research into the experiences of university students of other nationalities and so increase our understanding of the complex nature of the international student experience. In addition to providing valuable information for policy-makers at UK universities, I hope that the testimony of the students in this study will be helpful to Thai students who are about to embark on a university degree course in the UK and assist Thai

educationalists prepare their students for a very different and possibly challenging experience.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is composed of eight chapters. Chapter 1, the Introduction, describes the impetus for the study and contextual background. The historic 400-year link between the kingdoms of Thailand and the UK includes the tradition of sending Thai students to study in the UK which is maintained to the present day. The chapter introduces research into the international student experience and sets out the focus and implications of this research study.   Chapter 2, the Literature Review, explores the rich contribution of other researchers who have addressed the diverse and problematic nature of culture providing a framework which informs and supports the focus of this study into the Thai student experience.

Chapter 3, Research Methods and Methodology details the mixed methods and research design employed to conduct this study. A detailed explanation of each method is included and how triangulation of the data sets validates the study. Safeguarding data, ensuring participant anonymity and other ethical issues are addressed.   Also included are details of the challenges of translating English to Thai in order to create a user-friendly bilingual survey which endeavours to faithfully represent the phraseology and meaning of each question. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present analyses of the data focusing on the three emergent themes of Language, Pedagogy and Culture.   These thematic, analytical chapters introduce the testimony of the 4 key participants.   It is also supported by the 63 respondents to the questionnaire and my own classroom observation and field notes.

Chapter 7, the Discussion Chapter, reflects on the key issues raised. This chapter also discusses a fourth unexpected theme, stereotype, which emerged from the data and wove its

way through each of the three thematic chapters. It also highlights research and initiatives of the Higher Education Academy which provide resources and a framework for HE providers to support their multinational teaching and learning community.   Chapter 8, the Conclusion, brings together the various strands of the investigation and evaluates its contribution to the research community. I reflect on my own positionality as a UK-trained teacher and my relationship with the students as the year progressed.   I acknowledge the positive work being undertaken by some UK universities to support international students and suggest further study in this challenging and important area of research to increase our understanding of the difficulties experienced by international students. I also underscore the positive contribution international students make to a learning community and the disservice of categorizing and stereotyping international students. I reflect on the growing recognition of the importance of internationalisation to UK universities and the work of the Higher Education Academy in promoting good practice in this key area.

CHAPTER 2:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

'We are never just members of a nation but perform many other identities…simultaneously and at different points in our lives' (Piller 2012: 68)

This chapter sets out to explore the influence of culture which permeates this research study and illuminates how the Thai students negotiate their personal identities and interactions within the multicultural environment of a UK university. The concept of culture is complex. Culture forms part of our heritage and informs how we think and react in various situations.

In this chapter I comprehensively review aspects of culture in relation to the experiences of a group of Thai students within a multi-cultural teaching and learning environment. I address the challenge of defining culture and critically review the notion of Holliday's (1999) paradigm of Small Cultures to assist in explaining how Thai students may negotiate various intercultural challenges within the classroom and social environments of a UK university. As Holliday (1999) explains, in '…the newly forming small culture of the classroom group, each member will bring small culture residues from other educational, classroom, collegial and peer experiences' (Holliday 1999: 248-249). I review research into how a culture of teaching and learning in English (L2) within the stressful classroom environment of a pressurised UK Master's course may prove challenging to some linguistic minority students. Reviewing the work of Reyes (2009) I address the positive and negative aspects of cultural stereotyping and how ethnic minority individuals may gain support from membership of a larger group within a UK university community. I also review historic literature addressing the origins and traditions of Thai culture which forms valuable background information to assist in possibly providing an explanation for some of the responses and observed behaviour of the Thai students in this study.

2.1 Challenges of defining culture

Defining culture continues to challenge researchers. Hall (1976) developed the 'iceberg concept of culture' depicting the obvious or 'observable' e.g. national food, dress /costume, method of greeting and outward behaviour as the visible tip of the cultural iceberg. The subtle aspects of culture e.g. rules of conduct and concepts of personal space, are described as the substantial 'invisible other' which are hidden from view. These can sometimes be unexpectedly encountered, for example, within the multi-cultural learning and social environment of a UK university.

Figure 2.1: Hall's iceberg concept of culture (1976)
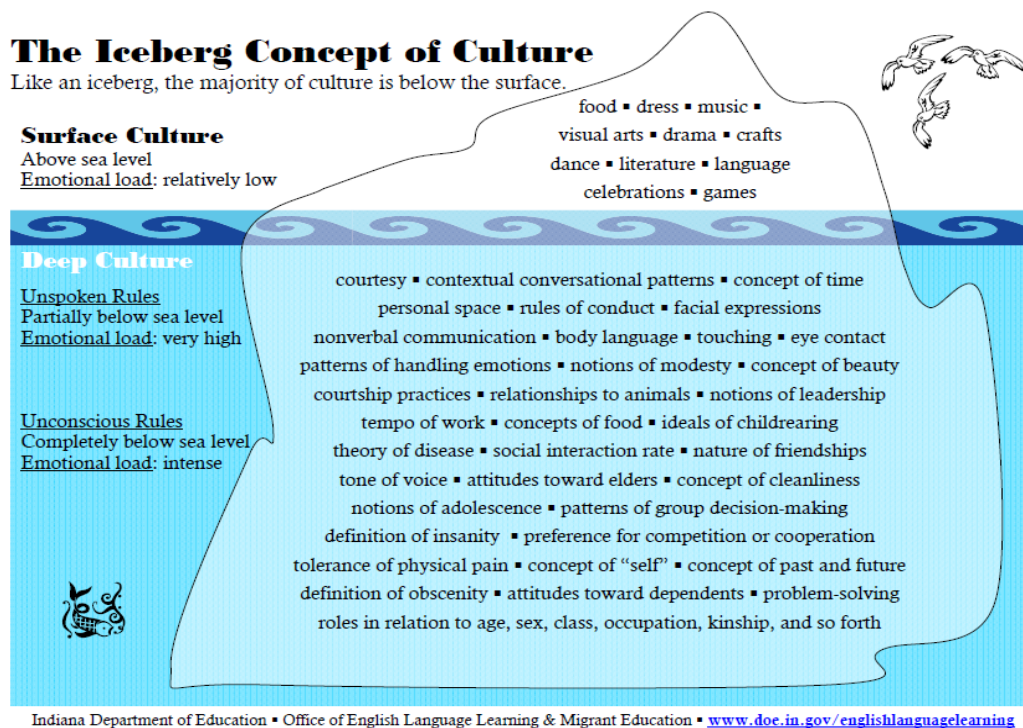
I will be investigating how the Thai students in this study react to the multi-cultural community of a UK university and whether they find it challenging to adapt to the pedagogic culture of teaching and learning within a UK Higher Education (HE) classroom.

Piller (2012: 9) remarks that '… 'culture' is a problematic term' and she advises that one should 'explore the ways in which it is used before we can hope to understand intercultural communication'. Holliday (1994: 21) also warns, that 'culture is a concept which needs to be handled carefully' because it is 'much used and often far too loosely' in 'common parlance' (ibid. 22).

Holliday (1994) notes that '…culture is therefore particularly at issue in the lives of people in dynamic, complex situations, especially when their identity is at stake' (ibid: 27). In a later work, Holliday (2000: 38) explains that there are 'two significant views of 'culture'; the essentialist view which '…may be characterised as positivist and the non-essentialist as interpretive.'

Holliday (1994) comments that the 'most common' use of the word tends to refer to the essentialist view of national culture which he states is '…very broad and conjures up vague notions about nations …. which are too generalised to be useful' (ibid: 21).

Holliday (2011: 9) later reflects on the 'common cultural labels of individualism and collectivism' and how they are portrayed as 'neutral labels' for two 'prototypes of national culture'. He comments that individualist cultures e.g. North Americans, Australians, Western Europeans, perceive themselves to be '...autonomous and prioritise personal over group' whereas '…collectivist cultures e.g. Southern Europeans, Africans, East and South Asians perceive themselves as members of a group with strong group loyalty and interdependence'. However, he notes that 'despite the claim to neutrality…it seems clear that individualism with its emphasis on self-reliance …represents imagined positive characteristics and collectivism represents imagined negative characteristics' (ibid: 11).

Holliday comments that this '…hint of imagined division in the minds of those who use it is something approaching a geographical division between the 'West' and the 'non-West'. He makes the point that 'these terms have a problematically unclear nature, hovering between geography and psychological concept'. Yet he admits that using them is 'unavoidable because they are on everyone's lips' (ibid: 11).

Piller (2011) also interrogates the status of 'culture' and whether it is an 'entity' or a 'process'. She describes 'two fundamentally incompatible understandings of the status of culture' and explains that 'the entity understanding of culture is essentialist: it treats culture as something people have or to which they belong. The process view of culture is constructionist: it creates culture as something people do or which they perform' (Piller 2011: 15).

Culture can be viewed as active or passive depending on one's perspective. Piller contrasts Hofstede's (2005) essentialist view of culture as 'the software of the mind … mental programming' with the perspective of anthropologists and sociologists who 'hold exactly the opposite view' and that culture is 'not a real thing but an abstract and purely analytical notion' which '…does not cause behaviour'. She concludes '…culture has many different meanings and is used in many different ways, which differ along the dimension of use, content, scope and status' (Piller 2011: 15).

Holliday also comments on Hofstede's (2005) '…now ageing over-simplification of complex realities' (Holliday 2011: 6). He reflects on the concept of culture from two very different perspectives stating that an essentialist like Hofstede views culture '…as a physical entity…it is homogenous in that perceived traits are spread evenly giving the sense of a simple society. It is associated with a country and language'. However, a non-essentialist views culture '…as

a social force' and that '…society is complex with characteristics which are difficult to pin down' so 'cultures can flow, change, intermingle, cut across each other regardless of national frontiers' (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman 2010: 3).

2.2   Small and large cultures

Holliday (1994:6) moves away from what he terms 'stereotypical national cultural definitions' which he states are 'often the basis of destructive ethnocentricity' preferring to view culture in a 'smaller, more precise way'.

In a later work, Holliday (1999: 237) develops this fine focus on culture by distinguishing '…two paradigms of 'culture' which he describes as small and large cultures. Holliday explains '…in simple terms 'large' signifies 'ethnic', 'national' or 'international' and 'small' signifies any cohesive social groupings'.

A 'small culture' approach thus attempts to liberate 'culture' from notions of ethnicity and nation and from perceptual dangers they carry with them' (ibid: 237).

Table 2.1:   **Two paradigms of culture (Holliday 1999: 241)**

	Small cultures	**Large cultures**
Character	non-essentialist, non-culturist	essentialist, culturist
	relating to cohesive behaviour in activities within any social grouping	'culture' as essential features of ethnic national or international group
Relations	no necessary subordination to or containment within large cultures, therefore no onion-skin	small (sub) cultures are contained within and subordinate to large cultures through onion-skin relationship
Research orientation	Interpretive, process interpreting emergent behaviour within any social grouping heuristic model to aid the process of researching the cohesive process of any social grouping	Prescriptive, normative beginning with the idea that specific ethnic, national and international groups have different 'cultures' and then searching for the details (e.g. what is polite in Japanese culture)

Challenging Hofstede's (2005) essentialist viewpoint, Holliday emphasises the importance of avoiding obvious stereotypic groupings based on nationality or ethnicity stating '…what has become the default notion of 'culture' refers to prescribed ethnic, national and international entities' however, '…this large culture paradigm is by its nature vulnerable to a culturalist reduction of 'foreign' students, teachers and their educational contexts.

In contrast, a small culture paradigm attaches 'culture' to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour and thus avoids culturistic ethnic, national or international stereotyping' (Holliday 1999: 237).

Holliday (1999) expands on this differentiation by explaining that the large culture paradigm begins with 'a prescriptive desire to seek out and detail differences' that is 'what makes cultures…essentially different from each other' whereas 'a small culture approach is more concerned with social processes as they emerge' (ibid: 240).

2.3 Small culture of the classroom

Of particular relevance to this study, Holliday (1999: 248) describes the 'small culture' paradigm by considering relationships within the 'newly forming small culture of the classroom group' and how each member brings various 'culture residues' from other national or ethnic educational and peer experiences. Therefore, in a multicultural classroom environment, with a range of nationalities common to a UK postgraduate group, Holliday states that the combined national or ethnic experiences 'will be the building blocks for the new small culture' (ibid: 249).

Holliday (1994:6) believes it is more useful to talk about the 'cultures of individual classrooms and of individual teacher and student groups' with which we are familiar and

Figure 2.2: Holliday's Small Culture formation (1999: 249)
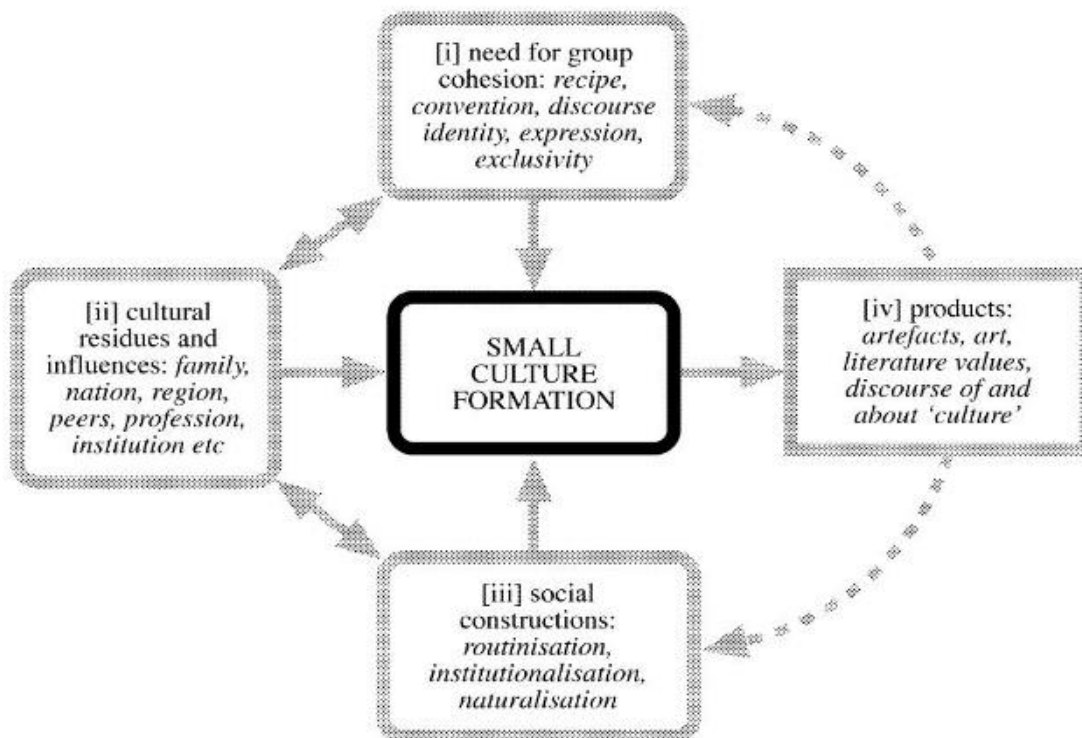
which are 'more tangible than and 'Arab culture' or a 'Western culture'. He describes the

'smaller cultures' of the classroom as 'more neutral in their connotations' and how, in this 'micro-cultural landscape of teachers, students and classes' one can observe 'dynamics of change and interaction' (ibid: 6).

He likens the classroom to a cosmopolitan 'cultural market place' where 'all parties are equal' and where new ideas and practices are traded between different groups according to their needs' (ibid:6).   He explains that in the 'smaller market place, all teachers are outsiders to the cultures of their students, and vice versa and all curriculum developers are outsiders to the cultures of teachers and vice versa' (1994:7). He also refers to the 'macro social context' outside the classroom which influences the attitudes of teachers and students within the classroom regarding 'relationships of status, role and authority' (ibid: 1994: 14).

It could be argued that this description of a classroom as a 'cultural market place' where 'all parties are equal' is rather idealistic and does not take into account cultural diversity and the complex dynamics and interactions which are taking place within this multicultural environment.   Is Holliday perhaps suggesting that the teacher is equal in status to the students?   For some students, a relaxed interaction with the teacher would not be an unfamiliar experience. However, it is possible that this relationship would be at odds with the more formal pedagogic culture experienced by some international students.   One could therefore possibly envisage cultural tensions arising within the classroom and impacting on the teaching and learning experience.

Holliday (1994: 23) notes that classroom cultures do not have 'permanent membership or long histories or traditions when compared to the cultures of whole societies'.   He explains that they are temporary in that they form 'when the groups in question meet to carry out

specific activities'. He explains that individuals can be members of several of these cultures, 'switching as they move from one activity to another'.

Reflecting on Holliday's Small Culture paradigm, one might propose that there are different cultures at work within the one classroom environment. That there is a finely balanced interactional dynamism which can enhance the teaching and learning experience of all members. It is an interesting concept to debate and possibly as a future study, one could compare and contrast the small cultures of different classrooms and the observable interactional dynamics which take place within the multicultural environments. However, I pose the question; could it be postulated that trying to define the culture of a classroom could be as flawed as trying to define a nation's culture?

2.4   Cultural adaptation

Bochner comments that '…the greater the degree of cultural distance the more difficult the interaction' (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 145). This view is supported by Coles and Swami (2012: 88) who comment that the '…success of a sojourn is often conceived…in terms of adjustment'. They explain that 'perceived cultural distance between a sojourner's home culture and host culture has also been reliably associated with sociocultural adjustment' and students with 'larger perceived distance' have more difficulties to overcome.

Brown (2009: 4), in her study of friendship patterns of international university students in England, found that '…co-national friendship networks were established within days of students' arrival.' and '…the speed of its establishment was surprising.' The international students in her study recognised their dependence on the co-national group and Brown remarks that it was '…particularly entrenched in the South East Asian cohort whose urge to

form a primary network of mono-national bonds is said to relate to their socialisation in a collectivist culture that enjoys the company of the extended family' (ibid: 4).

What I found particularly concerning about this study was how South-East Asian students were '…perceived (by other international students) to be close to the point of exclusivity' and of particular importance to this study was her finding that '…Thai students were seen to be the most entrenched and the most unapproachable'. Brown (2009) commented '…withdrawal in the face of inaccessibility was the common response to Thai segregation, with negative implications for the development of understanding between Thai and non-Thai cohorts. These statements represent the common view of the Thai cohort' (ibid: 4).

This particular finding based on her interviews with thirteen students from thirteen different nationalities was worrying. I was reminded of Piller's energetic condemnation of such broad and sweeping statements when criticising Hofstede's (2005) essentialist cultural dimensions. Brown's study (2009) was particularly negative towards Thai students. However, it provided impetus to my study and to hopefully present a more in-depth presentation of the experiences and behaviour of Thai students in UK universities.

 Lakey and Hill (1991: 123) focussed on the cultural adaptation of Thai students in American universities and commented that greater emphasis should be directed towards '…development of social support systems, cultivating networks with members of the host culture…for developing interpersonal relationships and communication' (ibid: 123). Unlike Brown's (2009) study, they discuss the limitations of their study in depth and noted that some questions in the cultural survey were either not answered or misunderstood by the respondents. They admitted that the Acculturation Scale '…forced respondents to answer all questions ranging from "Thainess" to "Americanness" with no allowance for the

inapplicability of a question' (ibid: 124). Reflecting on Lakey and Hill's findings, I decided to produce a bilingual questionnaire to ensure that by using the recommended back-translation technique (explained in Chapter 3), the questions would convey the correct and accurate meaning to the participants.

Blommaert (2011:12) describes a more fluid concept of relationships by describing how '…in different niches of our social and cultural lives, we arrange features in such a way that they enable others to identify us as 'authentic', 'real' members of social groups…we enter and leave these niches often in rapid sequence'. He describes this dynamic and ever-changing concept as an anti-essentialist framework which 'attempts to provide a realistic account of identity practices'. He explains how one is never a 'full member of any cultural system because the configurations of features are perpetually changing and one's fluency of yesterday need not guarantee fluency of tomorrow' (ibid:12). In a later work, Blommaert (2015:3) expands on this concept and describes social grouping as 'a world of 'encounters'-focussed social activities which do generate groups'. He states that 'traditional concepts of 'culture' are past their sell-by date' and 'contemporary 'cultures' are best seen as characteristics of social 'niches', arenas we pass through on an everyday basis and in which we have to deploy specific cultural resources in order to be 'normal'.

Would the Thai students in this study inhabit the static mono-cultural grouping described by Brown (2009), would they occupy multiple niches within the university community described by Blommaert (2011) or would the picture be more complex and nuanced?

2.5 Culture-sensitive pedagogy

Like many of their international peers, Thai students form part of an ethnically diverse learning community. Some may have experienced very different teaching and learning styles compared to the pedagogy within in a UK university. Ryan (2011), in an article for the online Guardian Higher Education Network Blog (18 May 2011), notes that '…every year there are more international students in UK universities' and she also notes that '…while this was once confined to specific subjects…now every discipline is experiencing a much more diverse student cohort'. She comments '…it can be a little unsettling for staff faced with a room of international students…questions arise in the lecturer's mind: Will they be able to cope with the course?' Thomas (1997: 13-14) also raises the important issue of globalisation and the challenges teachers face when educating students from 'a multiplicity of cultural backgrounds' and how a culture-sensitive pedagogy could meld political, economic and cultural dimensions in order to accommodate a 'global culture''. He expands on this theme by stating that developing a culture-sensitive pedagogy '…addresses basic learning needs and yet enables teachers to adopt and adapt content and skills with reference to a learner's cultural heritage' (ibid: 15). He remarks that 'little attention has been given to melding existing information and research findings on learning cultures into teaching strategies and styles' (ibid: 15).

Thomas notes the opportunities but also the 'issues which are likely to arise in the wake of the ever-increasing pressure of globalization'. He comments that 'a pedagogy needs to have a balance between global inputs and inputs from the experience of the teachers and learners of their own cultural context' (ibid: 23). Holliday (1994: 23) also supports this view and notes that 'both learning and teaching can be said to have cultures of their own, as can

different approaches and methodologies… which influence the culture of the classroom'. Would the Thai students in this study and their international teachers have opportunities to learn from each other and explore the rich diversity of experience and perspectives within the multicultural classroom?

Prestigious universities attract talented researchers and gifted students from across the globe. In an article for the Chronical of Higher Education, Fischer (2011: 1) reports on how international students have presented both academic and cultural challenges for colleges 'across the United States'. Fischer states that international student offices are dealing with a range of varied issues including plagiarism, poor language skills, cultural taboos and sex education. She quotes Ivor Emmanuel, Director of the international office at the University of California at Berkeley who commented, 'It's a culture shock not just for the students but for the campus' (ibid: 1).

2.5.1   Asymmetrical relationships

Holliday (1994: 24) explains that the culture of the classroom provides 'tradition and recipe for both teachers and students in that there are tacit understandings about what sort of behaviour is acceptable'. He explains that the cultures of individual classrooms are transmitted to new members. Both teachers and students must learn and share them if they are to be fully accepted into the group. However, in a multicultural classroom there may not be a shared understanding of common tenets of behaviour. Holliday refers to 'asymmetrical relationships' which are created when 'students give the teacher the right to allocate rights and duties to the students'. Holliday concedes that these elements of culture transcend the pedagogic functions of classroom pedagogy' (ibid: 24).

Chen (1999: 54) reviews how, in her terminology, the 'Asian' student may react to being translocated to a 'Western' classroom. This is a view which is relevant to this study because, as a category, 'Asian' students, which include Thai students, form the largest international group within the UK Higher Education (HE) system [ref Appendix 2]. She explains the '… Asian system carries a strong notion of distance between professor and student to emphasize respect and order… Asian students may feel very puzzled and confused when they face frequent classroom discussions and student presentations.' She also comments on how Asian students '…may also regard other students' behaviors, such as eating and drinking during class hours, as very disrespectful behavior toward the professor'. Finally, she states that '…it would be unimaginable in Asian universities for a professor and a student to call each other by their first names' (ibid: 54). Although the term 'Asian' is problematic in that it refers to an enormous and diverse continent, by refining the focus, would the Thai students in this study find it challenging to adapt to the UK classroom where student participation and discussion are encouraged and there is a more relaxed, informal relationship between teacher and student?

2.5.2   Culture of learning

Jin and Cortazzi (1997: 37) focussed on how the background culture of learning emerges unconsciously when a teacher uses their native language when delivering a lesson. 'Thus, when a teacher and students come from different language and cultural backgrounds the situation is by definition an intercultural one, both as content and medium.' It could be said that the study depicts teachers as pedagogic stereotypes and that individual teachers from both cultures may have more nuanced perspectives on their roles. However, the pedagogic practices described in the study may have particularly important effects on the culture of

learning, including cultural beliefs and values about teaching and learning, the expectations about classroom behaviour especially in intercultural education settings and the challenges associated with sojourners' pedagogical adaptation. I believe it is important to address these issues by acknowledging and exploring the cultural lens through which students and teachers view their roles and responsibilities.

Chan (1999: 9), observing the learning behaviours of Australian and Chinese university students, stated that '…students from different, or even the same cultures or countries may differ in the learning behaviours they manifest when they are engaged in the same cognitive activities'. She draws attention to the misuse of stereotypes stating '…the differences would be more subtle than those represented by the bipolar dichotomies that many educators express' (ibid: 9).   Purdie (1994) compares the learning of Japanese and Australian students and suggests that there could be a social aspect to learning which was integral to the student's culture and background. Supporting this view, Chalmers and Volet (1997: 92) positively describe how the 'South-East Asian students' in their study, located in Australia, formed 'informal study groups' which provided opportunities to 'clarify their understanding of tutorials and course work'. The study groups provided 'social and emotional support…previously supplied by their communities and families'. However, Fischer (2011: 4) in her article in the U.S. Chronical of Higher Education comments that 'educators have mixed feelings about this propensity to cluster together' with students from their home country. She explains that educators recognise the need for mutual support and a shared first language (L1) but are concerned about '… closed sets forming, isolating students and robbing them of a truly international experience'. This reflects the findings of Brown's (1999) study. Gordon et al (1998: 7) also seem to support this conjecture when they comment that

'…Vygotsky's (1962) 'socially mediated' understanding may have some real significance'.
Mutual support may be a factor in the preferred learning strategies exhibited by the Thai
students in my study.

Figure 2.3: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1962)

Zone of proximal development
Focused teaching
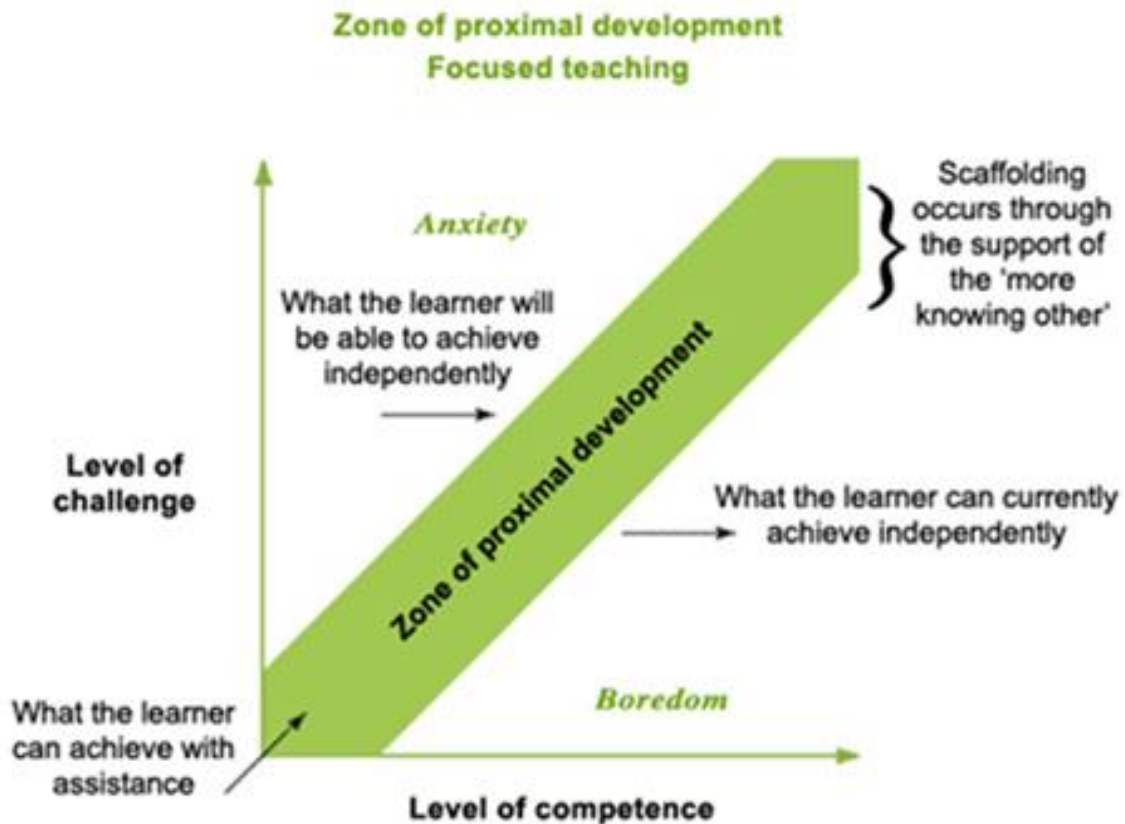
Source:
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/proflearn/Pages/vel
szopds56.aspx accessed 28 April 2013

Banning (2005: 503) refers to conventional classroom practice '…where the student is the
recipient of new knowledge and the teacher is the knower'. She continues by citing Tight
(1996: 26) redefining the role of the teacher as '…no longer seen as imparting knowledge
…but is redefined as facilitation of self-directed learning'. Interviews with Chinese students

conducted by Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1999: 246) revealed that they felt 'Western' instructors assumed that the basics were 'self-evident or transitory' and so the 'acquisition of the basics was less important'.

Segall (2004: 491) states '…the introduction of the concept of pedagogical content knowledge [has] done much to further our understanding of what teachers know, how they come to know it and as a result how they go about teaching it'. Citing Murray and Porter (1996) he comments '…pedagogical content knowledge is fundamentally about structures that confer meaning and understanding…as such, discussions of pedagogical content knowledge are at the heart of the teacher educator's work and cannot be avoided' Segall (2004: 491). He continues '…knowledge is always by someone and for someone, always positioned and positioning' (ibid: 491).

Referring to the use of academic texts in the classroom Segall (2004: 492) states that they are not '…finished works of content awaiting pedagogical transformation; they are …invitations for learning. Working with or against those invitations, teachers' pedagogies do not initiate the pedagogical act but add further pedagogical layers to those already present in the text. …the instructional or pedagogical act does not begin with the teachers in classrooms nor does the content act end at the desk of the subject-area scholar. Both produce pedagogical content knowledge … [i.e.] content that is always pedagogical and pedagogies that are always content-full' (ibid: 492).

Cummins (2001: 21) highlights the fundamental interaction between teacher and bilingual students as being viewed through two lenses '…the lens of the teaching-learning relationship...to promote reading development, content knowledge and cognitive growth; and

the second lens of identity negotiation… who they [students] are in the teacher's eyes and who they are capable of becoming.'

Figure 2.4: The development of Academic Expertise (Cummins 2001: 125)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC EXPERTISE

FOCUS ON MEANING

Making input comprehensible

Developing critical literacy

TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

MAXIMUM COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT ◄► MAXIMUM IDENTITY INVESTMENT

FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

Awareness of language forms & uses

Critical analysis of language forms & uses

FOCUS ON USE

Use language to:
Generate new knowledge
Create literature & art
Act on social realities

Cummins (2001) constructed a pedagogical framework to illustrate the development of academic expertise which explores this vitally important teacher-student relationship which he terms the 'inner circle' and which he likens to Vygotsky's (1962) '…influential notion of the Zone of Proximal Development' (ibid: 30) where '…knowledge is generated (learning occurs) and identities are negotiated' (ibid: 125).

Cummins (2001:126) describes the inner circle as '…the interpersonal space of teacher-student interactions' where '…students' cognitive engagement must be maximised if they are to progress academically'.   He also emphasises the role of the teacher in creating an environment which '…affirm students' cultural, linguistic and personal identities…for maximum identity investment in the learning process'.   However, he warns that '…students

will be reluctant to invest their identities in the learning process if they feel their teachers do not like them, respect them and appreciate their experiences and talents.' He also comments that in the past, students from 'marginalised social groups have seldom felt this sense of affirmation and respect for language and culture from their teachers. Consequently, their intellectual and personal talents rarely found expression in the classroom' (ibid: 126).

Cummins also stresses that inner confidence is founded on the student's competency in English language which in turn leads to proficiency in key academic skills and cognitive engagement. The students in my study have all achieved high IELTS levels of English language required by their UK universities in compliance with UKVI regulations [ref. Appendix 3]. This examination tests competency in the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. However, Cummins comments that '…acquisition of discrete language skills in English, while important, is not necessarily predictive of future academic language development' (Cummins 2001: 76). Specifically referring to teaching international students he states that '…underachievement is not caused primarily by lack of fluency in English. Underachievement is the result of particular kinds of interactions…that lead culturally diverse students to mentally withdraw from academic effort' (Cummins 2001: 77).

Further evidence of the complexity of challenges faced by international students studying in the UK is provided in a study by Murphy (2011) of pre-Master's Chinese students in their second term at an international college in Scotland. The students had achieved IELTS scores of approximately 5.5. Murphy reported that '…while a significant percentage of students identified studying in a second language as the greatest barrier to adapting to UK HE [Higher Education] a large minority [more than a third] felt the academic conventions of referencing

and citation to be more of an obstacle. …they may however be taken by surprise at the level of complexity they encounter as they try to adapt to the appropriate forms of referencing and citation' (Murphy 2011:5).

However, Dooey (1999) in her research on international students attending an Australian university concluded that '…the study found no evidence to suggest that students who did not meet minimum English proficiency criteria were destined to fail. In terms of the IELTS overall band score required, only two students failed to meet admissions requirements and both passed their first year' (Dooey 1999: 5). She also noted that '…clear failures were among the native speakers who came in with high IELTS scores. …Since all these students entered the disciplines of Science and Engineering (previously identified as 'less linguistically demanding'), it would seem that skills other than language proficiency are needed to ensure academic success. …This concurs with previous studies which found that high levels of English proficiency, as measured by the IELTS test, do not necessarily lead to academic success' (Dooey 1999: 5).

Graham (1987) in her review of research into English language proficiency and the prediction of academic success seems to have come to a similar conclusion '…what research does show is that the relationship between English proficiency and academic success is complex and unclear and that language test scores should not therefore play a disproportionate role in admissions decisions' (Graham 1987: 516). She also addresses the complexity of the situation warning against over-simplification '…it seems likely that there is a minimal level of English proficiency required before other factors assume more importance. What that level is will almost certainly vary from institution to institution and indeed from program to program' (Graham 1987: 516). However, would the Thai students in this study feel confident

to actively participate within a multicultural classroom environment and tackle the sophisticated academic literature of a UK Master's course. I review this aspect in the following section.

2.6 Acculturation stress and English language proficiency

All students whether from the UK or abroad must adapt to a new environment when commencing their university studies and this brings with it various acculturative stressors or life changers e.g. educational, sociocultural and practical. Lewthwaite (1997: 168) comments that literature suggests that '…international students do appear to experience more physical and mental ill-health as well as academic problems than native students'. He states that with only a short time to adapt to post-graduate study '…it is important that these sojourners adapt to the new culture rapidly so as to function effectively' (ibid: 168). Students need to establish friendship networks, adapt to academic challenges and cope with daily practicalities and stresses of living away from home. Berry (2005: 698) defines acculturation as '…the dual process of culture and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members'.

International students experience the aforementioned life changes but many have the additional pressure of negotiating all of the above through a second language (L2). 'Poor English skills are a major stressor and can create significant problems and barriers when trying to succeed and function for many Asian international students' (Lin & Yi 1997: 475). Sandhu & Asrabadi (1991: 19-20) found that international students encountered great problems in communicating with others in English, especially in academic settings. 'Most of these difficulties were due to differences in accent, enunciation, slang, and use of special

English words… Moreover, translation and retranslation back and forth from English and native language, also slow down the normal communication processes.' (ibid: 19-20).

This view is supported by Chen (1999: 52) who comments '…among those international college students for whom English is a second language … it is not surprising that language competency is a critical factor that emphatically affects self-concept and self-efficacy in work and study performance' [ref. Appendix 4]. Montgomery (2010: 36) supports this view stating '…language could be said to be at the centre and the basis of our interaction with others' and that '…language formulates our identity'.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 20) comment on the process '…by which selves are located in conversation'. They explain that '…interactive positioning assumes one individual positioning the other, while reflective positioning is the process of positioning oneself'. However, they also stress that '…instances of reflective positioning are often contested by others and many individuals find themselves in a perpetual tension between self-chosen identities and others' attempts to position them differently' (ibid: 20). Would the Thai students in this study experience challenges to their identities within the multicultural community of a UK university?

Chen (1999: 52) remarks that '…the more competent international college students are in using English, the more confident they may feel in dealing with challenges, the fewer harmful and threatening circumstances they may perceive, and the fewer stressors they may experience in academic pursuit and sociocultural adjustments' (ibid: 52).

According to Chen, competency in English language diminishes the 'harmful and threatening circumstances' perceived by international students. Competency in English language is also

highlighted in Cummins' (2001) 'Inner Circle' (fig. 2.3) where essential 'teacher-student interactions' take place to 'maximise cognitive engagement' and 'identity investment'. Cummins (2001:76) addresses the issue of assessing language and warns that '…misconceptions about language on the part of educators … have clearly contributed to students' difficulties [and]…the persistence of these misconceptions … is a symptom of the underlying educational structure that disables culturally diverse students'. He highlights the importance of critically examining the '…notion of "language proficiency" and specifically that students' '…surface fluency in English cannot be taken as indicative of their overall proficiency in English' (ibid: 76).

Would English language competency be a key stressor for the Thai students in this study and negatively impact on the development of their academic expertise and relationships with their teachers and peers?

Norton (2000: 123) notes that L2 students in her study '…tended to feel ashamed, inferior and uninteresting because of their second language abilities' and that '…such feelings of inadequacy and poor self-confidence must be linked to the power relations that [they] had to negotiate'. This view is supported by Nomnian (2008) in his study on the impact of linguistic diversity in a classroom on the participation by Thai students in a UK university. He noted a reluctance of Thai students to speak in class and commented that Thai students seemed to '…position themselves as 'linguistically inferior' to their European counterparts and this discourages them from participating in class and group discussions…and they may therefore consider themselves as members of the 'outgroup' compared to speakers of '… 'standard' English who they may consider as the 'in-group' (Nomnian 2008: 31).

Norton (2000) reflects on how speed of delivery can also affect self-confidence. She explains '…in activities that take place in real time, that is when the learner has little time to process information, the learner will have limited time to activate the schemata necessary to help decode the utterance…since oral activities take place in real time learners have little control over the rate of flow of information in these communicative events, which in turn increase their levels of anxiety' (Norton, 2000: 123).   Would the Thai post-graduate students in this study also experience similar stress within a fast-paced academic environment of a UK university?

2.6.1   Language acquisition and culture

Although the Thai students in this study achieved the increased English Language requirements of the UKVI (as I mentioned in the previous chapter) it will be interesting to investigate how they respond to the linguistic challenges within a multi-cultural UK university.

Reflecting on the research of Cummins (2001) one could suggest that if the Thai students were confident in their English language skills this could positively influence their cross-cultural communication, establish multi-national friendships and result in successful academic attainment within a UK university environment.   If, however, they lacked confidence in their language skills, then it could negatively influence other aspects of their learning and interaction with their teachers and their peer group.

Jung, Hecht and Wadsworth (2007) in their research on international students attending a university in the United States of America commented that '…sojourners such as international students with higher levels of English proficiency…are more likely to be more

confident and competent in communication with Americans, less hesitant in expressing themselves freely and better able to express themselves accurately to Americans' (ibid: 609). Thai students need to understand social and academic English but they must also be able to express themselves accurately both in written and spoken English.   I will be investigating whether the Thai students in this study comment on English language proficiency as a particular focus of concern which impacts on their academic progress and intercultural relationships while studying in the UK.   I consider this aspect in more detail in Chapter 4.

2.6.2   Communicative repertoire: Cultural and social implications

Rymes and Leone (2014: 27) remark on the lack of research into 'language and its social value… [the] …assumption that there exists one single 'unmonitored' way of speaking', and that '…lexical items change over time and across regions without addressing speakers' awareness of their own speech' (ibid: 28).   They advocate a 'more nuanced and emic qualitative approach that taps into circulating discourses about language' (ibid: 28).   They comment on the 'many ways of speaking' which relate to a new 'sociolinguistics of mobility rather than one of distribution' and they comment that '…one cannot rely on … the distribution of regional accent variation as a means of understanding the communicative repertoires of highly mobile individuals and/or participants in highly Internet-based communities' (ibid: 30).   They elaborate on the 'proliferation of exposure to different means of expression (language, accent, word-choice, clothing, intonation…)' and pose the question '…how do individuals decide which feature of communication is relevant?' (ibid: 33).   They comment that '…racist judgements about certain ways of speaking persist' (ibid: 34). However, they also note that 'most young people, part of a different social network [to their teachers], recognise a more nuanced view of how different ways of speaking fit into their

own and their peers' individual repertoires'. They also comment that '…many English Language Learners adopt non-standard Englishes because they carry more social capital' (ibid 34).

Wortham and Reyes (2015: 51-52) define evaluative indexicals as '… any signs that presuppose some evaluation of the people or objects being described, of the speaker, audience and others in the narrating event, or of relevant context - any signs that associate people or objects with some recognizable social type and evaluate that type'. This applies to labels and descriptions and they provide the example of 'attorney' as opposed to 'lawyer' by explaining that although they are the same group of professionals the labels used '…presuppose different things about how much respect the speaker has for those people' (ibid: 51-52). Blackledge and Creese (2016: 276) explain that '…emblems of identity are not merely psychological, but are corporeal and performed as practice. This is true of the clothes we wear, the music we listen to …[and] …the way in which we deploy heteroglossic linguistic resources. Our accents, vocabulary and grammar are material resources that index our individual histories and trajectories'.

Crystal (2006: 434) also reflects on this theme when he comments that in the past the view was taken that '…there could be only one kind of English, the standard kind, and that all others should be eliminated'. However, '…the contemporary view, as represented by the UK National Curriculum, is to maintain the importance of standard English while at the same time maintaining the value of local accents and dialects'. He explains that '…language has many functions and that the reason for the existence of standard English (to promote intelligibility) is different from the reason for the existence of local dialects (to promote local identity)'. Crystal (2003: 3-4) defines accent as the '…cumulative auditory effect of those

features of pronunciation which identify where a person is from, regionally or socially. The linguistics literature emphasises that the term refers to pronunciation only, and is thus distinct from Dialect which refers to grammar and vocabulary.'   He further explains that '…regional accents can relate to any locale, including both urban and rural communities within a country (e.g. 'Liverpool') as well as national groups speaking the same language (e.g. American…) and our impression of other languages ('foreign accent', Slavic accent)' (ibid: 3-4).   Crystal uses the term 'Received Pronunciation (RP)' which he explains is '…the name given to this regionally neutral accent, and because of its regional neutrality RP speakers are sometimes thought of as having 'no accent''. Agha (2005:52) describes it as 'Standard British Received Pronunciation' and Rymes and Leone describe it as 'imagined mainstream standard' to compare with 'non-standard Englishes' (2014: 34) or regional accented English.

However, Crystal comments '…linguistics stresses that everyone must have an accent though it may not indicate regional origin. The popular label 'broad' accent refers to those accents that are markedly different from RP' (Crystal: 2003:4).   He explains that '…social accents relate to the cultural and educational background of the speaker.…In Britain, the best example of a social accent is the regionally neutral accent associated with (being educated at) a public school [independent UK school], and of the related professional domains, such as the Civil Service, the Law Courts, the (royal) Court and the BBC, hence the labels ''Queen's English' and 'BBC English'' (ibid: 4).

Lippi-Green (2012: 42)   comments that 'as far as linguists are concerned, accent can only be a fuzzy term' however she also stresses that it is 'important to distinguish between two kinds of accent: first language (L1) and second language (L2). She states that 'every native speaker of English has some regional variety…an L1 accent no matter how unmarked the person's

language may seem to be' Lippi-Green (2012: 43). She contrasts this with an L2 accent 'when a native speaker of a language other than English acquires English, accent is used to refer to the breakthrough of native language phonology into the target language'.   Lippi-Green (1994: 165) also makes the point that for most people '…accent is a dustbin category: it includes all the technical meanings and a more general and subjective one: accent is how the other speaks. It is the first diagnostic for identification of geographical or social outsiders'. She states '…most people will draw a very solid basic distinction of "standard (proper, correct) English vs everything else'. She notes that '…prejudiced listeners cannot hear what a person has to say, because accent, as a mirror of social identity and a litmus test for exclusion, is more important' (ibid: 166).

 Lippi-Green (1994: 166) also comments on 'accent discrimination' especially when 'associated with racial, ethnic or cultural minorities'; she states that apart from a '…basic level of communicative competence on the part of the speaker …even more important…is the listener's goodwill'.

Rubin and Smith (1990) in their study focussed on how native English-speaking undergraduate students at a university in Georgia (U.S.) responded to being taught by non-native English speaking teaching assistants. They comment '…undergraduates need to be disabused of the stereotype that teachers who speak with non-native accents are necessarily going to be poor instructors. This will require some kind of human relations and cultural sensitization training that can be delivered efficiently to large numbers of students' (Rubin and Smith 1990: 350).   Rubin (1992: 511), in a later extended study of university student responses to non-native speaking teaching assistants (NNSTA), commented on how the study revealed the existence of powerful stereotypes and prejudices; the '…sight of an Asian visage

was sufficient to elicit …perceptions of foreign accent even though the speech sample was produced by an expert speaker of SAE' (Standard American English). He also commented '…even more revealing, when students were shown an Asian NNSTA, their listening comprehension scores were negatively impacted' [even though the] 'speech in each case was SAE' (ibid: 511).

The students in Rubin's research were described as native English (L1) speakers attending a U.S. university; non-native English speakers were excluded from the study. It was interesting to compare his results with observations and comments from the perspective of the ethnic minority Thai students (L2) at UK universities in London. Rubin (1992: 529) concludes his study by commenting '…no doubt stereotypical reactions would be different among students with a greater variety of cross-cultural experience'.

Fairclough (2003: 176-177) identifies 'evaluative statements' which he categorises as either 'desirable' or 'undesirable'. This is very interesting especially when comparing the data Shuck (2006) obtained when interviewing white native English speakers at an American university. She states that '…by drawing on the discourses of colonialism, speakers of many language backgrounds — not only native English speakers …perpetuate a social order that has native English speakers on the top and native speakers of languages less familiar to most Americans, especially those spoken by non-Whites, at the bottom' (ibid: 268). She reflects on the '…ideology of nativeness' which '…relies on the notion of place as a dimension along which native and non-native English speakers may be discursively imagined: Native speakers are from "here", whereas non-native speakers must be from far away' (ibid: 269). This interesting observation reflects the perceptions of her white 'Western' research participants and how they viewed English as spoken by 'exotic' non-native English speakers.

A distinct aspect to this study is that all the participants had achieved the appropriate IELTS standard in English required by their UK universities but would this prepare them for the linguistic challenges they encounter during their one-year Master's degree course? It will be interesting to discover how the Thai students react when exposed to Crystal's 'regional' or 'foreign' accents and how it might influence their views, opinions and their interaction with others. I analyse their responses in Chapters 4 and 7.

2.6.3 Universal language of mathematics

Would the use of recognisable equations and symbols provide helpful scaffolding and context to linguistic minority students within a multicultural classroom? Morgan (1996: 2) takes issue with the phrase 'The Language of Mathematics' stating that the use of '…the definite article carries with it the assumption of uniqueness'. Moschkovich (2012: 17) also wrestles with the phrase stating that descriptors in research literature in mathematics education range from '…asserting that mathematics is a universal language to claiming that mathematics itself is a language'. She advocates combining all the arguments and defines the phrase as '…the communicative competence necessary and sufficient for competent participation in mathematical discourse practices'. She recognises the complexity of language in a mathematical classroom involving 'multiple modes' e.g. oral and written as well as 'multiple representations' employing objects, pictures, symbols, tables, graphs' (Moschkovich 2012: 22). Tall (2004: 285) refers to the 'world of symbols' which '…we use for calculation and manipulation in arithmetic, algebra, calculus and so on. These begin with actions (such as pointing and counting) that are encapsulated as concepts by using symbols that allow us to switch effortlessly from processes to do mathematics to concepts to think about.'

Cummins (2001:70) defines academic language proficiency as '…the ability to make complex meanings explicit in either oral or written modalities by means of language itself rather than by means of contextual or paralinguistic cues (e.g. gestures, intonation etc)'. He comments that second language learners (L2) require '…considerable contextual support or scaffolding …to succeed' (ibid:131). He explains the importance of prior knowledge individuals have acquired '… to actively contextualise (make meaningful) content and language from a range of situations' (Cummins, 2001: 67). He provides an example of a physicist who when reading a technical article on Einstein's Theory of Relativity '…has far greater internal resources and prior knowledge' to comprehend the article '…than a person whose knowledge of physics is minimal'. He continues by explaining that to the physicist, the article may be '… quite context-embedded' whereas '…it is likely to be highly context-reduced to most of us' (ibid: 67).

Morgan (1998: 12) comments on the paucity of publications providing advice on writing mathematical texts which she states may be due to '…a common perception among mathematicians that the only significantly meaningful part of a mathematics text resides in the symbol system'. She continues by arguing that '…since producing 'correct mathematics' may be seen as an equivalent to producing a correct sequence of symbols, the mathematical writer's task is merely to record the content without any need to pay particular attention to the form of language in which it is recorded' (ibid: 12).

It will be interesting to discover whether students in this study comment on the possible advantages of prior knowledge and contextual framework provided by mathematical symbols and scientific equations.

2.7   Cultural stereotyping

Holliday warns of the dangers of cultural stereotyping; referring to his own research on Hong Kong Chinese, Holliday (2011: 31) admits '…the stereotype of Chinese culture was so deeply embedded in my thinking that I had to bracket it. If I was to avoid the 'easy answer' that Chinese students are 'collectivist' and 'passive', I had to work hard to think of them first as students, not as Chinese' (2011: 31).   Holliday's struggle resonated with my own research into the experiences of Thai students.   I also needed to be mindful of the temptation of cultural stereotyping and 'bracket' its influence on my research.

2.7.1   The 'inferior other'

Montgomery (2010: 14) notes that stereotypes act as a '…selective filter through which people view others and '…stereotypical assumptions about particular student groups could … be considered an influence on the teaching and learning experience' (ibid: 15). Montgomery (2010:15) states that '…staff may refer to an accepted stereotype of the 'South-East Asian learner' as a passive learner who is unwilling to offer spoken contributions to a group.'   However, the phrase 'accepted stereotype' is especially troubling despite Montogomery stating that 'such generalisation is as unreasonable as saying that 'all students are lazy' (citing Holliday, 2007a).   However, later Montgomery (2010: 31) states '…more emphasis should be placed on variation …within ethnic and national groups of students'

It was also particularly disappointing to read in a popular Thai national newspaper, a front page article entitled 'Thai win refutes student stereotype' describing how a Thai student university team of engineers had won victory over 100 teams from 63 countries. Even though the Thai students were victorious, the reporter began the article by stating that Thai students

'…are often accused of lacking self-discipline and analytical and systematic thinking, which are important for problem solving and teamwork' (The Nation, Jan. 30 2012). With this negative stereotypic perception even within Thailand itself, I hoped my research would provide an illuminating perspective into how Thai individuals met the challenges of studying in the UK and to '…understand a real-life phenomenon in depth' (Yin 2009: 18).

There is the temptation to fall into the essentialist trap of stereotyping or 'othering' individuals by ignoring the '…layers and depths of a complex society in which identity is multifaceted and shifting' (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2010: 8). Categorising according to the crude, broad brush strokes of a perceived national characteristic, and grouping individuals into categories based on their origin can be one method employed by universities for administration purposes. So, the collective label 'international students' which includes Thai students, could be viewed as the construction of a social category of a marginalised, 'inferior other' group rather than promoting cultural diversity within the classroom as a positive contribution to the learning experiences of students and their teachers.

Reyes (2009: 112) comments that sometimes, in participant narratives, the '…process of identification also emerges through the discursive accounts of objectification- moments in which individuals contemplate an event…through the eyes of another'. Ward, Bochner and Furnham, (2001: 153) add to this perspective of distancing oneself from an incident or 'othering' those involved by stating: 'It is not uncommon for international students to perceive prejudice and discrimination, and these perceptions are often stronger in students who are more culturally dissimilar from members of the host population. Perceptions of discrimination are also stronger in sojourners compared with immigrant students'. As Holliday (2011: 5) states the '…discourse of 'Othering' is so powerful that anyone who does

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not fit the essentialist definition is thought to be not a 'real' Chinese, Arab, Muslim'. He warns that '…the serious implication here is that people are not allowed to step outside their designated cultural places'. Pursuing this train of thought it follows that, '…behaviour which goes against national stereotypes is therefore nearly always framed as an exception to the essentialist rule rather than a reality in its own right' (ibid: 7).

2.7.2   Advantages of stereotype to minority groups

In contrast to Holliday's (2011) negative view of stereotype, Reyes (2009: 53) takes a more positive perspective and focuses on how stereotypes can be an advantage to minority groups '…positioning the self and other…is part and parcel of how stereotypes are used to resist oppression and celebrate identities …invoking the Asian stereotype foregrounds the potential for inhabiting this stereotype'. She comments that '…using the idea of stereotype as resource' it is interesting '…how people re-appropriate stereotypes of their ethnic grouping as a means through which to position themselves and others in socially meaningful ways' (ibid: 53). So, by 'inhabiting the stereotype' individuals from ethnic minority groups can position themselves as members of a larger group which can provide strength and identity. They can 'inhabit the stereotype' either willingly or feel compelled to do so in response to pressure from others or in a particular interactional context.

It will be interesting to see whether this broadening of stereotype, or references to typification of behaviour, occurs when I interview Thai students and their teachers or to possibly narrow a stereotype to fine focus on a particular nationality. Would teachers of Thai students, for example, categorise them collectively as Asian or would Thai students themselves refer to their membership of this larger ethnic group in order to strengthen their positionality within the large culture of a UK university. Reyes (2009: 57) also notes that stereotypes can be

perpetuated and circulated as images and 'material signs' by popular media. Perhaps as individuals we need stereotypes to make sense of the world? However, Reyes also points out that stereotypes are fragile and without continuous reinforcement they '…can fade if discursive chains break' (ibid: 57).

2.7.3   Paradoxical stereotypes

Spreckels and Kotthoff (2009: 422) warn against the dangers of stereotyping '…we must categorize in order to make the world understandable, for categorization means simplification…it is precisely in this simplification that we find a danger of stereotyping and thereby as a consequence the danger of developing prejudices'   It is clear that the issue of stereotype is nuanced and subtle. Reyes (2009) and Spreckles and Kotthoff (2009) illustrate the diverse and complex nature of this sensitive subject. Whether one embraces the positive stereotype of a similar-minded, larger co-cultural group of individuals who provide support or a sense of belonging to its members or employ stereotypic language as a descriptor of a culture or nation with which one is unfamiliar, they underline how distress and misunderstanding can be an unintended outcome.

What is interesting is that stereotypes are also powerful and can be both positive and negative depending on the circumstances and the perception of others. They can provide a secure environment and identity where individuals may willingly inhabit or 'co-inhabit the stereotype' (Reyes 2009: 54 & 57) if it is associated with a positivity e.g. Asians are good at maths or as a defence strategy to position oneself as belonging to a defined racial or supportive familial group rather than face a perceived hostile, unfamiliar environment alone. As Reyes (2009: 54) explains, interactants can use the stereotype as a resource 'for creating relationships with one another as they interactionally position themselves as unified in

support of the stereotype'. How would the Thai students in my study react to immersion in a UK academic environment and would they turn to fellow Thais or other Asians for support?

2.8   Thai social etiquette: Background information

In this section I shall review work to provide background context to this study which might be helpful in understanding cultural challenges experienced by some Thai students. Some of the difficulties and challenges faced by some Thai students when they enter a UK learning and social community may stem from traditional Thai etiquette and cultural mores.

2.8.1   Concepts of 'face' and 'krengjai'

Goffman (2005:5) in his ground-breaking analysis of ritual elements in social interaction defines the term 'face' as the '…positive social value a person effectively claims for himself …an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes'.   He explains how 'face' is inextricably linked with the emotional 'feelings' of the individual and how '…participation in any contact with others is a commitment …and an involvement in the face of others' (ibid: 6).   Further, Goffman explains that '…a person's face clearly is something that is not lodged in or on his body, but rather something that is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter' (ibid: 7). Goffman (2005: 14) comments '…the person will have two points of view - a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face'

I found that one of the most interesting and challenging themes to emerge from this research was the culture of 'krengjai' which proved to be a key factor in underpinning the interactions and positionality of Thai students in this study, whether in the classroom or socially.   My

research enabled me to gain an understanding of how this elusive factor influenced the interactions and motivation of the students in this study and to present it in this thesis.

Subtly different from the Chinese concept of 'face' this research demonstrates that krengjai provides a delicate framework for negotiating relationships and cultural practices. As Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998: 187) explain, '…Face refers to a claimed sense of favourable social self-worth that a person wants others to have of him or her…. Thais refer to the notion of 'face' but in a Thai way which emphasises their awareness of the feelings of others'.

Chitrada (2004: 1) explains that the term is formed by combining two words: kreng (to be afraid or fear something) and jai (of the heart or mind). Its rough equivalent in English as Intachakra (2010: 619) explains '…is more widely construed as consideration or concern for others' feelings'. Chitrada (2004: 1) comments that krengjai '…draws on the Buddhist beliefs of the majority of Thai people [and] reflects the idea of Karma that guides one's actions towards others in the expectation that one will receive the same thing in return'. Accidentally straying outside the fine lines of acceptability can cause serious offence to others and distress to the perpetrator as this study illustrates when one of the key participants in this study, Wendy, challenges the views of a fellow-Thai student during a class debate (ref Chapter 6).

Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998: 197) explain that '…those who have an interdependent self-construal want to fit in with others, act appropriately, promote others' goals and value relational collaboration'. They explain that '…when communicating with others, high interdependents value other-face and mutual-face concerns. They are eager to appeal to other–face concerns in vulnerable interpersonal situations in order to preserve relational harmony'. Wendy is very upset as she feels she has caused the other Thai student to 'lose

face' in front of her peers. Interestingly Wendy's perception is probably correct as she comments in the same interview that the student does not speak to her again.

This study demonstrates how the culture of 'krengjai' may also influence the subtle relationship and positionality between a teacher and student which may not be appreciated or understood by UK teachers. The in-depth interviews and survey responses reveal an unexpected rich tapestry of cultural and societal mores which influenced the behaviour and social interactions of Thai participants in this study.

2.8.2   Non-verbal language of Thai hierarchy

Goffman (2005) refers primarily to Chinese interactional rituals which are very informative. However, I have found very little research into the origins of Thai social etiquette. The work of Anuman-Rajadhon and Wijeyewardene in the 1960s provide insight into historical folklore, customs and beliefs which may shed light on why some Thai students find Western culture so challenging for example physical contact observed between individuals and even between strangers meeting for the first time.

The concept of hierarchy in Thai society can be expressed in 'nonverbal language'. Vongvipanond (1994) provides the example that '…if one has to walk past somebody older or higher in rank, one needs to lower one's head and bow slightly…this is a gestural expression of one's respect for others' (ibid: 5).

This non-verbal language is described by Phraya Anuman-Rajadhon (1888–1969), one of modern Thailand's most remarkable scholars. A self-trained linguist, anthropologist and ethnographer, he became an authority on the culture of Thailand. His detailed research on Thai folklore and customs include the traditional 'Thai sign of salutation' termed the ' *"wai"* '

where both hands are raised '…joined palm to palm, lightly touching the body somewhere between the face and chest'. Anuman-Rajadhon explains that the "wai" varies according to the rank of the person being addressed. 'The higher the hands are raised, the greater is the respect and courtesy conveyed' Anuman-Rajadhon (1961: 159).

He describes how the "wai" should be performed with a '…graceful manner as in slow motion' and explains that 'Thai etiquette

Figure 2.5: Traditional Thai 'Wai'

Source:
http://www.aboutthailand.info/images/thaiwai.jpg

implicitly requires that a junior in age or rank initiate a "wai" as a sign of respect to a senior, accompanied at the same time by a slight bow'. However, the "wai" can also be used as a means of demonstrating power or positioning in relation to others; '…psychologically, if a person receiving a "wai" from a junior is egoistically conscious of his superiority, he will return the "wai" with the hands raised to a position not higher than his chest [or] he may merely …nod only as a favourable recognition or approval' (ibid: 161).

Anuman-Rajadhon (1961: 163) refers to traditional Thai customs and historic societal tenets of behaviour commenting that '…to most of the Thai, the "wai" is preferred to hand shaking [because] the "shaking of one's own hands" is hygienically better than shaking of other people's hands'. He also explains that the handshake can be a painful experience '…if the hand which is clasped is a sizeable, big one, compared to the slim hand of the Thai, particularly women'. So there appear to be pragmatic and practical reasons for the practice

of the "wai" and its adaptation to a variety of societal occasions.   Would the Thai students in my study experience anxiety when faced with 'Western' cultural practices?

Wijeyewardene (1968: 21) reflects on how '…one of the sad aspects of progress and technological innovation is the loss of folk customs which were intimately connected with the old technology' and he comments on '…the death of traditional northern courtship practices'. Wijeyewardene (1968: 23) in his research into historic traditional Thai customs and beliefs in North Thailand refers to the '…rules and conventions which dictate the progress of courtship' between a young man and a young girl. He notes that '…any physical contact is 'an offence against the spirits' and must be compensated for [otherwise] sickness will befall some member of the family'. Wijeyewardene comments that '…the prohibition on touching is part of the general prohibition of any intimacy in public, even between husband and wife'. He explains that '…the objection to public intimacy and physical contact without the placation of the spirits is not merely a matter of propriety. There is a very real apprehension of the supernatural dangers of contact between men and women' (ibid: 23). Would public courtship practices in the UK cause anxiety and embarrassment to the Thai students in this study or have historical Thai social traditions, beliefs and etiquette been superseded by the influence of 'Western' culture? I consider the impact of 'Western' culture in more detail in Chapter 6 as I analyse the responses of the Thai students in this study.

2.8.3   Honorification

Very little research has been carried out on Thai honorific language. However, research on Japanese and Chinese terms of address form a framework from which to compare the attitudes and responses of Thai students in this study.   Agha (1994: 227) comments on '…linguistic means of marking relationships of honorification – relationships involving

social status, respect or deference between communicative interactants'.   Agha differentiates between politeness and honorific systems with the former being '…understood inherently to be an aspect of speaker-addressee relationship' and the latter to '…mark deference to a number of role categories' (ibid: 288).

Gu (1990: 250) comments that in Chinese culture '…most occupational titles can be used as address terms' and he provides the example of 'teacher'.   As Gu explains '…unequal encounters [include] political power but also of profession, knowledge, age difference, kinship status…[and] …the inferior tends to choose the address terms which are more formal [a means of showing respect]' (ibid: 251).

Similarly, Vongvipanond (1994) explains that in Thai society 'kinship terms are still used as terms of address as well as personal pronouns' (ibid: 2). She explains that '…when strangers meet, the title "khun" (your goodness) will be adopted until a satisfactory relationship develops at which time kinship terms will be used instead' (ibid: 3). The particular kinship term is determined by 'age or seniority' and once adopted 'both parties know the relationship has reached a satisfactory level' (ibid: 3). However, if one party continues to use the title 'khun' then it could be seen to be ignoring '…the other party's attempt to use kinship terms' (ibid: 3).   Vongvipanond explains that in rural villages it is common to 'treat even a stranger like a visiting relative' by using kinship titles such as 'uncle' which 'automatically makes him a relative of all members of the family which takes care of him, which means almost everybody in that village' (ibid: 3).

Each academic year the Thai students take part in the ceremony of 'Wai Kru' during which

Figure 2.6: Ceremony of 'Wai Kru'

Source: http://www.swp.in.th/thaiculture/

students kneel to pay tribute and respect to their teachers. The Thai term "luuk sit" literally means 'learning child' and provides an example of extending kinship terms when referring to 'pupil, student, trainee, apprentice and disciple'. A teacher is regarded as 'having the same status and obligation as a parent' which may refer to a time when 'schools were not in existence and those who sought education or training had to live in the home of their teachers' (Vongvipanond 1994: 3). I focus in more detail on the student teacher relationship in Chapter 5.

2.8.4   Thai hierarchy

Vongvipanond (1994) explains that the Thai expression "thii tam thii soong" 'literally means "high place and low place" and that '…people can be "high" or "low" according to their age, family background, occupation or professional rank' (ibid: 4). This hierarchical system '…is most evident in the Thai pronominal system, which is one of the most complex system among languages' (ibid: 4).   Vongvipanond describes how the choice of pronoun '…reveals the sex of the speaker, where the speaker places himself and his addressee in the hierarchical social system, his opinion about the degree of distance or intimacy in their relationship and his evaluation of the speech situation'. Vocabulary in relation to royalty '...is learned only by those who work with the King and Queen and the royal family' (ibid: 4).

Vongvipanond (1994) explains that body parts are also allotted a hierarchy. 'Head and face are considered higher than other parts of the body' which she concludes is why 'no Thai cares

to have his head touched and they feel offended when a person points …to them with his foot' (ibid: 5).   She explains that '…face ("naa") is the most notable part of the body [representing] reputation, honor, respectability, credibility and integrity'.   She notes an interesting '…distinction made in the Thai perception between one's head ("hua") and one's heart ("jai") (ibid: 5).

She comments that '…if frequency of occurrence can be taken as an indicator of the degree of attention and interest, Thai people seem to put more emphasis on their heart than their head. There are more compound words with "jai" than with "hua"'. She then provides three examples which '…tell a great deal about interpersonal relationships of the Thais' (ibid: 6):

    ow jai   = to please [lit. to take a person's heart into consideration]

    khat jai   = to displease [lit. to block a person's heart]

    krengjai   = to give high priority to how another person feels or thinks about something [lit. to be respectful of another person's heart].

Vongvipanond explains that 'Thais are taught from an early age to "krenjai" other people which means they have to be careful…what they say and what they do so that they in no way offend, upset or displease others' (ibid: 6).   Would Thai students in this study find it challenging to negotiate their positionality within the teaching and learning community of a UK university? I focus on this key aspect in Chapter 6 where I analyse the interviews with Thai students and their teachers.

2.8.5 Thai psyche and culture

Komin (1991) a Thai Fulbright scholar, conducted a ground-breaking research study entitled 'Psychology of the Thai People': Values and Behavioral Patterns'. Komin identifies nine 'value clusters' which she states are common characteristic elements within Thai culture and lists them in order of importance:

1. Ego Orientation
2. Grateful Relationship Orientation
3. Smooth Interpersonal Relationship Orientation
4. Flexibility and Adjustment Orientation
5. Religio-Psychical Orientation
6. Education and Competence Orientation
7. Interdependence Orientation
8. Fun-Pleasure Orientation
9. Achievement-Task Orientation

Komin (1991: 134) explains that 'ego orientation is the root value underlying various key values of the Thai, such as "face-saving", "criticism-avoidance", and the krengjai attitude which roughly means "feeling considerate for another person, not want to impose or cause other person trouble, or hurt his/her feeling"'. In Komin's view, relationships are highly important to Thais and it follows that '…reciprocity of kindness and the highly valued quality of being 'grateful' to another individual who renders the kindness does not diminish over time and distance' (ibid :135).

Komin (1991: 137) comments that Thais value the polite and humble personality and a 'relaxed and pleasant interaction' with others accounting for the smiling and friendly aspects of the Thai personality. As Komin (1991) states, this is in contrast to some 'Western' cultures whose key values '…tend to focus on self-actualization, ambition and achievement, down-playing such values of self-control and politeness' (ibid: 136). Would the Thai

students in this study adapt to cross-cultural relationships within a UK university community? This focus and the analysis of data is considered in Chapter 6.

When considering the particular focus of my study I was interested to learn that Komin (1991) indicates that '…knowledge-for-knowledge sake does not receive a high value in the cognition of the Thai in general'. Education is perceived as a means to obtaining higher prestige socially and a higher salary 'rather than an end value in itself' (ibid: 146). As Komin (1991) explains '…since the Thai people place highest value on the ego, self, the face, and social relations, decorative external labels, degrees, decorations…thus naturally become important. The possession of them would identify the owner with the respected class of the society' (ibid: 144).

Komin (1991: 146) also reflects on the stereotypic perception of Thailand as the 'Land of Smiles' and the 'popular myth' of the Thai who '…would not do anything that is not Sanuk' (to have fun, to enjoy oneself and to have good time). Komin (1991: 153) challenges the entire concept and appropriateness of Hofstede's 'Western' orientated quantitative study of cultural / national dimensions in relation to Thai culture [ref. Appendix 5]. She comments that '…the high score on "masculinity" which refers to the "go-getter" type of persons, with emphasis on "assertiveness, acquisition of money and things, importance of work, performance, ambition, achievement, and independence, etc., not caring for others or people", explains why the achievement motive has become so popular for the Americans' (ibid: 153). Komin also makes an astute observation: '…one striking fact about the concept of "achievement" is that the word itself is not translatable in many non-English speaking cultures as in Thai language; in particular, 'the Thai word for "ambition" has a negative connotation for Thai personality' (ibid: 153).

What is particularly interesting in Komin's research is the difference in attitudes to achievement and task orientation between Thai individuals from different geographical regions and backgrounds. Those from the cosmopolitan city of Bangkok valued 'good relationships' the highest of all groups while farmers from the poorer north-east valued 'work' the highest. Would the students in my study, from different regions of Thailand, reflect Komin's findings?

2.8.6   Exploring Thai communities of practice

Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998: 190) define individualism as '…a culture emphasising 'I' identity over 'we' identity, individual rights over group rights and personal self-esteem issues over social self-esteem issues'. In contrast, collectivism is described as a culture which emphasises '…the importance of the 'we' identity over the 'I' identity, in-group interests over individual interests and mutual-face concerns over self-face concerns'. They also stress that 'within each culture, different ethnic communities can also display distinctive individualistic and collectivistic value patterns'. Komin, (1991: 145) mentions the concept of 'interdependence orientation' which she lists as one of the nine key values governing Thai societal beliefs. It 'reflects more of the community collaboration spirits and …the value of coexistence and interdependence.' She explains that '…collaboration is a dominant behavioural pattern particularly in the rural communities'. She depicts a positive perspective of mutual collaboration in contrast to Brown's (2009) study which paints a bleak picture of co-national students being driven by '…shame and the desire to avoid anxiety [to] retreat from English-speaking scenarios into the comfort of the mono-ethnic ghetto' (ibid: 188). She reports that 'Thai students were said [by other students] to be the most entrenched and unapproachable' (ibid: 187). Research by Aoki throws into doubt the 'unapproachable'

depiction of Thai students; her findings indicate that Thai speakers want to 'strengthen their relationship with hearers by disclosing themselves… frame the acts as play or sanuk [fun, enjoyment, having a good time] … [and the] presentation of self in a light-hearted manner…This speech behaviour encourages openness and accessibility to the self of individuals in interaction' (Aoki 2010: 307-8).

Far from being 'entrenched and unapproachable' Aoki, when comparing Thai with Japanese participants in social group discussions, found Thai to be fun-loving, open and accessible in their relationships with others. Both Brown's (2009) and Aoki's (2010) research studies are interesting and informative but observe Thai in very different contexts. Aoki's study raised some intriguing and unexpected results as she explained '…Thai participants incline toward individual-orientated topics and independent styles of talk' in contrast to the Japanese participants who preferred to 'build common ground through discussion of communal topics' (ibid: 289).

Aoki's research illustrates yet again the diversity within Thailand. McCargo and Hongladarom (2004: 220) state that '…identity is not fixed…[it] is consciously or unconsciously defined and constructed by groups and individuals, primarily by means of discursive strategies'. Referring to Thailand they reflect on the '…plurality of cultural identities in flux' and how the 'long-standing essentialism of Thai studies is now giving way to a new emphasis on the extraordinary diversity of cultural identity'. Their research highlights the cultural diversity of Thailand which has never been colonised. It highlights the need to employ a more nuanced appreciation of the ambiguities of its cultural profile as it is a complex 'social terrain' (ibid: 234).

2.9   Chapter summary

Reviewing the diverse and varied research of others has been illuminating, informative and instructive. Specific research into the experiences and challenges of Thai students in the UK is sparse. However, I was able to benefit from the studies carried out by researchers in other countries particularly in Australia and North America which provided a backdrop against which to compare and contrast my own findings. The work of Cummins (2001) and Vygotsky (1962) provided insight into the interaction between student and teacher. Holliday's (1999) Small Culture paradigm combined with the research of Komin (1991) and Kanno (2003) into Thai and Japanese cultures provide insight into social interaction and cross-cultural communication experienced by the Thai students in this study. The specific research into societal honorific gestures and language combined with historical mores of Thai culture provide invaluable background to enable this UK researcher to understand and appreciate in more depth the challenges experienced by the Thai students in this study as they negotiate their identities within a UK university environment. As Preece (2016: 36) comments '…there is a need to discuss ways of imagining higher education as a multilingual space' and how '…diversity of the student body can be used as an asset'.   Reviewing the work of others has enabled me to chart a course and fine focus on key issues which have emerged during this period of reflection and enlightenment. It has also reaffirmed the focus of my own study and defined my research question which challenge me to explore and investigate and perhaps enhance understanding of the international student experience:

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
while studying in UK?

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?"
Albert Einstein [1879-1955]

3.1 Introduction

The quote from Einstein (above) is an appropriate introduction to this chapter because embarking on a major research project is rather like setting out on a voyage of discovery into uncharted territory. Others may have navigated aspects of the international student experience but research into the cultural challenges experienced by Thai students studying in a UK university is sparse. In this chapter I explain how I identified the key objectives of this investigation and what instruments I employed to explore, collect and interrogate the evidence I obtained.

3.2 Perceptions of reality: An ontological conundrum

What is reality and how do we define it? Is one person's perception of reality the same as another's if they share the same time and space? Television producer Melvoin (1994) asks if reality is '…the image distorted by our own personal lenses?' Our reality and how we make sense of it and react to it is determined and shaped by our unique life experiences; some within our control and some outside it. We may find ourselves in a strange and unfamiliar situation because of the decision of another e.g. parental job relocation (Kanno 2003) or being awarded an academic scholarship to a university in a foreign land as in the case of the Thai students in this study. The pressures, challenges and how we adapt and react to a situation are as individual and diverse as human nature itself. This is what made this investigation fascinating and demanding.

3.3   Epistemological challenges

Collecting and analysing data yields knowledge. However, is it relevant? Does it address and answer the research questions? Clearly the choice of appropriate data collection methods is crucial in responding effectively to this epistemological challenge.   Schell (1992: 2) advises that '…defining the research question is the most important step in a research programme'. He analyses the phrasing of research questions and how they influence research design: ''What' questions usually suggest that exploratory research is indicated [and]…'How' and 'why' questions are more explanatory by nature' (Schell 1992: 3). The focus of my research crystallised itself into one key question:

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
while studying in the UK?

My research question fell into the 'how' category so I was heading for an investigation which I found exciting and challenging. The fact that this research was contemporary, occurring in real time, enabled me to consider methods which would yield valuable and pertinent information. Brewer (2000) cited by Bell (2005: 16) defines ethnography as '…the study of people in naturally occurring settings'. Robson (2002: 89) notes that an ethnographic study 'seeks to capture, interpret and explain how a group, organization or community live, experience and make sense of their lives and their world'.   This ethnographic approach reflected my aim '…to see things as those involved see things' (Denscombe 1998: 69 cited by Bell 2005: 17).

I therefore decided to conduct an ethnographically-oriented study of a group of 96 Thai scholarship Master's students studying at universities across the UK during the academic year 2011-2012.   Bearing in mind the advice of Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004:25) I was

aware that a 'complex and delicate balance' is required which '…acknowledges the views and opinions of people formerly known as 'research subjects' and leads researchers to collaborate with, rather than investigate the practices of the study participants' (ibid: 25). It was therefore essential that I obtained the support, trust and co-operation of the Thai students; that they understood the aims and objectives of the study and felt confident that their identity would not be revealed should they wish to volunteer as participants.

3.4 Defining the boundary

Simons (2009: 29) advises 'defining the boundary' of the research study and '…an initial framing for your case through foreshadowed issues' (ibid: 32).   I identified at the outset several limiting factors which formed a boundary for my research: I would not be studying with the students so would not be 'participating directly in the setting' (Brewer 2000 cited by Bell 2005: 16); my ethnicity, my professional role in the Thai Education Office and a limited knowledge of the Thai language could form a barrier to being '…accepted by the individuals or groups being studied' (Bell 2005: 17).   By recognising these 'foreshadowed issues' at the start of the process I could address them in the choice and design of my methods of investigation.

3.5   Data collection: Choice of instruments

Robson (2002:92) comments that the methods or techniques used to collect ethnographic information, which he terms the 'tactics of enquiry,' include questionnaires and 'various kinds of observations' (ibid: 92).   However, he also notes that the '…ethnographic approach…can be augmented by interviews and documentary analysis'. In order to obtain

rich and pertinent data within the defined boundary of my employment and restricted time scale of one academic year I decided to employ the following instruments of data collection:

- Bilingual questionnaire

- Semi-structured recorded interviews

- Classroom observations & field notes

These mixed methods provided a multi-dimensional and triangulated rigour to the study: designing and constructing a bilingual questionnaire disseminated to the larger scholarship group in the UK provided the 'broad brush strokes' to the study; interviewing individual participants and observing them in their lessons provided the fine contrasting detail which makes a painting evolve from 'interesting' to possibly 'exceptional'.

<u>**INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION**</u>

3.5.1   Questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire was both quantitative and qualitative with open-ended and closed questions, set out in clearly defined topic sections which reflected key areas of interest including issues related to English language, experiences of teaching and learning, self-assessment of confidence levels and sources of stress. It incorporated a numerical Likert scale for some questions to acquire quantitative data as Bryman (2008) explains: the Likert scale, named after Rensis Likert, is '…a multiple – indicator or multiple-item measure of a set of attitudes relating to a particular area' (ibid: 146). Bryman explains that the goal '…is to measure intensity of feelings about the area in question' by means of a set of statements relating to a particular issue or theme' (ibid: 146). The respondent indicates their level of agreement or disagreement to each statement usually by means of a five-point scale from one

extreme (strongly agree) to the opposite extreme (strongly disagree) with a neutral position in the middle. The Likert Scale enables responses to be scored quantifiably illustrating the degree of positive or negative feelings towards each statement.

The questionnaire structure and style were uniform as Swetnam (2007: 61) advised and included variation in the presentation of the questions and methods of response. Questions were presented in language which was '…simple, direct and appropriate to the target population' (Swetnam 2007: 60) and focused on the most relevant issues. As Bryman (2008: 147) advises, I included positive and negative statements. 'This variation [the inclusion of positive and negative viewpoints] is advised in order to identify respondents who exhibit 'response set' i.e. respondents who 'consistently agree or disagree with a set of statements'. The inclusion of negative statements was designed to 'weed out' respondents who '…appear to be replying within the framework of an acquiescence [agreeing] response set' (Bryman 2008: 147).

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<u>Example of a positive statement:</u>

The lecturer provides extra materials e.g. notes or tapes to help international students understand and keep up with the work

<u>Example of a negative statement:</u>

The lecturer does not check to ensure international students understand the content of the lecture

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Boyce and Neale (2006: 5) advise '…where necessary, translate …into local language and test the translation'. So, to minimise the possibility of questions and written instructions

being misinterpreted by the respondents, I decided to produce a bilingual [Thai-English] version of the questionnaire.

3.5.2   Challenges of translation and interpretation

The problems of producing and designing a bilingual questionnaire are well documented by other researchers so it was no surprise to encounter not only problems in translating the words from one language to the other but also in conveying the exact meaning of the questions '…concepts or ideas present in one culture are not necessarily present or as meaningful in another (Banville, Desrosiers, and Genet-Volet 2000: 374). 'Phrasing can become unnatural in the target language [and] …high levels of measurement error can result as respondents often fail to understand the question's intent' (McKay et al. 1996; Gabbard and Nakamoto 1994) cited by Potaka and Cochrane (2004: 291) who designed a Maori language survey. They warn that 'a further problem is that direct translations are commonly undertaken late in the development cycle' (Potaka and Cochrane: 2004: 291). However, I had tackled this issue in the developmental stages of the study.

As a non-Thai speaker, I found the translation aspect of the design process challenging. The use of the '…back-translation technique, arguably a method often considered best practice for questionnaire design' (Potaka and Cochrane 2004: 292) proved the most reliable option whereby two bilinguals translate the text: '…one translating from the source to the target language, the second blindly translating back from the target to the source' (Brislin 1970: 186).

A native English-speaking colleague who spoke fluent Thai, translated the English questions into Thai. There followed a 'back-translation' when a native Thai-speaker, who had excellent

English language skills, translated the Thai back into English. The resulting translation was then compared with the original English text and any amendments or modifications were made. Even with this cross-checking, I received helpful feedback from participants in the study on how they felt a particular question might be better phrased in Thai. This demonstrates that interpretation of language might be down to each individual's meaning-making when reading the same text at a particular moment in time. It was a major consideration to keep the questionnaire relevant, focused and objective. 'Vagueness breeds vagueness' warns Swetnam (2007: 62) so the process of refining the focus and re-phrasing the questions enabled these key aspects to be addressed before presenting the questionnaire to the participants. Below are some examples of the final bilingual version of the questionnaire design [ref Appendices 6a, 6b, 6c & 6d for the complete questionnaire & responses].

Bilingual example: I dislike challenging the lecturer's views

คุณไม่ชอบการถกเถียงกับความคิดเห็นของอาจารย์ผู้สอน

Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

In addition to the above quantitative Likert scale format, I included open-ended questions with a box for the students to provide their responses. This format provided an opportunity to obtain qualitative data where students were able to give their views [either in Thai or English] and expand on their experiences.

The questionnaire also included questions on key topics which required a quantitative response as a percentage score:

Robson (2002: 241) states '…survey questions should be designed to help achieve the goals of the research and, in particular, to answer the research questions'. However, he adds that questions are not produced by '…sitting down and trying to think of some interesting things to ask or even by getting a group together to do this.'

While I appreciate his point of view, I believe the positive contributions of Thai colleagues in this particular situation were invaluable and resulted in a final format which was appealing, engaging and above all focusing on the key topics which were clearly phrased in both Thai (L1) and English (L2).   As Robson (2002: 242) notes, a good questionnaire not only

'…provides a valid measure of the research questions, but also gets the co-operation of the respondents, and elicits accurate information'.

By explaining the relevance of the questionnaire to colleagues and ensuring that the translations reflected the true sense of the questions in both Thai and English, I believe they experienced positive involvement. I am also grateful for the valuable assistance of my Thai colleagues to ensure the phraseology of the questionnaire was accurate and was presented with cultural sensitivity which would not cause offence. It would enable the students to provide rich data which would assist in enabling me to understand the cultural challenges they were experiencing. Practically, the bilingual questionnaire evolved into a form which could be emailed and completed using a computer. Thus, the design provided the students with the opportunity of participating on a voluntary basis wherever they were studying in the UK.

In November 2011, a total of 93 Thai scholarship Master's students were sent bilingual consent forms explaining the study and were emailed a copy of the questionnaire. 63 agreed to participate voluntarily and returned completed questionnaires.

3.5.3   Semi-structured interviews

The questionnaires supplied valuable information both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, another investigative method was required to enable individuals to provide rich personal narratives detailing their own experiences, feelings and opinions in a particular time and setting. I decided to conduct recorded face to face semi-structured interviews throughout the academic year with the four voluntary participants.

As Bryman (2008: 192) states, interviews elicit from participants '… all manner of information: interviewees' own behaviour or that of others; attitudes; norms; beliefs; and values' which could never be presented adequately simply by means of a questionnaire. A key element of the face to face interview is the interaction between interviewer and interviewee; the visual / physical cues of unvoiced body language, expressions and laughter which enriched the investigative experience and provided light and life to my observations.

Opdenakker (2006:4) categorises the face to face (FtF) interview technique as 'synchronous communication of time and place' compared to a telephone interview which he describes as '…synchronous in time but asynchronous in space' (ibid: 4). He explains that an advantage of FtF interviews is that '…there is no significant time delay between question and answer; the interviewer and interviewee can directly react on what the other says or does' (ibid: 5).

'Social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language' all add to the advantage of this synchronous communication [within a shared dimension of time and place] and 'the answer of the interviewee is more spontaneous, without an extended reflection' (ibid: 5). The inclusion of FtF Interviews provided an intensely personal dimension which complimented the more prescriptive written responses from remote respondents to a static, paper based questionnaire.

In the winter term of 2011, I met with a group of 18 volunteers who were interested in my research. All were Thai scholarship Master's students studying in the UK during the academic year 2011-2012. I explained the overall methodology and I answered any questions they raised. I emphasised confidentiality by employing the use of pseudonyms and that they could withdraw their consent at any time during the academic year. There was no pressure

to participate. As I mentioned earlier, those who wished to participate voluntarily were presented with a bilingual consent form which explained the focus of the study.

Due to my full-time work commitment, I needed to plan my strategy carefully and 'define the boundaries' as Simons (2009: 29) advised in order to be able to complete my research and obtain in-depth meaningful testimony within the timescale of the one-year Master's course. Therefore, for logistical reasons, of the group of 18 Master's scholarship students, I chose four volunteers who studied different subjects at three universities near my office.

In total, I interviewed the four students 15 times throughout the academic year for a total of eleven hours which I have detailed in Table 3.1. The first interviews took place in the familiar surroundings of their universities to enable them to feel more relaxed and to provide responses which were rich in detail and personal viewpoints.

During the Spring Term, I interviewed the students after I had observed their lessons. This proved very beneficial. The semi-structured questions provided a focus for each of the interviews, but also offered the flexibility to build on the shared experience of the lesson content and interactions which had taken place. This format worked very well providing a familiar contextual framework within which to set the interview and opportunities for in-depth exploration of ideas, views and opinions. Table 3.1 lists recorded face to face semi-structured interviews with the four key participants and details the time and location of each.

Table 3.1: Log of recorded face to face interviews with four Thai students

Date	Time	Interviewee Pseudonym	Location	Degree Subject	Notes
Feb 8 2012	16.00 - 16.30	Plum	Reception area of university	Law	Interview with student after observed lecture
Feb 9 2012	13.00 - 13.30	Abe	Reception area of university	Physics	Interview with student after observed lecture
Feb 9 2012	15.30 - 16.00	Sid	Reception area of university	Finance	Interview with student after observed lecture
Feb 14 2012	18.30 - 19.00	Plum	Student lounge area of university	Law	Interview with student after observed lecture
Feb 17 2012	18.00 - 18.30	Sid	Cafeteria of university	Finance	Interview with student after observed lecture
Feb 22 2012	14.00 - 14.30	Abe	Dining room at my work place	Physics	Interview with student after observed lecture
Mar 9 2013	17.30 - 18.00	Wendy	Vacant classroom at university	History	Interview with student after observed lecture
Mar 14 2012	11.30 - 12.00	Wendy	Student lounge area at university	History	Interview with student after observed lecture
Mar 21 2012	17.00 - 18.00	Abe, Plum & Sid	My office	Physics, Law, Finance	Interview with group prior to a meal I hosted
May 30 2012	14.00 - 15.00	Abe	Library at my work place	Physics	Reflections on the year
May 31 2012	16.00 - 17.00	Sid	Library at my work place	Finance	Reflections on past year
May 31 2012	15.00 - 16.00	Wendy	Library at my work place	History	Reflections on past year
June 19 2012	15.30 - 16.30	Plum	Library at my work place	Law	Reflections on past year
Aug 7 2012	17.00 - 18.00	Abe, Plum & Sid	My office	Physics, Law, Finance	Interview with group prior to a meal I hosted
Nov 5 2012	15.00 - 16.30	Wendy	Library at my work place	History	Reflections on past year

As the year progressed, I developed a good rapport with each of the participants. Later we met at my work place either in my office or in the library. Most interviews were one to one

but on two occasions [March 21st and August 7th] I conducted group discussions with three of the students [Abe, Plum and Sid] to observe how they interacted with each other and whether being in a group would influence the views and opinions they had expressed during individual interviews.

In the example below [Table 3.2] I interviewed Plum after a lesson I had observed during which the teacher posed many questions to the class. This interview focused on UK and Thai pedagogy. I initially asked Plum whether she found this inter-active teaching style challenging as I had observed that during the lesson she had not responded in class. The semi-structured nature of the interview provided the flexibility to follow-up on Plum's initial response by requesting clarification [Row 2].

Table 3.2:   Excerpt from Plum's interview transcript [14/02/2012]

ROW	TIME [from start of interview]	TRANSCRIPT
1.	00:09:19	Respondent: I think it's really good. Because when you um I think the nature of Thai student which has been in you know kind of Thai traditional academic style we don't really expose ourselves in class.
2.	00:09:35	**Interviewer: What do you mean by 'don't expose yourself'?**
3.	00:09:38	Respondent: We just sit there and listen. *[heavy rain in the background]* That's just what we do because we've been in kind of we we've never encouraged to to say something in class , I would say. I mean in my generation it was like that but now they they tend to improve to to be towards like you know kind of international kind of Westernised and encourage students to contribute to classes more and more and more so I would say that.

| 4. | 00:10:15 | **Interviewer: So it's literally within the last couple of years; do you think it is changing?** |
| 5. | 00:10:20 | Respondent: Yeh it is changing from what I have heard because I've got um brother you know who just graduated from university as well and he's he's been telling me and you know I would just I see the differences but it it takes time for for Thai students to actually you know *[door banging in the background]* contribute themselves in class, raising hand and asking questions is just it is rare. |

Repeated probing [Row 4] resulted in rich, descriptive data when Plum compares her classroom experiences in Thailand with those of her younger brother illustrating the changing nature of Thai classroom culture 'Yeh it is changing …he's been telling me … I see the differences'. However, she qualifies this statement with the caveat '…but it it takes time for for Thai students to actually … contribute themselves in class, raising hand and asking questions is just it is rare.' [Row 5].

3.5.4 Qualitative observations and defining the research sites

Creswell (2009: 181) defines qualitative observations as those where '…the researcher takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site'. He also states the importance of identifying '…purposefully selected sites and individuals…that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question' (ibid: 178). Creswell mentions four aspects regarding purposefully selected sites and participants identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) as '…the setting (where the research will take place), the actors (observer and interviewee), the events (what the actors will be observed or interviewed doing) and the process (the evolving nature of events undertaken by the actors within the setting)' [emphasis by Creswell] (ibid: 178).

My observational focus (setting) took place within the academic environment of the lecture theatres and seminar rooms, observing the four key participant students (actors) and how they interacted with their peer groups and teachers during the lectures or seminars (process). I also noted how the teachers interacted with the class and whether they addressed the Thai students directly which added a further dimension and dynamic to the observation.

3.5.5   Witnessing behaviour and interactions

Creswell (2009: 178), citing Marshall & Rossman (2006), notes the importance of taking steps to gain entry to the setting and to secure permission to study the participants '.…by seeking the approval of gatekeepers, individuals at the research site that provide access to the site and permit the research to be done [emphasis by author].' With this in mind, I contacted and obtained the permission of the individual student and the teacher prior to each observational visit.

I observed the students for a total of 13 hours in different university Master's level classes taught by different teachers. I sat in each class from start to finish so I had a complete overview of the structure of the lesson and observed the students as they entered the rooms and selected their seats.   I decided not to video record or take photographs during the observed classes as it would have been too complicated and time-consuming to obtain individual consent from all those present and might have caused embarrassment to the attendees and disruption to the lessons.

My field notes and the seating plans made during each classroom observation provided a rich source of data, illustrating personal preferences with regard to where the Thai participants sat and with whom, the interaction of the Thai students with their peers and with the teacher.

I also observed how the teachers interacted with the Thai students and the diverse group of international and UK students in the class. Ideally, I would have liked to have spent more time observing lessons but this proved impossible due to their timetables, exam schedules and my work commitments. Plum's timetable enabled me to observe her in two classes on one day. Two of her lectures were 2 hours in length compared to Abe's Physics lectures which were of one-hour duration and were scattered throughout the week. I maximised the time I had with them by interviewing them after each class.

As a 'complete observer' where the '… researcher observes without participating' Creswell 2009: 179). I sat unobtrusively, usually at the back of the class (OB in the classroom seating plans: see Appendices 8a & 8b] and made field notes during the lesson noting the relationships and interactions of the Thai student with the teacher and multicultural peer group.

> **Excerpt of observational field notes: Law seminar [Plum] [08 /02/2012]**
> The lecturer poses several questions which are sub-divided and asks students S2 and S1 to answer them. But there is no reply. He then looks at other students in the group. S4, S5 & S6 give only one word answers. At this point the teacher is obviously annoyed by their lack of preparation and states that the answer is in the textbook. It is interesting that the lecturer keeps referring to specific examples in Nigeria and Thailand, but also the U.S., which makes the discussion more relevant to the international students in the group…. The Thai student makes notes but so far has made no response at all to any of the questions and keeps her head down, making no eye contact with either her fellow students or the lecturer.

3.5.6   Sharing experiences

I had observed that Plum (one of my key participants whom I will introduce a little later) was the only Asian student in the class; a fact she referred to when I interviewed her after the seminar. It was a significant point she wished to make which affected her positionality within the group as, unlike her peers, there was no one with whom she could share information in

L1. The fact that I had observed her situation and her reluctance to participate in class [mentioned in my field notes] was important to her and a key theme which developed during my research. Sharing her experience in the classroom situation provided a significant point of contact between us. By observing her in that setting I gained a deeper understanding of her situation.

A further benefit of the 'complete observer' approach was not only to gain first-hand experience of a situation but also to '…explore topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss'. (Creswell 2009: 179). In an interview which took place directly after a lesson I had observed, Plum describes how she felt and why she did not participate in class. It was clearly an important issue for her.   If I had not observed her lesson she may not have mentioned this problem and rich data might not have been identified.

3.5.7   Multi-dimensional data

I was aware that my interpretation of my classroom observations might be subjective in the light of my own background as a UK trained teacher which is why I constructed an observation schedule of each of the four key participants in two different lectures or seminars and followed up each class observation with a semi-structured face to face interview with the student immediately after each class. This schedule capitalised on the restricted time I could spend away from my office and maximised the face to face contact time with the interviewees, by focussing on a class which was fresh in our minds and which they felt confident in discussing.   Mason (2002), comments that 'observations are valuable in that not all knowledge is for example articulable, recountable or constructable in an interview. Such a position is based on the premise that these kinds of settings, situations and interactions 'reveal data' in multidimensional ways' (ibid: 85).   My 'naturalistic observations' defined

by McDonough and McDonough (1997: 114) as '…the understanding of natural settings and the representation of the meanings of the actors within that setting [of an] …everyday lesson with its usual participants in real time' (ibid: 114) combined with semi-structured interviews and data obtained from the questionnaires provided a platform to explore how the Thai students adapted to a multicultural UK university. Epistemologically, my interpretive/qualitative approach and mixed method data collection enabled me to gain a wider insight and knowledge into their experiences which added depth and perspective to my research.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.5.8   The perspective of the teacher

Although my research focuses on the cultural challenges experienced by Thai students and therefore from their perspective, I was also interested in obtaining background testimony from their teachers on their experiences of teaching Thai students in the multicultural setting of a UK university classroom. I was especially interested in whether or not their comments coincided with the views and opinions expressed by the Thai students. I felt the contribution of the teachers to this study was particularly relevant in providing an additional set of data to inform discussion and recommendations emerging from this study. I contacted them by email and telephone well in advance of the proposed visit and explained the nature of my research. I sent them full details of my research focus, methodology and a consent form [ref. Appendix 9] to observe their lessons and also to carry out recorded fact to face semi-structured interviews with them after the lesson. They were most cooperative and I greatly valued the time they gave in a very busy schedule and their interest in this research project. Table 3.3. provides a log of the face to face interviews with university lecturers.

Table 3.3:   Log of audio-recorded interviews with university lecturers: for background information

[Ethnicity/nationality was either provided by the teacher during the interview or an approximate descriptor was used to ensure anonymity. I am aware of its limitations*]

Date	Time	Interviewee Ref ID	Location	Nationality / Ethnicity*	Faculty	Notes
Jan 7 2012	19.00-20.00	L11	Conference	Thai	Medicine	Interviewed during a conference for Thai students
Jan 31 2012	13.00 - 13.30	L09	Reception area of university	Punjabi	Finance	Interview with Sid's lecturer. Large classes. Teaches several parallel groups
Feb 8 2012	13.30 - 14.00	L01	Lecture theatre of university	UK	Law	Interview with Plum's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Feb 9 2012	11.00 - 11.30	L02	Lecturer's office in university	Middle Eastern	Physics	Interview with Abe's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Feb 9 2013	15.00 - 15.30	L03	Lecture theatre of university	German	Finance	Interview with Sid's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Feb 14 2012	18.00 - 18.30	L04	Lecture theatre of university	German	Law	Interview with Plum's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Feb 17 2012	17.30 - 18.00	L05	Lecture theatre of university	Italian	Finance	Interview with Sid's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Feb 22 2012	13.00 - 13.30	L06	Lecturer's office in university	Portuguese	Physics	Interview with Abe's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Mar 9 2012	17.00 - 17.30	L07	Lecturer's office at university	North American	History	Interview with Wendy's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Mar 14 2012	11.00 - 11.30	L08	Lecturer's office at university	UK	History	Interview with Wendy's lecturer after teaching student (observed)
Apr 26 2012	17.00 - 18.00	L10	My office	German	Thai Studies	Interview with lecturer re Thai students in UK. Attended seminar at my place of work

I met with 11 university teachers using semi-structured interviews which might lead to a greater understanding of the cultural challenges Thai students might experience within the UK classroom environment. In the following excerpt of an interview transcript, in my original question I asked Sid's finance teacher to describe his experience of teaching Thai students. It is interesting to note in his response [Row 1] he broadens the perspective to include all 'Asian' students and explains the practical challenges of teaching large classes and his perception of how 'Asian' students interact in class.

Table 3.4:   Excerpt from interview transcript with Sid's lecturer (L05) [17/02/2012]

ROW	TIME [from start of interview]	TRANSCRIPT
1.	00:01:10	**Respondent**: So it's very hard for me to know people, on an individual basis. This is the sixth er class I'm running so it's virtually impossible for me to really know the the single individuals. I can just say that, in general, er Asians tend to be erm less pro-active during during the class. Er questions usually come from er er from non-Asians….
2.		Interviewer: I noticed that these girls, for example, came to you at the end [*of the lecture*]
3.	00:02:17	**Respondent:** Always. I was about to say that as well. Yeh, they always come at the end so it's really hard for them to to ask in front of others. Yeh. That's true.

The flexible format of the semi-structured interview enabled me to pursue the comment he made regarding the reluctance of 'Asian' students to respond in class [Row 1]. I was also able to refer to my field notes, made during the lesson, and elicit a comment from the teacher regarding a group of female students (whom he later identified as Chinese) I had observed. They waited until the end of the class, when the other students had left the room, to request him to clarify a point of information [Row 2].

Below is a summary of the instruments of data collection I employed in this research study:

Table 3.5: Summary of data sets

Data	Number	Detail
Audio-recorded interviews with students	17	With four key participants
Bilingual questionnaires sent to Master's students studying across UK	96	Sent to Master's students across UK
	63	Questionnaires completed and returned
Lesson observations [4 faculties]	9	Which preceded my interviews
Field notes & seating plans	9	Made during my lesson observations
Background audio-recorded interviews with teachers	11	9 lecturers interviewed after lesson observations. 1 Thai lecturer teaching in UK 1 UK lecturer teaching in Thailand

3.6   Limitations of instruments

 Interviews and questionnaires elicit opinions at a particular moment in time from the subject group based on their experiences and evaluations of certain criteria. They often rely on the subject's understanding of the question and emotional responses depending on their personal and educational experiences. They are, nevertheless, key research methods and tools to ascertain student responses, which are in themselves, valuable and relevant.

3.6.1   Threats to validity: Survey responses

Creswell (2009: 162) warns against 'threats to validity' and so at the design stage I took measures to minimise them. As he suggests, I identified potential threats to the internal validity of the study e.g. '…experiences of the participants that threaten the researcher's ability to draw correct inferences from the data about the population'. One potential threat I identified was the effect of 'mortality' i.e. participants 'dropping out' of the survey, so as

Creswell advises, I sent out a large number of questionnaires '…to account for dropouts' (ibid: 163).

Bryman (2008: 221) suggests a further way to improve the response rate is to include 'clear instructions and an attractive layout'. I therefore spent considerable time ensuring that the questions were relevant, interesting and visually appealing which I hoped would encourage more responses. I used mostly short, closed questions, as recommended by Bryman (2008: 221) '…since people are often deterred by the prospect of having to write a lot'. I also included open ended questions which provided opportunities for the respondents to express their views and opinions. As a further incentive to encourage responses, I had the questionnaires translated into L1 to avoid misinterpretation of the questions and I hoped this would encourage respondents less competent in the English language to complete the questionnaire.

Bryman (2008) recognises the threat to the validity of a study by low response rates so advises to 'follow up individuals' with 'possibly two or three further mailings' (ibid: 221). I sent out 93 questionnaires by email mid-way through Term 1 and followed up the first email with a second email after two weeks and finally a third email three weeks' later. The second and third reminders produced responses. I then emailed a similar number of questionnaires in Term 3. The response rate of 35% was disappointing compared to the higher response rate of 67% in Term 1. There could be several reasons for this, including the possibility that at the time the final questionnaire was sent out the students were focusing on completing their dissertations and then making preparations to return home.

Mangione (1995: 60-61) cited by Bryman (2008: 219) classifies response rates into bands: over 85% = excellent 70-85% = very good 60-69% = acceptable 50-59% = barely acceptable

below 50% = not acceptable.   Bryman, notes a warning about low response rates and the 'representativeness of the achieved sample'. He comments that a low response rate runs the risk of bias unless it can be proven that '…those who do not participate do not differ from those who do'. He also states that '…this is likely to be an issue only with randomly selected samples'.

My sample was not selected by means of '…a probability sampling method '. The 'sample' was pre-determined by the fact that they were all Thai scholarship students who were all studying for Master's degrees at UK universities at the same period of time. The selection was therefore not random and the focus of my study specifically related to this select group. I took note of Creswell's advice (2009: 162 & 165) 'to minimise the threats to 'external validity' and not fall into the trap of drawing '…incorrect inferences from the sample data to other persons, other settings and past or future situations [and to] …restrict claims about groups which cannot be generalised'. Bryman (2008: 220) concurs and states that in this situation of a non-randomly selected sample, the response rate '…is less of an issue because the sample would not be representative of a population even if everyone participated.'

Referring to Mangione's classification, Bryman adds encouragingly '…if you achieve a low response rate do not despair…a great deal of published research also achieves low response rates' (ibid: 220).   Bryman (2008: 220) advises that 'the key point is to recognise and acknowledge the implications of the possible limitations of a low response rate ...if however, your research is based on a convenience sample, ironically it could be argued that a low response rate is less significant' (ibid: 220). I felt that the measures I had taken in the design and distribution of the questionnaire addressed potential threats to the validity of this aspect of the research study. In addition, I was not relying entirely on this method of data collection.

3.6.2 Technology: Convenient but remote

My decision as a lone researcher to email the questionnaire worked well in that it was a quicker and cheaper method to administer to respondents and '…is especially advantageous if you have a sample that is geographically widely dispersed' (Bryman 2008: 217) compared to using the postal service or travelling throughout the UK to interview the students which would be slower, more expensive and impractical.

The questionnaire was sent electronically by means of one 'group bcc email' i.e. by collecting all the email addresses of the students from the office records, forming a group and sending it out simultaneously as blind carbon copy (so none of the student email addresses was visible to recipients) to all the 93 scholarship Master's students with a covering letter explaining the focus of the research and an invitation to participate. As a distribution-response method it was convenient for me and for the respondents because they either owned their own laptops or had access to computers at their universities.

3.6.3 Disadvantages of electronic distribution

One of the disadvantages of this electronic distribution method was that it was remote and impersonal. I did not have a rapport with the respondents which I would have done if they were responding to the questionnaire in front of me. Another disadvantage of emailing the questionnaires, which I only discovered during the research process itself, was incompatibility between different types of computer and the emailed document. The formatting of the questionnaire, which was designed in Microsoft Word, was not, for example, compatible with some of the respondents' computers which used different software programmes. This caused a problem when I received a completed questionnaire which could

not be deciphered on my computer as either I was unable to open their attachment or the formatting had changed which made it difficult to work out which answer matched which question.

Some students were very helpful and resent the questionnaires in various formats but it resulted in several 'spoiled' or wasted responses. This was a problem which I did not foresee in the planning stage and which I am raising as an important aspect to trial in the pilot stage for future research. Some email addresses were incorrect, so several questionnaires were undelivered and some students did not reply, possibly ignoring an email which they may have identified as spam or they just did not wish to participate.

I felt that on balance, the advantages of email distribution outweighed the disadvantages and provided an excellent opportunity to reach a much wider cohort of students. Despite the frustrations there was the satisfaction of receiving almost immediate responses from some students.

3.6.4   Advantages of audio recording

With the consent of participants, I decided to audio-record the interviews to provide an accurate record and to facilitate future analysis. I was interested not just in 'what people say but also in the way that they say it.' Bryman (2008: 451) (emphasis by author). My recordings captured not only the content of the responses but also the tone of voice providing an accurate recollection of exact phrases, inflection, emphasis and intonation. The key focus of this part of the research, was, as Robson (2002: 274) counsels '…listen more than you speak.'

The advice of specialist suppliers was sought to obtain the latest digital technology and compatible transcription software.   I upgraded my old cassette tape recorder to a light and compact Philips Digital Pocket Memo LFH 9600 recorder which I felt would be unobtrusive yet produce good quality recordings. I also invested in a boundary microphone which was invaluable during group discussions.   This ensured high quality recordings, security of storage by encrypting digital files on a personal computer and future-proofing the recordings. The recordings were saved and archived as audio digital files in .dss format using SpeechExec Pro Dictate software into a secure folder within my personal home computer. The digital recording ensured security and confidentiality as the voice files could be encrypted and password protected to prevent unauthorised access.   Bryman (2008: 453) suggests '…to allow five to six hours for transcription for every hour of speech' so at the outset I knew that with the commitment of a full-time job I would be unable to spend the time transcribing the many interviews I intended to carry out.   I therefore employed a transcriber who lived locally. I provided compatible equipment to ensure efficient and successful transfer of data. Digital files were sent via email to the transcriber who was aware of the confidentiality of the study and was only supplied with ID codes for the interviewees. This system proved successful and convenient for both of us. Although the quality of the recordings was, on the whole, good, it must be said that the transcriber found the Thai accents of some of the interviewees as well as some technical terms and the occasional inclusion of Thai words challenging.   I therefore spent many weeks listening to all the voice files, checking and amending the transcriptions for accuracy.   It was a very useful exercise as I re-lived each interview and made detailed annotations based on my responses and my general observations.

3.6.5   Observational biases

Mason (2002: 85) explains that from an ontological perspective collecting data though observations '…emphasises interactions, actions and behaviours and the way people interpret their actions [and] from an epistemological position … knowledge or evidence of the social world can be generated by observing, or participating in, or experiencing 'natural' or 'real-life' settings, interactive situations'.   I was particularly interested in the reality experienced by the Thai students as they positioned themselves within the multicultural environment of a UK university classroom.   However, Robson (2002:322) warns of the dangers of 'observational biases' and so I was also conscious of my own positioning and perspective as a UK trained teacher.   Mason (2002: 5) advocates reflexivity as a means of '…thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see'. Robson (2002: 324) provides the following salient and helpful advice; '…start with an open mind – and keep it open' and '…write up field notes into a narrative account promptly'.   My observations of the Thai students enabled me to witness their behaviour and interactions within the multicultural classroom setting of a UK university. Making meaning from the interaction from various perspectives was essential and, in particular, how the Thai students perceived and interpreted their experiences and relationships with their multicultural peers and teachers.

3.7   Triangulation & rigour of the study

Bryman (2008:700) defines triangulation as '…the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings can be cross-checked'.   This

view is supported by Robson (2002) who defines triangulation as '…a valuable and widely used strategy [which] …involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research [and which] can help to counter all of the threats of validity' (Robson 2002: 174-175). Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were employed in this study to potentially strengthen the rigour and validity of the study. Yin (2009) explains that the most important advantage of triangulation and corroboration of data '…is the development of converging lines of inquiry' and any finding or conclusion '…is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information' (Yin 2009: 116). By using multiple methods, I could identify and confirm emerging themes from the various data sets. Robson (2002) also notes that triangulation can reduce the threat of researcher and respondent bias. However, he warns that '…there can be greater researcher bias with prolonged involvement. A positive or negative bias may build up' (ibid: 174). Denzin (1988) cited by Robson (2002: 174) identifies four types of triangulation strategies:

- Data triangulation
- Observer triangulation
- Methodological triangulation
- Theory triangulation

Researchers in favour of mixed methods felt that this approach would be 'self-regulating' in that '…biases inherent in any single method could neutralize …the biases of other methods.' (Creswell, 2009: 14) My investigation into Thai student experiences would take place over a period of one year. I felt that concurrent mixed methods of collecting qualitative and quantitative data by means of various techniques would address the importance of triangulation. Campbell and Fisk (1959) cited by Creswell (2009: 204) first used a 'multi-

method matrix to examine multiple approaches to data collection'. The concept of mixing qualitative methods e.g. interviews and observations with quantitative methods e.g. questionnaires enabled me to obtain the broad brush strokes of the larger student population and provided an opportunity to fine focus on detailed exploration of a smaller group of individuals. My mixed method study utilised four main sources of data: interviews, questionnaires, observations, and documents as illustrated in the following table which I based on Denzin's four triangulation strategies (Robson 2002: 174).

Table 3.6:   Based on Denzin's (1988) four triangulation strategies

Strategy	Interviews	Surveys	Observations	Documents
Data Triangulation				
More than 1 method of data collection	Face to face interviews with students. teachers & others	Written survey of students at different universities across UK	Observation of individual students in lectures	Investigation into the studies and findings of other researchers
Observer Triangulation				
More than one observer in the study (peer group support & participation)	Contribution & participation of colleagues & students		Contributions of students and their teachers	Observations and conclusions of other researchers and contributions from participants in the study
Methodological Triangulation				
Combining qualitative & quantitative approaches	Qualitative	Qualitative & quantitative	Qualitative	Qualitative & quantitative

Theory Triangulation				
Using multiple theories or perspectives	Design of interview & framework of semi-structured questions to provide variety in approach and presentation	Design of questionnaire to provide variety of format to appeal to participants in the study	Comparing interaction in class and responses to UK teaching and learning styles	Research & inclusion of key educational theories and methodologies. Comparative pedagogy and influence of Thai culture. Perspectives of students and of their teachers

Silverman (2010: 134) warns about the use of mixed methods in that the data produced may be 'under-analysed' and may 'complicate the picture' and that 'often the best research says a lot about a little'. I considered it would be the most effective implementation strategy in maximising the time available and yielding the most valuable, diverse set of data in what is a complex phenomenon.

It was however, imperative that I carefully dissected the data to identify, isolate and analyse in depth common key threads which transected the overall fabric of the research Interview transcripts were analysed and coded according to emerging themes and cross-referenced with data obtained from the questionnaire responses, field notes and lesson observations. This was a lengthy process but rewarding as broad themes were refined and connections were identified as they emerged from the collected data. I explain the analytical protocol of coding in the following chapter.

3.8 Limitations of the study

Simons (2009: 29) advises that when defining boundaries fine focus on the participants of the research, the physical location and time scale. I was working full-time so I needed to heed the advice of Simons and carefully define the boundary of the research study to obtain rich data with the most efficient use of time and resources.

The large number of Master's scholarship students and their widespread geographical dispersal made it logistically impossible for me to meet with all the students. I therefore divided the cohort into two unequal sized groups. Group one comprised the sixty-three Thai post-graduate scholarship students studying Master's degree courses at universities throughout the UK. To obtain the testimony of these students, who were studying a range of different subjects, I emailed them an in-depth bilingual questionnaire (which I shall describe later). Their responses provided breadth and scope to the study.

The second group comprised four students who I shall collectively describe as the key participants (whom I shall introduce later), studying different subjects at three universities situated relatively near my office. Their convenient location enabled me to meet the students in the familiar environment of their universities where I conducted individual semi-structured recorded interviews, observed them in lessons and made field notes. By finely focusing on the in-depth, personal testimony of this small group over the academic year I obtained valuable testimony which revealed their personal views, problems, frustrations and challenges as the academic year progressed.

Kanno's (2003) in-depth research into Japanese student sojourners in North America also focussed on four key participants. However, unlike Kanno's 'longitudinal study… which

followed the same bilingual students …over a long period of time' (ibid vi), my research extended over one academic year. I am therefore aware that a criticism could be made that there were only four key participants in my study. This was due entirely to practical limitations and constraints of my particular circumstances. However, I noted Simons (2009: 34) timely advice '…where the study is small you can interview all the key actors in the case…from which you are likely to learn most about the issue in question'. The four key participants provided valuable information with which to compare and contrast the evidence received from the larger group of students in response to the questionnaire.

An additional factor to note is that all the students involved in this study, whether key participants or questionnaire respondents, were Thai students who had been awarded scholarships from Thailand and who were studying Master's degrees at UK universities during the academic year 2011-2012. All had achieved the appropriate IELTS levels which were required by the UKVI for HE studies from 2009. While it could be said that results from this study cannot be generalised across all Thai students studying at universities in the UK, this study clearly defines its objective and specifically focuses on a particular group of students: i.e. Thai scholarship students who are academically gifted and have obtained the requisite level in the IELTS English language test. I believe, therefore, that the testimony of the four key participants together with the responses of the 63 questionnaire respondents does provide a credible representation of the views and opinions of Thai scholarship post-graduate students studying in the UK during that academic year.

Although this research study focuses on the Thai student perspective, I also interviewed university teachers who contributed additional but purely secondary data to this investigation.

Their views and opinions in relation to teaching Thai students provided rich background information which was both interesting and enlightening.

As a UK-trained teacher, I was aware that my professional background might influence my classroom observations and field notes. I was also aware that my presence in the classroom might influence the behaviour of the students. I was therefore careful to obtain the cooperation of the students and permission of the teachers in advance. Prior to each lesson observation, I contacted the teacher, explained the focus of my research study and emailed them a consent form. In consultation with the teachers I agreed not to take photographs or record the lessons and to sit unobtrusively at the back of the room. This was another 'foreshadowed' aspect to the research which was recognised early in the design process.

3.9 Ethics: Consent, confidentiality and security

I met a group of 18 Thai post-graduate Master's scholarship students at my work place who were attending a seminar shortly after they arrived in the UK in 2011. I explained the aim of my research and my role in the organisation. I felt it was important at this initial stage to assure them of confidentiality and to reassure them that I worked in a separate area unconnected to the scholarship section. I described my background as a UK teacher, my previous roles within the state and independent sectors and how I came to be employed by the organisation. We chatted informally about their life in Thailand, their initial impressions of the UK and settling at UK universities. I explained what had prompted me to conduct the research study.

It was also important for me to reassure the students that if they decided to volunteer as participants in the study, that their identities were safeguarded and they understood the nature

of the study and how the data would be used. Each student was therefore given a document printed in Thai and English describing in more detail the aims and objectives of the research. No pressure was placed on individuals to participate. A consent form (approved by the University of Birmingham ethics committee) detailed clearly in Thai and in English the aims and objectives of the research. The methodology detailed in the form changed slightly e.g. the Facebook discussion did not take place due to insufficient time.

The students were asked for their specific signed consent for each method of data collection. It became clear which students wished to be involved at each level of the study and the key participants were identified.

It was important that the participants in the study felt able to provide honest feedback about their experiences during their one-year degree course. The information they provided was collated and summarized and not attributed to individuals. The names of students used in this study are therefore fictitious but other information is accurate. Bell (2005: 49) citing Sapsford and Abbott (1996: 318-319) makes the distinction that '…confidentiality is a promise that you will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondent'. The completed questionnaires, documents and recorded interviews were secured in a locked cupboard and not disseminated. If students did not wish to participate under these conditions, they were not compelled to do so and could withdraw from the study at any point.

3.10 Analytical protocol

In this section I detail the methodology I employed in order to identify and trace thematic strands which emerged from the mass of data obtained from transcripts of interviews and questionnaire responses. Qualitative and quantitative data were reviewed, analysed and compared to identify themes and trends which gradually built up to form a multifaceted picture evidencing the challenges faced by Thai students studying in the UK. Cresswell (2009:186) explains the process of coding as '… taking text, data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences…or images into categories and labelling those categories with a term … often based in the actual language of the participant (called **an in vivo** term)' [Emphasis by author].

Using this coding concept, themes were identified in the interview transcripts, tagged and colour coded and comparisons made with the results, theories and models of other research studies.

I debated whether to use Nvivo software. Although I recognise that it is a most helpful analytical software programme, especially in identifying broad themes within large amounts of data, in the end I decided not to use it for this study. Instead I spent a considerable amount of time comparing, identifying and tracing threads across transcripts and questionnaire responses to ensure that less obvious themes and information were not overlooked. I analysed the transcripts of interviews according to the following protocol:

3.10.1 Format of interview transcriptions

It was important to standardise the format of the transcription which would make it easier to analyse.

A transcript template was agreed with the transcriber in advance to include:

- Row numbering (for reference)

- Timing (from audio digital file) for reference

- Data (text of interview)

- Date of the interview

- Code of interviewee (see below)

Each transcript included the following standardised information:
- Duration of the interview (hr: min: sec)

- Header included wording 'confidential'

- Each line of text was numbered for ease of reference

- Time was noted during the transcript for reference

- Font =Times New Roman 12

Codes were devised to identify recordings and participants:

Code	Denoting
I	Interview
S	Student
L	Lecturer
01	Participant ID number
a	First interview
T	Transcript

- e.g.: **TIS01a** = Transcript of the first interview with student 01 (pseudonym 'Abe')

The transcriptions were cross-checked with the audio files for accuracy. A template was constructed consisting of 5 columns to enable a comprehensive analysis of transcripts and allocation of thematic codes and comments (see below). Line numbers were condensed to row numbers which reduced the risk of error (with high numerical line numbering) especially in longer interviews.

Three broad 'a priori' categories were identified, colour coded and listed:

- Challenges (A) ==green==
- English language (B) ==blue==
- Academic (C) ==yellow==

Transcripts were read and the content interpreted and classified by highlighting the text in the relevant colour of the 'a priori' broad category. The transcripts were then re-read and this time I generated final superscript codes (e.g. [A1]) to further analyse the broader themes to provide enhanced depth and perspective. I also annotated the transcripts with my own comments, reflections and observations to provide a further dimension to the analysis [ref. Appendix 10]

Table 3.7:   Example of transcript with initial and final coding
File: ISO3b. 17022012

Row	Time	Interview Transcript [text]	Initial 'a priori' Code	Final Code	Comment
1.	00:00:00	**Interviewer:** Do you find it difficult to ask questions? [C3]	C (academic)	C3 Learning	**Obs:** [O5] I noticed in my lesson observations that Sid always sat with a group of Thai / Asian friends and although Sid would speak to them during class he never asked a question or responded to the teacher.
2.	00:02:02	**Respondent:** Actually I haven't **I've never wanted to ask any questions in class before** because erm I normally tend to ask my friends [C3.]	C (academic)	C3 Learning	Asking questions …. Ask friends

A code book was compiled and used to record and define each code and colour to ensure consistency of the analysis. Refinements and modifications were made to the initial codes

throughout the analysis process which were recorded in the code book. The complete Code Book appears in Appendix 11.

Table 3.8:   Example of Code Book: Category (C) Academic

Theme	Academic (C)	Final code
Background	Thai schooling (academic background)	C1
Teaching	UK v Thailand (class sizes, pedagogy)	C2
Learning	UK v Thailand (student attitudes /behaviour) study skills	C3
Progression	Future plans after UK Master's course	C4
Preparation	Academic preparation before UK Master's course	C5
Thai Culture	Thai culture of Krengjai (respect e.g. for teachers)	C6
Facilities	e.g. University library etc	C7

Word count analysis within individual transcripts and across all transcripts identified frequently occurring words and provided a lexicon from which additional themes were identified thereby minimising the risk of overlooking relevant information. Triangulation of data analysis methodology (i.e. manually coding and using word count) addressed the possibility of 'a priori' themes taking precedence and so prevented unconscious bias. Focused coding was then employed to either subsume initial codes into broader themes or relocate them to other categories according to their relevance and context. On reflection, rather than code the first interviews of all the participants, then progress to the second etc., I decided to code the interviews of each participant sequentially e.g. Student 01 transcript 01, 02, 03 etc. By focussing on the interviews of the one participant, I would be more likely to identify developing themes over time and detect fine alterations in views or opinions of the individual which might occur throughout the course. I would also more readily recognise any challenges or stressors which might emerge during the one-year course as the work became more demanding and final examinations approached.

3.10.2 Analysis of questionnaires

For ease of analysis, the questionnaire was divided into the following broad key themes which emerged from issues which had been raised by Thai students in conversation with my colleagues:

- Level of English
- Teaching Style in UK
- Academic Learning in UK
- Adaptation to Academic Environment
- Academic Course
- Academic Experience
- Sources of Stress
- Academic Pressure
- Confidence

Qualitative data in response to open-ended questions was analysed using the same coding protocol used to analyse the interview transcripts.

The identities of the students were protected by using ID codes e.g. M6. The four key participants are identified using their pseudonyms e.g. Wendy.

Below is an excerpt of responses to the open-ended question on the theme: Sources of Stress.

Comments from Master's Students in response to open-ended questions in Term 1

Q 86. What is your biggest worry /concern?

I have no idea how to write academically. (M13)

Challenges (A) green
English language (B) blue
Academic (C) yellow

- My English skills (M4)

- English language competency (M6)

- Discussion or speaking presentation (M9)

- Grades and inability to meet the expectation of the scholarship sponsor and the organisation I will work with in the future. (M27)

- My academic English (M94 **Wendy**)

- Sponsor expectations. To understand the legal terms in legal text books, case law and journals. (M33 **Plum**)

- Not completing the course. **(M48 Sid)**

Quantitative data was analysed and presented using MS Excel spreadsheets, graphs and frequency tables. As Robson (2002: 403) comments '…bar charts, histograms and pie charts are probably preferable ways of summarising data …they are more quickly and easily understood by a variety of audiences'.

The example below illustrates how data on one theme (confidence in language skills) was presented in a comparative bar chart.

Figure 3.1: Questionnaire responses (n=63) Term 1:

Confidence in English   language skills
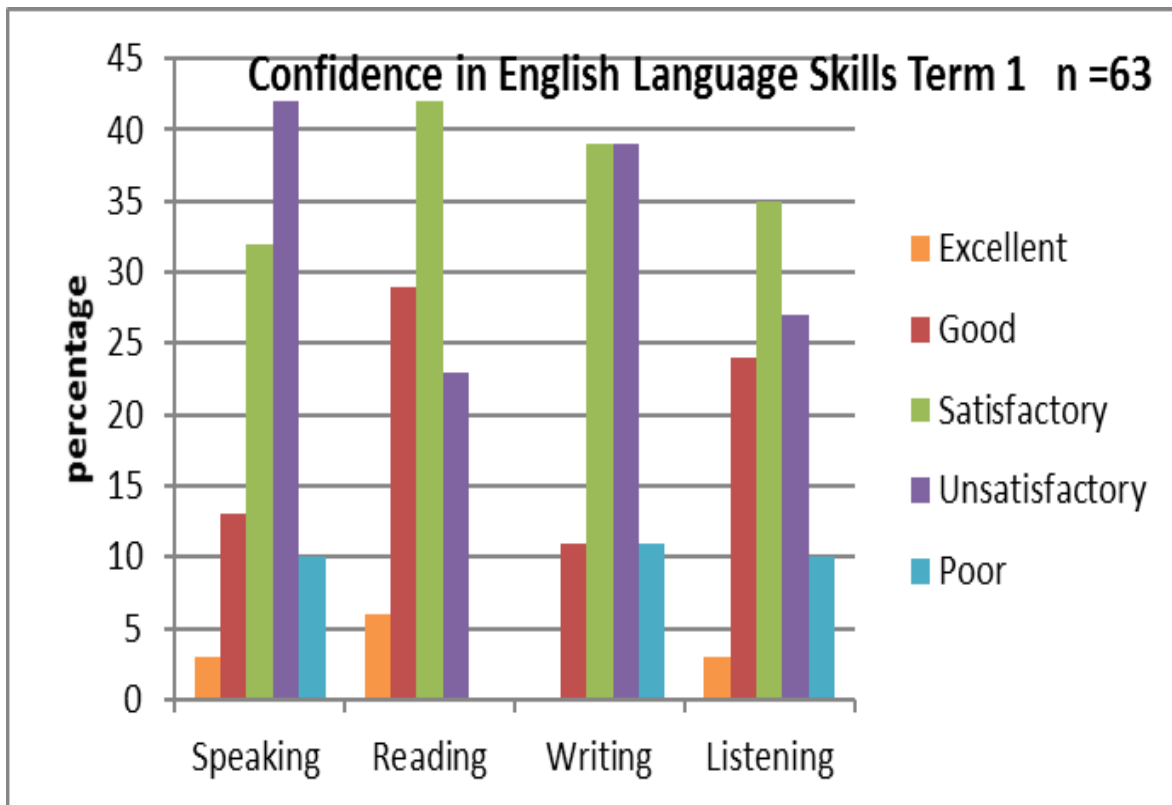
Questionnaire response data was also presented in the form of frequency tables which Bryman (2008:694) defines as 'a table that displays the number and /or percentage of units (e.g. of people) in different categories of a variable'.

Two examples are shown below in response to writing assignments in English (n=63).

Table 3.9: Frequency tables showing responses to Q1 and Q31of questionnaire

Q1 HAVE YOU HAD DIFFICULTY WITH USE OF ENGLISH IN ASSIGNMENTS?

ALL THE TIME	4	6%
OFTEN	26	41%
OCCASIONALLY	23	37%
ONCE OR TWICE	6	10%
NEVER	4	6%
TOTAL	63	100%

Q34 I FIND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS EASY

STRONGLY AGREE	0	0%
AGREE	3	5%
UNDECIDED	18	29%
DISAGREE	31	49%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	11	17%
TOTAL	63	100%

I summarised my analysis of the questionnaire responses by cross-referencing to my classroom observations and interviews with the four key participants and their teachers. Triangulation of data enabled me to check for any anomalies or contradictions across the data sets.   The example below focuses on the theme 'Level of English' and in particular English language skills. It also illustrates the use of triangulation across **data sets**:

<u>Excerpt from Thematic Analysis of Questionnaires (n=63)</u>
Theme 1: Level of English: Language skills:

While it would be inappropriate to generalise, information gathered from **interviews** and **questionnaire** responses, indicate that some students are very concerned about their competency in English and how it affects their understanding of lessons, their social interaction with other students and the length of time it takes them to complete assignments. It also seems to affect their level of self-confidence which manifested itself in a reluctance to participate in class discussions which I witnessed in my **lesson observations**.

3.11 Introducing the key participants

Four students (2 male and 2 female aged 23-25) responded most positively to the focus of my research and expressed a desire to be involved at a deeper level on a voluntary basis. The four students (pseudonyms used) Abe, Plum, Sid and Wendy were studying different subjects at three UK universities near my office. I explained the research study in more detail and how they would be involved. They agreed to participate fully in the study, permitting me to interview them and their teachers throughout the academic year and to observe some of their lectures.

We worked out a schedule of lesson observations and they provided me with the names and contact details of their university teachers so I could obtain permission to observe their lessons and interview them afterwards. The four Thai volunteers were temporary sojourners in the UK; similar in some respects to the 'kikokushijo' referred to by Kanno (2003) in her narrative inquiry on four students from Japan attending school in North America for a fixed time scale and then returning home.

As Kanno (2003:9) states, citing Polkinghorne (1995: 18) each is a '…distinctive individual in a unique situation, dealing with issues in a personal manner'. As in Kanno's (2003) study, each of my four Thai students had unique life experiences which helped shape how they dealt with the cross-cultural challenges of living and learning at post-graduate level in a 'Western' University.

They became central players in this research study so let me introduce them:

Table 3.10: Key participants: Information at the start of the Master's course

Pseudonym	Abe	Plum	Sid	Wendy
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age	23	25	25	24
Faculty in UK	Physics	Law	Finance	History
IELTS	6.5	7.0	8.0	7.0
Self-reporting: weakest Eng. lang. skill	Writing	Writing	Writing	Speaking
Self-reporting: Well prepared for UK course?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Future plans	PhD in UK	Employment in Thailand	Employment in Thailand	PhD in UK

3.11.1 Abe

What can I say about Abe? He was quite a character! He was brought up by his grandparents in northern Thailand after the death of his parents when he was a young boy. It was expected that Abe would enter the family firm so it was quite a shock to his grandfather when he excelled academically. Abe progressed to university in Northern Thailand for his undergraduate degree and then to a prestigious university in Bangkok where he studied not only physics but also several other subjects for general interest. Abe was the youngest of the four key participants and quite brilliant academically. He had the natural flair and individualism of the 'boffin' scientist who was literally focused on another world. His UK

Master's course concentrated on relativity and the possibility of time travel which he absolutely loved and could not understand why others were not similarly entranced with it. Abe was quiet and preferred not to socialise. He possessed a naivety and innocence which was totally unselfconscious. He spent his spare time conversing with others on Facebook in Thai and in English and posting pictures of his favourite cartoon characters and photographs of various gastronomic Thai delicacies. He shared a flat with an Italian student with whom he conversed in English primarily about food and was thrilled when he was taught how to make genuine spaghetti Bolognese. He started to 'pick up' some Italian vocabulary which he would occasionally 'try out' on me like saying "ciao" as he was leaving and then he would bow and 'wai' just in case I thought such familiarity was disrespectful.

Abe had an infectious sense of humour. When I listen to our recorded conversations they are interspersed with frequent laughter. He had a way of expressing himself so that you understood what he meant. His vocabulary was limited at the start of the academic year and linguistically he was the weakest of the four students but as time progressed he became more confident and the standard of his spoken English improved.

I was particularly grateful to Abe for so kindly volunteering to participate in the study. It must have taken great courage to talk in-depth to a UK researcher in a second language. I greatly valued his contribution and commitment to my research. Abe was successful in his Master's degree and I still keep in touch with him as he continues studying in the UK focusing on PhD research into his beloved physics.

3.11.2   Plum

If Abe was quiet and retiring then Plum was the polar opposite. She enjoyed the company of others and was ready to join other students socially. She was a bubbly, warm, effervescent individual who was always smiling and joking. She had an infectious deep throated laugh which made everyone near her smile. At 25 she was the joint oldest of the four key participants.   Plum's conversational English was very confident if not accurate. She spoke with an interesting soft accent which could be described as a mixture of US and UK. She spoke rapidly and energetically once she warmed to a topic about which she felt strongly. At other times she would gaze into the distance reliving experiences she was describing in a slow, measured, almost dream-like voice.

Of the four key participants, Plum was by far the most confident socially. She was at ease dining in UK restaurants and had no problem in holding a conversation on any topic. Her vocabulary was varied and modern often interspersed with modified expletives e.g. 'freaking' when she became excited or a topic was causing her particular anxiety. Like Abe, Plum was originally from the northern part of Thailand. Her parents were both professionals and the family moved to the bustling, cosmopolitan city of Bangkok when she was young

Unlike Abe, Plum travelled extensively during her younger years. Her parents recognised and fostered her interest in languages and so for three months she studied Chinese in China. Plum also spent several months experiencing life in the U.S. Plum returned to Thailand where she studied for a degree in Business Law at a prestigious university in Bangkok. After her studies, she was employed by a company in Bangkok which sponsored her UK Master's scholarship in Law.   She returned to Thailand to re-join her company after the successful completion of her studies in UK.

Of the four key participants, Plum was the one who regularly emailed me and kept in touch the most frequently during the academic year and when she returned to Thailand. She sent details of how she was settling back into Thai life and to the same work place she left the year before. I was touched when she invited me to her graduation ceremony which was attended by her family and her boyfriend, a student of Chinese origin whom she met in the UK.

3.11.3 Sid

Quiet, thoughtful and focused are adjectives which probably best describe Sid. As I listened to his voice and reviewed transcripts of our interviews I was impressed by how precisely he answered my questions and how he would request clarification as to what exactly I was referring before framing his responses. His answers were therefore concise with no time wasted on descriptions, opinions or details he felt were unnecessary. Remembering the advice of Robson (2002: 274) 'listen more than you speak' I wished at times that it were possible, as on reviewing the transcript of our interviews my words are often the most predominant, trying to tease out a particular point or more detailed response.

Sid's English was technically the best of the key participants in its grammatical accuracy and range of vocabulary. Although he did not expand on the points he was making without considerable encouragement by me, he thought carefully before responding in a measured and composed manner. I think he found it difficult to speak at length on a topic, preferring short concise sentences. Sid lived in Bangkok with his parents whom he described as 'white collar workers'. Like Plum he had experience of life in a major world city and was sophisticated socially. He had studied at a prestigious university in Bangkok. His undergraduate degree was in engineering but he changed direction for his first Master's

degree and studied International Economics and Finance where he felt there were more career opportunities. His Master's course in UK was also in Finance. Sid was passionate about football and was the only member of the group of key participants who participated in any regular sport during his year in UK. Sid's career pathway was to return to Thailand after his Master's course and work at a government ministry. He was not sure about the exact nature of the work in which he would be involved, so instead of opting to write a dissertation on a particular aspect of Finance, Sid decided to study two additional course modules (electives) and sit the accompanying examinations. Sid has not kept in touch since he left the UK.

3.11.4   Wendy

A year older than Abe and a year younger than Sid and Plum, Wendy's positionality was that of the 'Wednesday child' i.e. in the middle. While the other 3 students stated that they found writing the most challenging English language skill to master, Wendy found speaking a problem. This was her first experience of being taught in English and she found it very difficult. She had graduated from a prestigious university in Bangkok majoring in History. Whereas the other 3 students had previous experience of studying at Master's level, Wendy had progressed from her undergraduate degree in Thailand direct to a History Master's degree in the UK. She had the dual challenge of the academic rigours of post-graduate study and learning through a second language.

Even though Wendy found it challenging to speak in English and lacked confidence, especially when we first met, I found her eager to converse and explain her situation. She spoke at length about her family with whom she was very close. Her elderly parents were fruit growers in the central, agricultural region of Thailand. They owned several well-established orchards, harvesting various fruits including mango and durian. Disaster struck

in 2011 when vast areas of Thailand were flooded causing widespread damage. The orchards which the family had planted over 40 years previously were completely destroyed and the family home was flooded.

Her parents were not university educated and were not computer-literate but they read widely and encouraged Wendy in her love of History. Wendy did not have a social life at university in the UK as she spent all her time studying. It took her a long time to complete the reading tasks and assignments set by her lecturers. She did not accept my invitations to meet up with the other three key participants for any of our evening meals together during the year or participate in our group discussions but preferred our one to one sessions when I believe she could relax and be herself. My final interviews with the other three students took place in August 2012 but it was not until early November that I managed to meet Wendy. She successfully completed her Master's degree and has embarked on a PhD at the same UK university, researching her favourite subject, History.

3.12   Chapter summary

This chapter continues the narrative of this research study. It builds on the work of others, reviewed in the previous chapter and takes note of the advice of experienced researchers into the choice of appropriate data-gathering instruments for this ethnographically-oriented study over the period of one academic year. The chapter describes how the study was designed and conducted to ensure a robust, in-depth qualitative investigation and details the step-by step process of ensuring that appropriate methods were employed which were valid, reliable and ethical. As a UK researcher, I felt a particular responsibility to ensure that the data faithfully and impartially presented the authentic voices of the Thai participants which is why I recorded all my semi-structured interviews. To ensure that the participants understood

every aspect of the study, key documents including consent forms and questionnaires were presented in bilingual format (English and Thai).

As a lone researcher, who was working full-time, I found the advice of Simons (2009) particularly valuable in identifying, at the planning stage, the limitations and constraints of my particular situation, to recognise these boundaries and to design a study which would provide rich and valuable data.

Employing a combination of in-depth interviews and classroom observations with the key participants and disseminating a detailed bilingual questionnaire to a much larger student group across the UK, provided rich testimony into the cultural challenges, experiences and perceptions of the cohort of Thai scholarship Master's students over a time scale of one academic year. The secondary, background information supplied by the university teachers who taught Thai students provided a different perspective and an additional layer which enhanced the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS:
CHALLENGES OF THE CLASSROOM

'He spoke so fast it's like "oh what you talking about! I just can't keep up with you!"'
Plum [Reflections Interview Term 3]

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
while studying in the UK?

4.1.   Introduction

This chapter focuses on the testimony of ethnic minority Thai students regarding the challenges they face within the pressurised, fast-paced, academic culture of a UK university classroom.   I draw on data collected from 63 Thai Master's students, studying a range of subjects at universities across the UK, who responded to a bilingual questionnaire. I also include testimony obtained by means of recorded semi-structured interviews with the four key participants [Abe, Plum, Sid and Wendy] who were studying different subjects at three UK universities and my own field notes taken as I observed the interactions of the four students within their individual classroom environments. In addition, I also include in the chapter, for purely background information and where it is particularly appropriate, the testimony of teachers with whom I also carried out recorded semi-structured interviews. I believe their views provide valuable context which both supports but in some cases contrasts with the views of the students and my own observations.

4.2.   Challenges to linguistic confidence

This section presents the testimony of linguistic minority Thai students as they negotiate their identities in the linguistically diverse classroom culture of UK universities. Despite the Thai scholarship students in this study achieving the enhanced IELTS grades required by UKVI (2009) for entry to UK post-graduate courses, the Thai students reveal through face to face

interviews and responses to a bilingual questionnaire the linguistic difficulties they face and the anxiety they experience within the pressurised teaching and learning environment of a UK university classroom.

I include some examples of responses to the questionnaire which focus on how the students view their level of English language and their ability to cope with the demands of a one-year UK Master's course.

Q 72: How stressful do you find your level of English?

Figure 4.1 Responses to Q 72
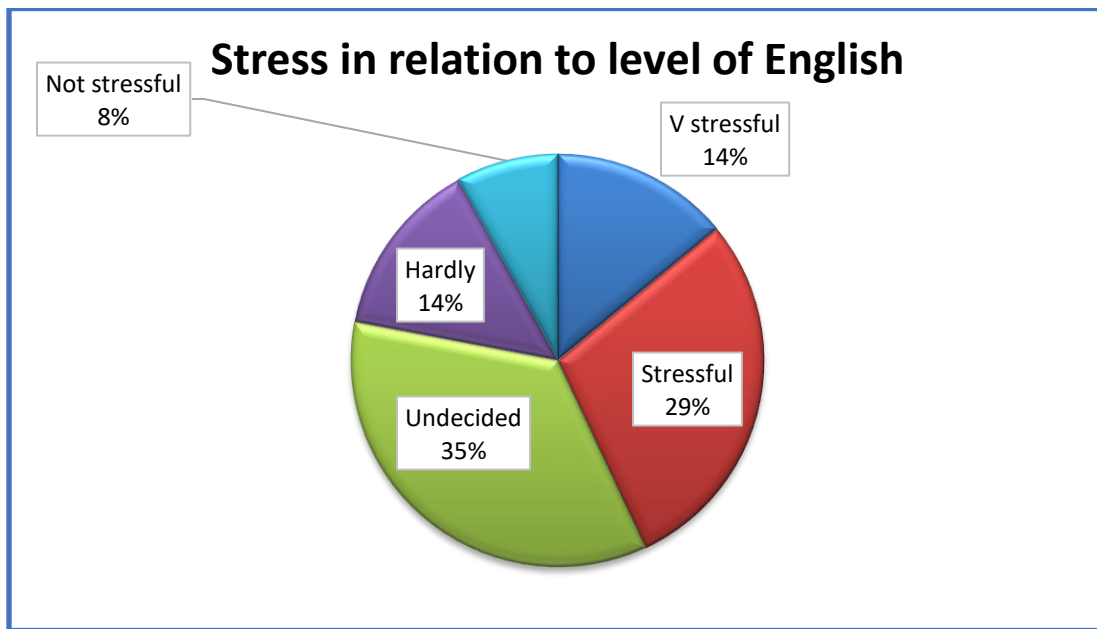
The questionnaire responses in Term 1 indicate that English language competency is a cause of stress. This is a surprising outcome from this academically able group who had achieved the increased IELTS entry requirements for their various Master's courses. Only 8% of respondents reported that their level of English was not a source of stress.

Fine-focussing on the four language skills of speaking, reading, writing and listening also produced interesting and revealing responses:

Q85a: How confident do you feel about the standard of your English language skills?

Table 4.1: Responses to Q.85a (%)

Skill	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Total
Speaking	3	13	32	42	10	100
Reading	6	29	42	23	0	100
Writing	0	11	39	39	11	100
Listening	3	24	36	27	10	100

Of the 63 students who responded to the questionnaire, 52% and 50% respectively identified speaking and writing skills as being unsatisfactory or poor.   Listening skill was rated higher, with only 37% scoring it unsatisfactory or poor.

However, this finding does not support the comments made in later sections of this chapter which address challenges students reported in understanding spoken English when delivered quickly or with an unfamiliar accent.

Q85b: How confident do you feel about the standard of your academic English?

Figure 4.2: Responses to Q. 85b

Academic English: Confidence Level

Poor 7%
Excellent 0%
Good 15%
Satisfactory 44%
Unsatisfactory 34%
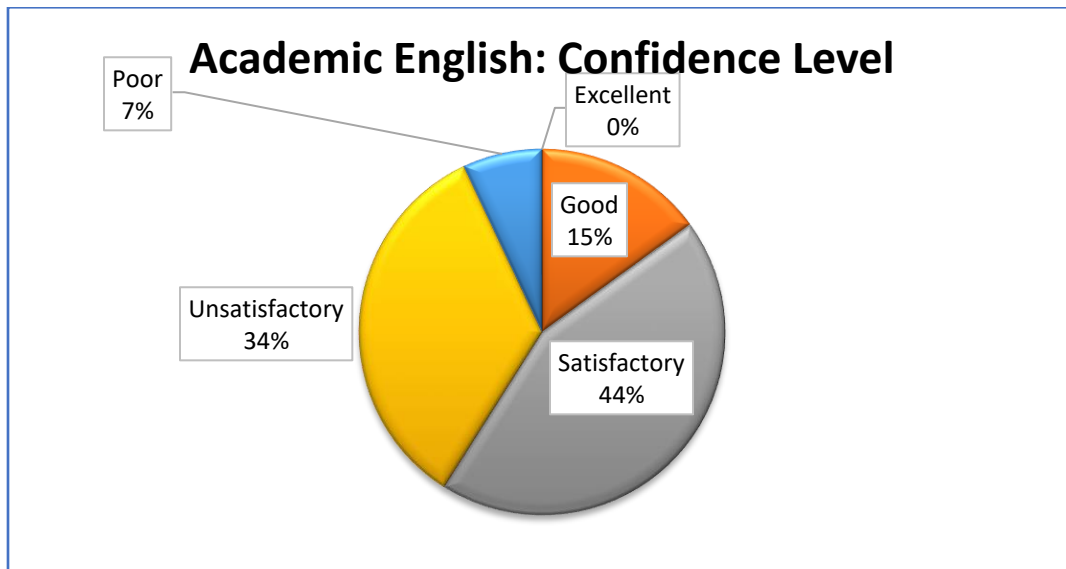
- Only 15% of respondents felt their level of confidence in academic English was good. The bilingual questionnaire also produced interesting results in the section focusing on self-assessment of their academic language proficiency.

- Only 32% of respondents agreed that their academic English and subject vocabulary was 'good enough to achieve good grades.' The remainder were either undecided or disagreed.

- Essay writing was a particular concern. To the statement: 'I find writing essays very difficult', 52% agreed or were undecided and 47% found using correct academic vocabulary challenging. 58% admitted to having difficulty in communicating their ideas in English.

When asked to reflect on their own levels of English three of the four key participants in this study [Abe, Plum and Sid] confirmed that they found writing in English the most challenging of the four language skills. This view is strongly supported by the responses to the questionnaire illustrated in the following frequency table:

Table 4.2: Responses to Q34

Q34 I FIND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS EASY		
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0%
AGREE	3	5%
UNDECIDED	18	29%
DISAGREE	31	49%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	11	17%
TOTAL	63	100%

An interesting outcome of this research noted that the Thai students self-reported an improvement in their language skills as the Master's course progressed.

The following graph shows that 67% of respondents to the bilingual questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that they had noticed an improvement in their academic vocabulary closely followed by 66% noting an improvement in their academic writing. 54% of respondents felt their English grammar had improved.

Figure 4.3: Responses to Q16, Q17 & Q18

Linguistic improvement during the course

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Academic writing	17	49	24	5	5
Academic vocab	13	54	23	5	5
Grammar	11	43	30	10	6
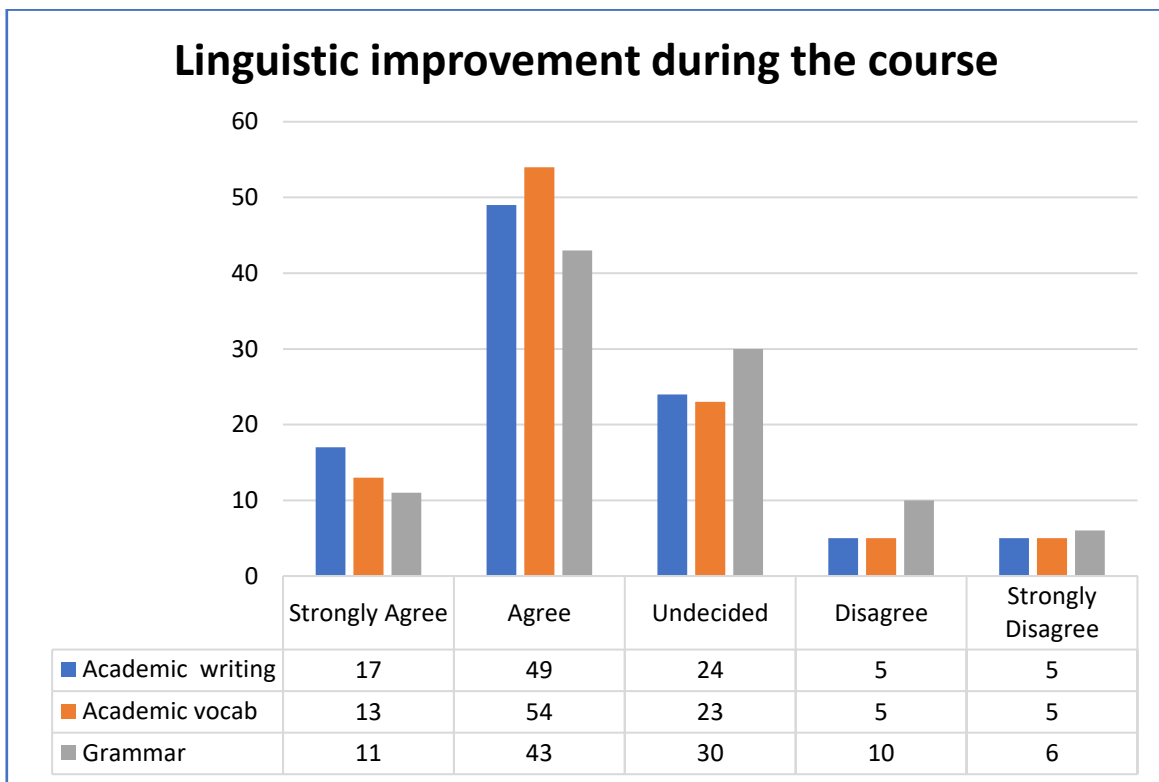
Although Thai students in this study reported lack of confidence in their level of English language skills, Sid's finance teacher, whose seminar I had observed, made the following interesting comment in relation to his view on the English language competency of Thai students:

'Some Asian students… are very good in English… a lot have already previous education in the UK or in the US or wherever, so they usually have a very good English. In general Thai students have better English than er Chinese or um other Asian students'. [Interview: Lecturer 03]

I also interviewed a Thai lecturer who has spent many years in the UK teaching in the field of medicine. I was interested to hear his views not only from the perspective of a Thai national but as a teacher within the academic culture of a UK university environment. He makes the interesting comment that in his opinion alternative language tests assess English language proficiency more appropriately for the skills required for academic study than the IELTS test.

'…if I were to have powers I would say they must pass either CAE [Cambridge Advanced English] or CPE [Certificate of Proficiency in English]. The tests are designed to test your proficiency, the subtleties of English … particularly if you're studying humanities. If you study science I mean the formulas are easy and Thai students do well.' [Thai lecturer: interview]

He also makes the relevant comment that scientific formulae and equations provide advantageous contextual scaffolding for Thai students studying science and maths which is addressed in more detail later in the chapter. While Sid's teacher commented that in his opinion, in general, Thai students had 'better English than Chinese students' the responses of the Thai students in this study reflected a lack of confidence in their academic language proficiency. It may be pertinent at this point to question whether, as the Thai lecturer suggests, IELTS testing which focuses on individual language skills, is an appropriate measure to gauge whether Thai students can cope with the academic and linguistic rigours of a UK Master's degree course. As Cummins (2001) comments '…acquisition of discrete language skills in English, while important, is not necessarily predictive of future academic language development' (Cummins 2001: 76).

4.3.   Comprehension in real time:

The fast-paced, interactive culture of a UK university classroom is a key factor which emerges from the data and which impacts on the linguistic confidence of the Thai students. Norton (2000:123) explains '…since oral activities take place in real time, learners have little control over the rate of flow of information in these communicative events, which in turn increase their levels of anxiety'.   Norton's comments are supported in this study as Plum testifies:

I = Interviewer   **P**=Plum

This interview with Plum took place in Term 3 and is divided into three excerpts:

I: What linguistic problems have you experienced in class?

P: '…one of the problem … is technical terms, right, so if they [*Thai students*] just come here they probably would have a shock … plus the accent and so if they don't keep up with it and their brain just kind of stuck and what happen is that when you listen to the lecture and then you just your brain just when it's new you just can't really keep up with it in time when they just keep speaking fast.' [Plum Reflections: interview Term 3]

In this first excerpt Plum reflects on the panic that she experiences in class when the teacher speaks quickly and uses unfamiliar subject vocabulary. She comments that this dual challenge could be a problem to students who have just arrived from Thailand. Plum reflects on how Thai students might have difficulty understanding the lectures and how this could impact on their self-confidence. She identifies three key reasons: The speed at which the teacher speaks, the use of specialist language and the accent of the teacher.

What is particularly interesting is that in this part of the interview Plum speaks on behalf of Thai students as she describes the 'shock' they will experience within the culture of the UK

classroom. She identifies unfamiliar subject-specific vocabulary as challenging, which when combined with fast-paced delivery, sometimes in accented English, makes it impossible to 'keep up' with the lesson. She eloquently describes how the brain is 'stuck' and cannot process this new information quickly enough to keep pace with the speed of the lesson.

In this excerpt from the same interview, Plum continues by describing the effect of not understanding unfamiliar academic vocabulary:

> 'So when you erm listen to the word that you don't familiar with, the brain just kind of shuts because you don't know what the meaning is and then you don't really know what he's talking about so you kind of just like lost a bit and then once you lost then that when your brain stop that means that your brain just not keeping up with what he's saying further you just stop there…' [Plum Reflections: interview Term 3]

Reflecting Norton's comments, she explains in more detail the anxiety experienced if the brain cannot process the new subject vocabulary and make sense of the lesson content. She describes a feeling of being 'lost' and of being unable to process any more of the lesson.

Plum expands on the feeling of increased panic in the third excerpt from this interview when she is asked a question by the teacher:

> He spoke so fast it's like 'oh what you talking about! I just can't keep up with you' …. he ask me a question and I couldn't answer … I I asked him back like "I'm sorry I just couldn't catch that can you repeat that again"'.
> [Plum Reflections: interview Term 3]

In this third excerpt, Plum provides an example of how the teacher spoke quickly and used unfamiliar subject vocabulary and how she was unable to keep up with the class. She eloquently describes the panic she felt when, in this confused mental state, she was asked a direct question by the teacher. She describes the strategy she employed to 'buy herself time' by requesting the teacher to repeat the question.

In response to the same question, Wendy also identifies fast-paced lectures as challenging:

> 'Sometime [I] have the answer when he ask, but is delay. I need time to think about it but he's already gone (*laugh*) when I want to say something…' Wendy [Interview Term 2]

Wendy makes an important point; she describes the time delay which occurs from when the teacher poses the question to when the question can be answered. Wendy explains how she must first decode English (L2) into Thai (L1) in order to understand the meaning of the question. She must then formulate the answer in Thai, translate it into English and then respond orally. She finds it frustrating because she knows the answer to the question but the lesson has moved on before she has time to process her response in L2.

What is also important to note in this interview, is that Wendy explains that she 'wants to say something'. She is not avoiding answering the question. However, to the teacher, Wendy's inability to answer the question immediately may be perceived as demonstrating unresponsive behaviour.

Questionnaire responses:

Comments made during face to face interviews referring to speed of delivery and use of unfamiliar academic terminology are supported by responses to the following open-ended question:

> **Please describe 4 main differences in the style of teaching employed by UK teachers compared with the style of teaching employed by Thai teachers**:
>
> 'Some lecturers speak too fast' [Respondent M94]
>
> 'Speed of teaching (faster)' [Respondent M49]

'Teachers in UK usually speak too fast and speak in academic style. In contrast Thai teachers will repeat until they make sure that the students understand about the topic.' [Respondent M75]

The comments of Sid's lecturer are particularly relevant at this juncture and provide an interesting perspective on the challenges of teaching a multilingual class:

'There are … lots of students from mainland China so you just have to learn to speak more slowly.' [Interview: Lecturer 9]

The lecturer identifies the linguistic challenges facing international students and has modified his speed of delivery to enable students with English as a second language to keep pace with the lesson. However, it is not only speed of delivery which challenges the students. It is also understanding the content of the lesson.

4.3.1   Comprehension of spoken academic English

Sid comments that he finds listening to lectures very challenging.

'…Erm in general I try to listen as much as possible because um frankly I would understand not more than thirty to forty percent in lectures so I have to go home and study…. I might be a bit of a slow learner for lectures.'   [Sid: interview Term 1]

Despite his high IELTS level, he comments that he only understands 30 to 40 percent of the lecture. This view is supported by a respondent to the bilingual questionnaire.

'I can catch only 50% of the contents taught in the class, due to I have no background for almost all of the class that I study and the speed of teaching' [Respondent M31]

This student makes the observation that two factors contribute to his inability to understand 50% of the lesson: the fact that he has very little prior knowledge of the subject and the speed of teaching.

The anxiety of not understanding lectures is reflected in the frequency table below which

displays the overall responses of 63 Thai students to the following question:

Q76: Based on your experience please enter a score of 1-5 for how stressful you find
the following activity: Understanding lectures: 1= very stressful & 5 = not stressful
at all.

Table 4.3: Responses to Q76

Q76 UNDERSTANDING LECTURES		
VERY STRESSFUL	7	11%
STRESSFUL	20	32%
UNDECIDED	22	35%
HARDLY STRESSFUL	11	17%
NOT STRESSFUL AT ALL	3	5%
TOTAL	63	100%

43% of the 63 Thai scholarship respondents found understanding lectures stressful. Only 5%

responded that they did not find understanding lectures at all stressful.

Plum provides a very clear example of how misunderstanding the teacher's pronunciation of

academic terminology can have serious implications on comprehending a key concept of law:

 'It just really fast and I would just say "Is it libel or liable"? For the whole two
hours we are talking about libel! When he says 'liability' I I understand! … one
example that is stuck in my head!' [Plum: interview Term 1]

Plum's testimony highlights the frustration and stress felt by the student who for two hours

had believed the teacher was referring to issues of 'libel' but in fact the teacher said 'liable'.

Plum complained to me that she had completely misunderstood this key concept and so had

to review the entire lesson in her own time in addition to completing the assignment which had been set for that evening. This example leads into the following section which addresses the challenge of unfamiliar accents.

4.4. Challenging accents: Testimony of Thai students

Nomnian (2008: 31), in his study of Thai students attending a UK university, noted that they '…seem to position themselves as "linguistically inferior" to their European counterparts'. Thai students in this study commented that they found the fast-paced, interactive culture of a UK classroom a source of stress and anxiety.

An unanticipated outcome of this study was the strength of negative feeling exhibited by some Thai students towards the varieties of spoken English by 'others' e.g. international teachers or British nationals with regional accents. The following excerpts of interviews with Abe, Sid and Wendy illustrate this:

> **I**= Interviewer   **A** = Abe
>
> **I**: Which of the four language skills do you find most challenging?
>
> **A**: 'I think the worst one is er listening because, because there, there many people here with different accents. I can I can only understand the accent like people speaking in BBC. *(laughter)* but if if if my my my friend start mumbling then I cannot understand.' [Abe: Interview Term 1]

Abe comments on the variety of accents he is exposed to while studying in UK. He explains that he can only understand 'BBC' (Standard) English and finds his friend's accent, which he describes as 'mumbling', impossible to understand. Abe uses the term 'BBC English' which Agha (2005:52) describes as 'Standard British Received Pronunciation' and Rymes and Leone (2014) describe as 'imagined mainstream standard' to compare with 'non-standard Englishes' (2014: 34) or regional accented English [ref chapter 2].

Abe comments that he has no difficulty in understanding most of his teachers but he does have a problem understanding a Portuguese lecturer.

I= Interviewer   **A** = Abe

I: Do you understand the various accents of your teachers?

Referring to the Portuguese lecturer he comments:

> **A**: 'Last time I I ask him how to pronounce his name properly and it's like Jo Jo something and ... OK forget it!   Fine!   *(laughter)*.   I try not to call him [*by*] his name.'   [Abe: Interview Term 1]

Abe took steps to address the problem by asking the lecturer how he should pronounce his name correctly. However, he comments in the interview that he was still unable to pronounce it so he tried not to use it at all.

Abe referred to accents later in the same interview which took place in Term 1

> '... in my class er there's er er British people that speak different accent than than yours er Manchester accent and someone just mm it's kind of mumbling in his mouth *(laughter)* and I can't understand what he's saying so so I basically keep myself away from him *(laughter)*.   It's it's not his problem it's just my problem. I need to get more familiar with with that [accent]. *(laughter)* [Abe: Interview Term 1]

Abe uses the derogatory description 'mumbling in his mouth' to describe his British friend's regional accent yet he qualifies this rather negative depiction by indicating that he is not criticising the other student but identifies the problem as his own [Abe's] which he needs to resolve. He therefore avoids that student commenting that he needs more time to become familiar with his accent.

Sid also comments on 'weird accents' during an interview in Term 1:

> 'I've always liked listening to British accent but I can't imitate it… it was hard during the first days especially some weird accents that I don't… it might not be from London, but it gets better over time.' [Sid: interview Term 1]

Using judgemental language to contrast the 'British accent' with 'weird accents' reflects comments by Lippi-Green (1994: 165): '…the subjective nature of these qualifiers is clear'. In a later work (2012: 6) she questions '…how we use language to construct "self" and "other"'; and 'who has the authority to decide what is 'good English' and who sets the standards for spoken and written language?'

The issue of accent recurs in a later interview with Abe, in Term 3. He refers again to the 'BBC accent' which he appears to hold in high esteem. He contrasts it with the 'West London' accent which he seems to regard as socially inferior.

> Speaking improve a lot and listening as well but er I still not satisfy with with my skill because if I speak with friend with some British friend that's that's er quite difficult. … <u>because</u> **their** accent …it's something else it's not your accent it's not BBC accent, some some people are from West London. [Abe: Reflections. Interview Term 3]

Although he recognises his own linguistic limitations Abe explains that he finds it difficult to understand his 'British friends' because of their regional London accent, possibly implying that the fault is theirs.

Over the course of a year Sid and Abe felt that they had improved their listening and speaking skills but still had difficulty in understanding regional accents. Abe provided another example of how a regional accent caused him confusion when he travelled to a city in the north of England:

> 'I been to Manchester and I'm going into to the the department store and and it's not open yet and the security *[guard]* walk walk to me and said "It's shoot" "what? Oh ok ok. It's shut ok" (laugh) [Abe: Reflections. Interview Term 3]

Abe finds this experience amusing. He takes pleasure in imitating the regional Mancunian accent and employs negative evaluative statements and humour when comparing the 'undesirable' (Fairclough 2003: 179) accents of others with Standard 'BBC' English' '…their accent, it's something else, it's not your accent it's not BBC accent.'

Wendy also commented on problems experienced by Thai students when the lecturer is not a 'native' English speaker:

> 'One of my my my friends say that she does she didn't understand the lecture because she the the her lecturer is not native speaker.' [Wendy: Reflections Term 3]

Wendy states that her friend did not understand the content of the lecture because the lecturer was not a native speaker of English, exemplifying Fairclough's (2003: 176) 'evaluative statements' and Wortham and Reyes's (2015: 108) 'negative connotations' of being a 'non-native' speaker. As Nomnian (2008: 34) states '…it is imperative for Thai students to develop optimistic attitudes towards multilingualism and varieties of spoken English inside and outside the classroom'.

4.4.1   Challenging accents: Views of teachers

While it is true that the Thai students experienced some difficulties comprehending various accents within the multicultural classroom environment, similar challenges were experienced by their teachers.

Sid's finance lecturer informed me that he was a German national and commented on how difficult it was for him to understand some of the more unfamiliar accents of his students:

> 'It's always also difficult because sometimes you just understand people better with the accents you know… I understand Thai [*students*] better than er Chinese

because I also have a few students from Thai …you get used to accents you know.' [Interview: Lecturer 03 /Sid]

It was interesting that, like Sid and Abe, he found it easier to understand unfamiliar accents the longer he was exposed to them.

I reflected on my own challenges when observing several classes attended by my Thai participants. In my field notes taken during a finance lecture given by a teacher who informed me that he was an Italian national, I commented:

'I found his accent difficult to follow in particular when he referred to 'Hedge' funds' which I mistook for 'edge' as he did not write the word on the board and did not pronounce the aspirated 'h'. '

This example reflects to some extent Plum's experience when she misunderstood the teacher's pronunciation of 'libel' and 'liable'. Like Plum's situation, the topic was unfamiliar to me and I was confused until the teacher wrote the academic vocabulary on the board toward the end of the lesson.

In my interview with this Italian teacher he makes pertinent remarks about the accents of his colleagues and the impact on students:

'I'm sure that when you are confronted with a faculty that comes from so many different backgrounds, we have Italians, French we have erm people from really all over, teaching all subjects … so you are combining … many dirty accents.' [Interview: Lecturer 05]

He comments that in his opinion it must be difficult for the students to cope with so many different accents especially if their English language skills are not very proficient. He refers to his own faculty where teachers originate from many different countries. The Italian lecturer's use of the descriptor 'dirty accents' is particularly pejorative. Lippi-Green (1994:

165) comments '…accent becomes both manner and means for exclusion…. when people reject an accent they also reject the identity of the person speaking: his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation or economic class …the concept of accent, so all-encompassing in the mind of the public, is a powerful one'.

It is interesting to compare the pejorative evaluative statement 'dirty accents' made by this lecturer with the slightly less negative comment 'weird accents' made by Sid.   Both statements employ derogatory judgemental language to describe what they perceive to be the 'undesirable' accents of others. What is also very interesting is at no time did the Thai students in this study refer to their own accented English.

Rubin and Smith (1990: 337) noted that when students perceived '…high levels of foreign accentedness, they judged speakers to be poor teachers'. This finding, however is not evidenced in my research. Although the Thai students comment particularly on how accent can sometimes impact negatively on their comprehension of spoken English and understanding of lesson content, it does not reflect how they rate the competency of the teachers.

4.5.   Challenges of examinations

An interesting aspect raised during the study was the pressure and anxiety students felt when being tested in timed examination conditions.   Some students commented on the unfamiliar academic culture of essay writing and terminal examinations. In this situation their academic English language skills and lack of experience of essay writing hampered their progress as Wendy explained:

Interview excerpt: Wendy

> 'The worst thing is the exam. I have to write in the in in three hours, three essay and compared to the native speaker. I think I a lot behind them (*laugh*) they write a lot of thing and I just start to write three sentence (*laugh*). oh no I just begin my introduction, they going to finish their conclusion for the first one [question].
>
> I have to first understand the question and then think what I have to what I should write on this question the introduction er introduction, the main body and the conclusion this very very hard the exam.'   [Wendy: Reflections. Term 3]

It is clear from Wendy's comments that she feels that native speakers of English have an advantage. She makes the point that no allowance is made even though she is studying in a second language and requires time to process the language before writing in an unfamiliar academic format.

Abe also comments on how the assessment culture in the UK differs from Thailand and the additional pressure he experiences during the end of year examinations

> 'The pressure will come before the exam cos ah yeh its its different in for here and Thailand the the the method of examination is different. Er   in Thailand we have like mid-term exam and then final exam and some some mark from from the homework or assignment but here we only got score from the exam for the whole year (laughter).   So by the end of this year I have to take eight exams.' [Abe: Interview Term 1]

Plum also recognises the challenges of examinations and writing in a second language under pressure ensuring that she conveys the correct meaning:

> 'I cannot know when you come to the exams whether I kind of convey the message correctly and that it makes sense.' [Plum: Interview Term 1]

In the same interview, she provides an example of how she misinterpreted an exam question which completely altered its meaning:

'I remember I was erm I was paraphrasing the sentence [*the question*] and I thought it means that you know they gonna **exclude** the list… But actually it means … they … brought up the new regulations I mean they **not** excluding … So it is you know absolutely different (*laughter*). So what I reading [is] the other way round, yeh. (*laughter*) [Plum: Interview Term 1]

In a later interview with Abe I ask him to reflect on the past year and identify his worst experience. He identifies the pressure of terminal exams and the absence of course work which is marked separately and the score included in the overall final grade:

'If I have bad experience … oh…. an exam (laugh) because … take all the knowledge I got all the year and and explain it in one paper. …It's not like one part in the first term and second part in in yeh in second term it's not like that it's just all in. There's no what you call collecting [course work] mark that the mark separate from the exam. Yeh, the whole the whole course in one month! Yes its 100% so I I call it frustrating.' [Abe: Reflections: Interview Term 3]

In the same interview he explains how the time element of examinations is a constant challenge for him, in UK and in Thailand:

'I always have problem with time limit. Not not not just here [UK] everywhere. I I I prefer to spend more time on on on one problem. People might might go through it quickly but I I try to make it perfect. I I know some time we we need to be hurry but but but I can't just leave it there.' [Abe: Reflections: Interview Term 3]

When I ask him whether he ran out of time in exams his answer was unequivocal:

'Always. Oh, definitely!'

Wortham and Reyes (2015: 59) explain how '…participants position themselves with respect to the messages they deliver, the people they interact with and the larger social world'. This interview with Abe illustrates how he evaluates himself and how he views the exam system. His self-deprecating language on the one hand exemplifies his frustration at trying to manage his time effectively. However, as one interrogates the text further, Abe turns the situation to

his advantage as he reflects positively on his wealth of knowledge and how lack of time in the exam is the result of striving for perfection in every answer. So he adroitly repositions himself from an initial negative standpoint to one which reflects positively on his character as a knowledgeable perfectionist.

4.6. The global language of mathematics and science

The linguistic challenges faced by students studying language-based subjects e.g. law and history compared to those studying mathematics and physics emerged during my interviews with the student participants.

Abe explained his preference for scientific / mathematical formulae and equations rather than reading and writing English prose. Formulae and equations provide him with helpful scaffolding and context for the lesson. He differentiates between the use of equations and diagrams:

> 'I don't prefer words. …I have bad wid the words I prefer equation, diagram but equation is more precise.' [Abe. Interview Term 1]

In my classroom observations, I compare the teaching styles employed by two of Abe's physics teachers:

> I noticed that Prof B relied heavily on diagrams to present the models of the complex and abstract topic of Relativity.
>
> Prof A spoke very little but wrote very long and complex equations on the board.
>
> Both were visual constructs not relying on English language.

I also reflect on Abe's comments in our interview:

Abe drew a fine distinction between the efficacy of diagrams and the precision of equations (which he preferred because he found them to be more accurate). Abe admitted that he had a problem with English prose and that equations were his preferred method of learning.'

Both physics teachers were using English as a second language. They spoke with strong accents and relied on diagrams and equations to transmit subject content to their students. Their use of written and spoken English was minimal.   I also include at this point comments made by Sid's finance teacher, an Italian national, which are germane to this issue as he discusses the language of mathematics:

'…when it comes to finance there's so much that is spoken by equations on a board. Everything is always written down by equations you have on the board. So if you're missing out on the sentence then that doesn't really matter because what you have to understand is the flow, the logic flow of the equation' [Interview: Lecturer 5 /Sid]

He eloquently describes the transmission of information through internationally recognised symbols when he comments '…there is so much spoken by equations on a board' and how '…missing a sentence doesn't really matter' because the equation provides the 'flow of logic' which appears to stand alone and does not require commentary using complex academic English language.

The reliance on equations to explain a mathematical concept was illustrated to perfection by a group of Chinese students whom I observed during this particular class. I comment in my field notes:

Some Chinese students were using their mobile phones to photograph the equations on the board when the teacher had left the room.

When I mentioned this observation to the teacher he laughed:

'I'm the messiest person [*writing*] on the board!' [Lecturer 5 / Sid]

Wendy comments that the language of mathematics provides a great advantage to the students in understanding the content of the lesson compared to those, like her, who are studying language-based subjects with challenging academic vocabulary:

> 'My friend who study something about maths or that kind of thing I think is easier than studying like me because I think it just is the math. …it's not a difficult vocabulary and they can they can learn from the book and I think they they don't have any problem with with this thing but for me if you don't understand in the class it mean you totally don't understand anything because the lecturer might think different things from the book' [Wendy: Reflections Term 3]

Supporting the views of Abe and Sid's finance teacher, Wendy describes how the vocabulary of maths is not challenging and students can refer to the text books. However, she contrasts this with her experience of studying history. She emphasises the importance of understanding the content of the lectures as the teacher might present an alternative interpretation to that depicted in the text book.

I asked Abe whether he had a problem understanding complex scientific vocabulary:

> 'Actually no because we already use these vocabulary in Thailand. Like 'thermion', 'black hole' er er 'dimension'… everything almost everything is is in this *[English]* language. We will laugh if someone try to translate it (laugh). Some people that make Thai dictionary they try to translate that [Scientific] word and we think "what, it doesn't make sense" *(laugh).* [Abe: Reflections. Interview Term 3]

In this excerpt, Abe illustrates how prior knowledge of specialist scientific vocabulary is a great advantage. Many of the scientific terms are used globally and Abe is already familiar with them from his education in Thailand. He laughs when he refers to attempts to produce a dictionary of scientific terms translated into Thai '…it doesn't make sense'.

Later, in the same interview, Abe provides a clear example of how he finds the symbolic nature of mathematics helpful in understanding the content of a lecture and how using academic English is not challenging:

> 'In this field it doesn't matter much for for English for if you know equation you know mathematics that's all. I can say I sometime I don't get what professor say but but with the equation and with something he write on the board oh ok …I know what he mean. …The language you you use in the course, as you saw, it it just ….'thus', 'therefore' and the that kind of word not complicate stuff.' [Abe: Reflections. Interview Term 3]

Abe refers to physics lectures I had observed. He explains how simple terms such as 'thus' and 'therefore' are used to link strings of equations. He comments that he finds the academic English easy and agrees in the interview that the context provided by the equations makes understanding this abstract topic easier.

In my field notes I comment that although the academic language might be 'simple' the subject content is abstract and complex. Abe reinforces this view by commenting on the exclusivity of the 'language of physics' which is not shared by 'the others':

> 'It's physics language … if the people outside area come to read this tech … it's aliens language. But for us it's just normal language, everyone know that yeh'. [Abe: Reflections. Interview Term 3]

This view of an exclusive 'alien language' is supported by Morgan (1998: 90) who addresses the inclusion of symbols in academic texts as '…one way in which the author claims authority as an expert member of the mathematical community' and '…as with the use of specialist vocabulary …there is an assumption that the reader will be a member of the same community, sharing the ability to interpret the symbolic language'.

Abe's physics teacher also supports this view of Abe's 'alien language' during our interview:

'…we speak our own language and er we only understand each other *(laugh)*. It's much easier to express er the erm the ideas using the blackboard than to speak to them *[students]*.'   [Lecturer 02 Physics /Abe]

I comment in my field notes on my interview with Abe:

Abe refers to his familiarity with the technical language of physics which to others may seem like an alien language! He seems to segregate the physics community from 'people outside area' because of their *[scientific]* 'foreign language'!

He finds academic science language familiar but has difficulty with other forms of written English. Does Abe relish the exclusivity of the scientific community with its 'alien language'? The use of 'alien' may imply a removal from the norm /standard. Is he possibly, in a fanciful way, comparing himself (as a physicist) to an extra-terrestrial exotic being set apart from lesser/primitive inhabitants of earth / within the university community?'

His phrase 'but for us' refers to the select group of scientists with which Abe identifies. In effect, Abe identifies with and inhabits two minority groups or cultures within the university community; the physics group who study this particular abstract topic and the ethnic minority Thai student group.

4.7.   The importance of context and prior knowledge

Cummins (2001: 131) comments that second language learners (L2) require '…considerable contextual support or scaffolding …to succeed'.   He explains the importance of prior knowledge individuals have acquired '… to actively contextualise (make meaningful) content and language from a range of situations' (Cummins, 2001: 67).

In the previous section, Abe comments on how helpful he finds the contextual framework of diagrams, equations and formulae in making sense of abstract concepts in addition to prior knowledge of specialist scientific terminology. Wendy, however, has a more challenging experience as she explains in an interview during Term 3:

> 'I cannot sometimes I cannot understand the article. …abstract is hard to understand about a concept … sometime most of the article I don't understand.' [Wendy: Reflections Term 3]

Sid has a similar view as he comments in an interview:

> 'I think my vocabulary is kind of a bit limited when you try to write academically. I I'm not quite familiar with that. [Sid: Interview Term 1]

The reliance on context by L2 students is supported when Sid comments in the same interview:

> '….in terms of listening, it's ok because you can, if you don't know a meaning of the word you can just guess from erm from other words… but speaking, sometimes I find myself hard going …finding the word to describe things.' [Sid: Interview Term 1]

Sid comments that understanding spoken academic vocabulary is greatly assisted by the context in which it appears. However, he is personally challenged by using the vocabulary correctly in spoken English.

4.8.   Chapter summary

This chapter presents the testimony of ethnic minority Thai students and how they describe their experiences studying in the stressful academic culture of a UK university classroom. Key themes emerge from the evidence of questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews

with the students and the inclusion of some relevant and pertinent comments by their teachers where appropriate to either support or contrast the testimony of the students.

Lin and Yi (1997) comment how '…poor English skills are a major stressor and can create significant problems and barriers when trying to succeed and function for many Asian international students' (ibid: 475). However, the evidence from this study paints a more complex picture. All the students in this study had achieved the enhanced IELTS levels required for their UK Master's courses and so could not be described as having 'poor English skills'. Yet, despite this enhanced standard of English, the evidence provided by the students in this study indicates lack of self-confidence in their linguistic skills and anxiety which adversely affects adaptation to the culture of the UK HE classroom. As Chen (1999) comments '… it is not surprising that language competency is a critical factor that emphatically affects self-concept and self-efficacy in work and study performance' (ibid: 52).

Of particular interest is how the students in this study differed in their positionality and views compared to Thai students in Nomnian's (2008) study. Nomnian comments that his students seemed to position themselves as inferior when comparing themselves to L1 English speakers and Norton (2000) also notes in her research that L2 students '…tended to feel ashamed, inferior and uninteresting because of their second language abilities' (ibid: 123). The students in this study did not express or convey this particular view although self-assessment of their language skills indicated lack of confidence.

Evidence from this study highlights a particular factor which contributes to lack of confidence in the UK classroom. Although the students rated listening as a stronger linguistic skill when compared to speaking or writing, this research highlights this skill as a particular

challenge.   Anxiety and confusion was experienced by some Thai students in this study when a teacher spoke too quickly, expected an immediate response and did not provide written vocabulary on the blackboard to form a contextual framework for the lesson. The testimony of some students indicates that comprehending rapidly spoken English in real time results in an inability to understand a significant percentage of the lesson content; time taken to decode and process Thai and English also results in the students' inability to respond quickly in a fast-paced lesson.   The evidence in this study supports the research of Sandhu & Asrabadi (1991) who comment '…translation and retranslation back and forth from English and native language, also slow down the normal communication processes' (ibid: 19-20).

Listening skills are also challenged by unfamiliar varieties of accented English which the Thai students experienced in the linguistically diverse culture of their UK classroom. As Sandhu & Asrabadi (1991) comment in their study '…difficulties were due to differences in accent, enunciation, slang, and use of special English words'. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 20) explain that '…interactive positioning assumes one individual positioning the other, while reflective positioning is the process of positioning oneself'.

The Thai students in this study did not convey the impression that they felt inferior because of their competency in the English language or their accent. It is interesting to compare this observation with Lippi-Green's (1994: 166) comments regarding 'accent discrimination' especially when 'associated with racial, ethnic or cultural minorities' It is interesting that several pejorative comments referring to the accents of others were made by some Thai students and some teachers in this study. It could be argued that 'accent discrimination' was demonstrated by some Thai students and teachers who were of ethnic minority origin in relation to 'others'. The challenge they experienced hearing varieties of spoken English

might be due to the lack of previous exposure to a range of English speakers with regional and national accents.

The students in this study also expressed the view that prior knowledge of the language of mathematics with its universally recognised subject vocabulary, symbols and equations provides a distinct advantage for the international student working in a foreign language. They also commented on the importance of presenting subject matter in context to aid comprehension. This supports Cummins (2001) who earlier in the chapter explains the importance of prior knowledge and contextual support for L2 learners. The students in this study comment particularly on the challenges of writing English essays under timed exam conditions, which they felt was unfair given that they needed extra time to process their thoughts into a second language and how tiring it was to learn through a second language.

This chapter also highlights how Thai students react differently to the linguistic challenges they experience within the culture of a UK university classroom. The varied responses and experiences of international students, reflected in the work of researchers mentioned in this thesis and evidenced in this study, underline the importance of recognising the individuality of international students within a learning community. This theme is explored in the following chapter when I consider the teaching and learning experiences of the Thai students.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS
CHALLENGES OF PEDAGOGY

'They expect me to know more than they teach'.
[Wendy Interview Term 3 Reflections]

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
while studying in the UK?

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter focussed on challenges in the classroom with an emphasis on learning

through English as a second language. In this chapter, I focus on the role of the teacher as

described by the students in this study and learning experiences of some ethnic minority Thai

students within a UK university classroom. Very little research has been conducted into

understanding the experiences of Thai student sojourners studying within the pedagogic

culture of a UK university. Research by others into the experiences of students from other

Asian countries provides an interesting basis from which to explore and compare the

experiences of the Thai students in this study and which I have reviewed in Chapter 2.   The

perception of the role and position of the teacher is evidenced by the comments and

questionnaire responses of the Thai students in this research. The students also comment on

the style of teaching they experience in a UK university classroom and the pressures of being

taught in a fast-paced interactive learning environment.

5.2   Perceptions of teachers

Sid attempts to compare the relationship between teachers and their students in Thailand and

the UK. He likens the culture of the Thai classroom to that of a close family, positioning the

teacher in the role of the caring parent. He describes being scolded by the teacher for not

paying attention in class; just as a caring parent would scold his child for misbehaving. However, in the UK he notes that from his observations, students are not chastised by their teachers for being inattentive. He appears to value the close relationship with his Thai teachers and comments:

> 'Thai teachers usually … care more about the students. I think … it's more like a parent and child thing like they…they scold you … if you are not listening. While here [*in UK*] the teacher sometimes they don't care if someone's not listening or someone's playing something, using their iPhones or iPods in class.' Sid [interview: Term 1]

This viewpoint is not supported in a response received in the bilingual questionnaire [n=63]:

> 'There isn't much interact between students and teacher in Thailand' [Questionnaire respondent: M36 Term 1]

Student M36 stated that in his experience the relationship between teachers and their students in Thailand is distant, commenting on the lack of interaction which is at odds with Sid's analogy to a close-knit family. However, it does illustrate the varied and individual experiences of the participants in this study.

The notion that the teacher is a respected figure of authority in Thailand is well illustrated during my interview with Wendy in Term 3. She is unable to conform to the familiar classroom culture adopted in the UK of referring to lecturers by their first names. She explains in detail how she feels more comfortable with Thai etiquette; where students refer to their teacher by a special title, 'Ajahn' [teacher] which overcomes any awkwardness

> 'In my class [in UK] we just say the first name [of the teacher] for example Mike … and I I don't I don't like this this kind of thing at all… I I always put some word before for example Professor … I have to have a title because I don't want to call him by name because I think he not my friend'. Wendy [Interview Term 3: Reflections]

She describes how she negotiates her positionality in relation to her teacher by a strategic compromise.   Instead of conforming to the cultural etiquette of the UK classroom she compromises by referring to the teacher's academic title before their first name e.g. Professor Mike. She also makes an interesting distinction when she describes levels of friendship. She comments that the teacher is not her friend so she feels it is inappropriate to refer to him by his first name which from her perspective would denote a closer relationship.   Wendy explains that in Thailand the position of the teacher is higher than the student. In the UK this distinction is not as clearly defined, which is why she struggles with this particular difference in UK classroom culture:

> '…here [in UK] the lecturer and you is like we are the same level in the class and they open for your answer and but in Thailand it's hard because the lecturer is always higher than student…' Wendy [Interview Term 3: Reflections]

Yet if we examine Wendy's response in more depth; on one hand Wendy respects the authority of the teacher within the culture of the Thai classroom yet she also recognises the advantages of the more relaxed relationship between students and teachers within a UK classroom which encourages dialogue and the sharing of ideas '…they open for your answer'.

The notion of the teacher as a figure of authority is also supported by a respondent to the questionnaire who comments that in his opinion there is a lack of respect shown by UK students towards their teachers.

> 'Seniority is not taken into account for most students in UK. They don't respect their teachers'. [Questionnaire respondent: M5 Term 1]

The position of the teacher in Thailand was also commented on during an interview with a European lecturer who was fluent in Thai and who had taught at a prestigious private

university in Bangkok. His personal experience was at variance with what he understood to be the Thai tradition of respect for teachers

> 'For the first five minutes I talk in English… and then switch to Thai. So the first five minutes they were "ah" in awe but then they start to get their mobiles out, they talk, you know, on the mobile; they go out, come in; something we would regard as disrespectful, you know, to the teacher.' [Interview: Lecturer L09]

He was very surprised by this behaviour and spoke to a colleague who commented: 'Yes that's normal, which is the reason they [teachers] use microphones in order to be louder'.

He then explained how these same students who had, in his opinion, shown him disrespect, then participated in the ceremony of 'wai kru' when students kneel to pay tribute and respect to their teachers:

> 'There were sixty students in this room and they had prepared this golden tray with flowers, with an envelope and presented it to me; high respect, hierarchy, you know.' [Interview: Lecturer L09]

He found it difficult to reconcile the two experiences:

> '…so that's quite interesting! What we regard as disrespectful here [in UK] seems to be, at least at that [Thai] university, erm normal.' [Interview: Lecturer L09]

5.3   Evaluative indexicals

Respect for the teacher was a topic which also arose during a group discussion with Abe, Plum and Sid during term 3. Wortham and Reyes (2015: 51-52) define evaluative indexicals as '… any signs that presuppose some evaluation of the people or objects being described, of the speaker, audience and others in the narrating event, or of relevant context - any signs that associate people or objects with some recognizable social type and evaluate that type'.

This applies to labels and descriptions and they provide the example of 'attorney' as opposed to 'lawyer' by explaining that although they are the same group of professionals the labels used '…presuppose different things about how much respect the speaker has for those people'. The discussion with the three students focused specifically on the teacher's mode of attire as an evaluative indexical which might influence the students' opinion of the professionalism and competency of the teacher. I had noticed their teachers wearing a range of outfits when I had observed their lessons. These are some of the comments I made in my field notes:

> 'The lecturer was in his early 40s, casually dressed in faded jeans and a loose T-shirt.' [Observation L02. Abe]

> He wore casual trousers and a short-sleeved T-shirt. He wore his curly hair long and had a beard. [Observation: L06. Abe]

> He drank frequently from a bottle containing a non-alcoholic fizzy drink; he wore a casual outfit consisting of a short-sleeved check shirt, no tie and casual trousers. He wore his shirt outside his trousers. I would estimate is age to be mid-40 years. He was clean shaven and wearing glasses. [Observation: L07 Wendy]

> The lecturer was smartly dressed in a suit and was confident. [Observation: L01. Plum]

> She was smartly dressed and was clearly an expert in this field. [Observation: L04. Plum]

Reflecting on my own subjective observations, I felt my opinions were probably unfairly influenced by the external appearance of the lecturers. I was therefore interested in the opinions of the Thai students, as to whether the attire of the teacher influenced their perception of the competency of the teacher. The students discussed how they viewed the attire of teachers and those in other professions. This discussion took place during an interview in Term 3 with Abe, Plum and Sid.

Abe focussed on the practicalities of teaching in Thailand:

'In Thailand it's very hot country but people insist that that the lecturer should wear trouser and shirt…. Not a suit but a shirt and tie. … That's very hard.'

Plum disagreed and felt that wearing a suit or other smart attire was a way of showing respect to the institution and demonstrated a professional attitude. She referred to working conditions in Thailand:

'Well you've got air condition as well. I think it just, to be sign of showing some respect to the place … it's like that you're professional in some way.'

Sid who was studying Finance agreed with Plum:

'It's similar to like how bankers wear a suit.' [Sid]

Plum continued her point: 'It shows some respect. Yeh, professional and you're reliable.' [Plum]

Abe however disagreed and continued his argument of preferring casual dress which he linked with increased productivity:

'I feel good … because [in the 'West'] everyone can wear anything that's … I would say not too bad and still go to work like you don't need to be too formal in order to work and I think it's more productive in this way. For example at Cern in Switzerland the researcher can come to the research facility with the short pants and t-shirt.' [Abe]

Abe returned to his original point:

'I would say maybe it's depend on the different area. In my area you know, no one cares about dressing just care about Physics.' [Abe]

Blackledge and Creese (2016: 276) explain that '…emblems of identity are not merely psychological, but are corporeal and performed as practice. This is true of the clothes we wear, the music we listen to …[and] …the way in which we deploy heteroglossic linguistic

resources. Our accents, vocabulary and grammar are material resources that index our individual histories and trajectories'.

The participants in this study entered into a lively discussion in relation to how mode of dress can be viewed as an 'emblem' i.e. '…a particular kind of evaluative indexical…that presupposes and characterises a recognisable social type' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 52) and how it can appear to influence perception of authority and competence.

Plum and Sid both agreed that dressing 'smartly' was an external indicator of competence and professionalism. Sid commented 'bankers wear a suit' and Plum supported this evaluation by providing positive qualities which she associated with that profession: 'Yeh, professional and you're reliable'.

Abe disagreed. He made a clear distinction between other curricular areas and his own subject of physics which he appeared to elevate to a higher plane and stated possessively and authoritatively '…in my area …no one cares about dressing, just care about physics.' Supporting the view of Wortham and Reyes (2015: 52) that the discussion not only provided '…an insight into evaluation of the people being described' but also of the speakers.'

5.4   Challenges of classroom practice

Banning (2005: 503) refers to conventional classroom practice '…where the student is the recipient of new knowledge and the teacher is the knower'. She continues by citing Tight (1996: 26) redefining the role of the teacher as '…no longer seen as imparting knowledge …but is redefined as facilitation of self-directed learning'. Continuing this theme; in an interview in Term 3 Sid reflects on the differences he has observed between UK and Thailand and how, in his opinion, Thai students are more dependent on their teachers:

'I think here [UK] they expect you to be responsible of doing self-study before maybe before coming to lectures or after lectures as your own review.   While in Thailand mmm maybe elder teachers tend to see you … more like younger students who erm have to be like force-fed information or something like that.'
 [Sid: Interview Term 3: Reflections]

As I reviewed the recording of the interview, it was interesting to note that Sid took time to formulate his thoughts before responding. Comparing his experiences in Thailand and the UK, he describes Thai teachers 'force-feeding' information to their students. In contrast, he explains that UK teachers expect their students to be independent learners and that attending lectures is to gain additional information.   Sid appears to feel positively about this style of teaching as in another interview he comments on how some UK teachers introduce interesting and wider perspectives on the subject area:

Some teachers they just go straight to the point that is in what the question ask and what is the answer… how to get the answer. This teacher [whose lesson I had just observed] I think tends to explain um the question in a wider perspective…. It might not be directly related to the question but you still get to learn something apart from that.' [Sid :Interview Term 2]

Sid appreciates this additional information rather than just focusing on how to answer the exam question. Referring to the responses to the bilingual questionnaire [n=63], only 14% of Thai Master's students said they preferred the teaching style in Thailand but when asked whether they preferred to be given the facts rather than provide information themselves there was a division of opinion with 33% strongly agreeing / agreeing, 35% disagreeing /strongly disagreeing and the remainder undecided as illustrated in the frequency table below.

Table 5.1: Frequency table showing responses to Q.30

Q30 I WOULD PREFER TO BE GIVEN THE FACTS RATHER THAN PROVIDE INFORMATION		
STRONGLY AGREE	9	14%
AGREE	12	19%
UNDECIDED	20	32%
DISAGREE	15	24%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	7	11%
TOTAL	63	100%

The responses to an open-ended question requesting students to describe differences they had noticed in the style of teaching employed by teachers in UK compared to teachers in Thailand provided interesting comments some of which are recorded below:

'Lack of [UK] teacher's attention to students who need help. Unclear explanation about coursework and assignments'. [Questionnaire respondent M5]

'More student-oriented in UK. You have to read a lot to be able to participate in class'. [Questionnaire respondent M48]

'All subjects [UK] are well connected. More likely for student to get the whole picture of study'. [Questionnaire respondent M49]

'Self-learning [UK] vs Teacher-based learning [Thailand]'. [Questionnaire respondent M75]

'High expectations from teachers in UK'. [Questionnaire respondent M42]

'More workloads in UK. More reading background [sic]. Less explanation in class'. [Questionnaire respondent M46]

'Thai teachers rarely focus on critical thinking'. [Questionnaire respondent M68]

'UK teachers make more effort to participate with students than Thai teachers'. [Questionnaire respondent M109]

'UK teachers let us teach ourselves'. [Questionnaire respondent M69]

Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1999: 246) in their studies at a university in Hong Kong, also noted how teachers from the United States or Britain [referred to as 'Western'] viewed foundation knowledge very differently from their Chinese colleagues.

The teachers from Britain and United States assumed the basics were '…self-evident compared to the more challenging and important learning such as problem solving and critical thinking'. While recognising that students must learn the basics, they felt that '…it was largely their [the students'] responsibility, rather than that of the teacher' and that the 'central work of the teacher was in elaboration, extension, application or critique of that foundational knowledge'. They perceived foundation knowledge to be '…subordinate to other goals and therefore less worthy of the teacher's time and effort' (ibid: 246).

Abe supports this perception and reflects on the different pedagogic styles of the teachers in UK and Thailand and how much of the information is pre-supposed which enabled the UK teachers to cover the syllabus faster in the limited time available for the one-year Master's course:

> '…the university I came from [in Thailand] … we might spend an hour or two hours for just derive this equation but here [in UK] the professors some yeh some professor very professional and they know how to derive this thing in short time'. [Abe: Interview Term 3: Reflections]

This view is supported by Wendy:

> 'When I study in Thailand the lecturer give me a lecture and I just listen to the lecture and then I just read it and take the exam but for here [in UK] they expect me to know more, more than they teach'. [Wendy: Interview Term 3: Reflections]

A Thai national who has taught at HE level in UK for many years, reflects on how he adopts a different teaching style which shocks some of his Thai students:

'Socratic type of teaching is almost unheard of [in Thailand]. Er for instance if they [students] say something [and] I said how do you **know,** they look taken back. They think I am so blunt, even myself, because I think I'm used to this way of teaching. … I think this is not to do with the language alone I think it is to do with their er mentality if you like' [Interview: Thai lecturer]

When he comments on 'their mentality' he seems to be distancing himself from his Thai students. He continues by reviewing the pedagogical style in Thailand:

'The teaching in Thailand is in a way very didactic; it's almost one way. Teachers talk more than students speak and it is very rote memory; pattern recognition rather than encouraging thinking.' [Interview: Thai lecturer]

This comment is supported by some respondents to the questionnaire for example:

'Teachers in UK usually speak too fast and speak in academic style. In contrast, Thai teachers will repeat until they make sure that students understand about the topic' [Questionnaire respondent: M75]

Plum commented on how she appreciated a lively approach to the lesson; a teaching style which was employed by some of her UK teachers. She provides the following example:

'He's got sense of humour … he doesn't make the lecture too boring. … some persons you find so boring, just comes monotone and they makes it like so ugh you wanna go home!' [Plum: Interview Term 1]

Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1999: 253) noted that both Chinese faculty and students expected instructors to provide more structure than did Western instructors teaching in the same location (Hong Kong). 'An effective [Chinese] teacher should slow down, provide further explanation and closer guidance …[also] adapt to their audience, guiding them step by step through the content' (ibid: 253). This view was reflected in comments made by some post-graduate Thai students responding to the questionnaire e.g.:

[*in UK lectures*] '…students have to take notes. Thai teachers give all lecture [notes] to students. UK teaching has many reading materials and assignments. [Teacher] just gives some important information and leave students to read. Thai

[teacher] gives students a lot of information and no homework.' [Questionnaire respondent: M105 T1]

'UK teachers rarely prepare documents in each class. On the other hand, Thai teachers are well prepared for teaching material'. [Questionnaire respondent: M109 T1]

Plum, welcomed the opportunity of exposure to new and different perceptions:

'So when you when you're in class you have certain things which you haven't learnt, haven't looked at it before but now you know you can go back and … check on the [web] site, look at it. … you know being encouraged … give you opportunities to … actually expose yourself to different perception… different world …you have now learnt.' [Plum Interview Term 2]

Plum's Law teacher, who was a German national, commented on the study skills of her Asian

students:

'…they expect to be told what to do at all stages and so they're not used to independent study and also to the idea that you could contradict your teacher or challenge anything they say.' [Lecturer L04 /Plum/ Law]

She then referred specifically to Law as a subject and how it is a particular challenge:

'I mean Law is … not straight forward. Ultimately, it's not clear what it means and you could say it could mean that [or] it could mean that.' [Lecturer L04 /Plum/ Law]

She explained in more detail why Thai students find studying Law in the UK challenging:

'I think Law is taught perhaps quite differently over there [in Thailand] so that they're more focusing on what the law says and you just have to learn that and know that and memorise it. Whilst I think what we [in UK] expect our students to do, is more critically discuss what it **could** mean and criticise particularly the available opinions which is a different skill. I feel some Thai students find that it takes a while to get used to and may be a year's quite short in the light of this'. [Lecturer L04 /Plum/ Law]

It is interesting to note that as she explains her perception of teaching and learning her language seems to 'other' the Thai students, referring to their country as 'over there' and she appears to align herself with UK pedagogy. She refers to key skills of critical thinking and

discussion of evidential data and makes the interesting comment that for some Thai students 'may be a year's quite short' to get used to this style of teaching and learning. This interactive style of teaching was commented on by a questionnaire respondent:

'Teachers in UK always ask students' opinions or ideas which sometimes based on our own experiences'. [Questionnaire respondent: M75]

Respondents to the bilingual questionnaire demonstrated a positive response in relation to how the UK teachers utilise and present course materials:

- Q21   The lecturer provides extra course materials to help international students understand and keep up with the work

- Q25   The lecturer makes the course material interesting and easy to understand

The graph below shows 53% of students supporting the above statement that UK teachers provide extra course work to assist international students and 51% agreeing that UK teachers make the material interesting and easy to understand.

Figure: 5.1:   Graph of responses to questions 21 and 25.

Responses to Q21 and Q25
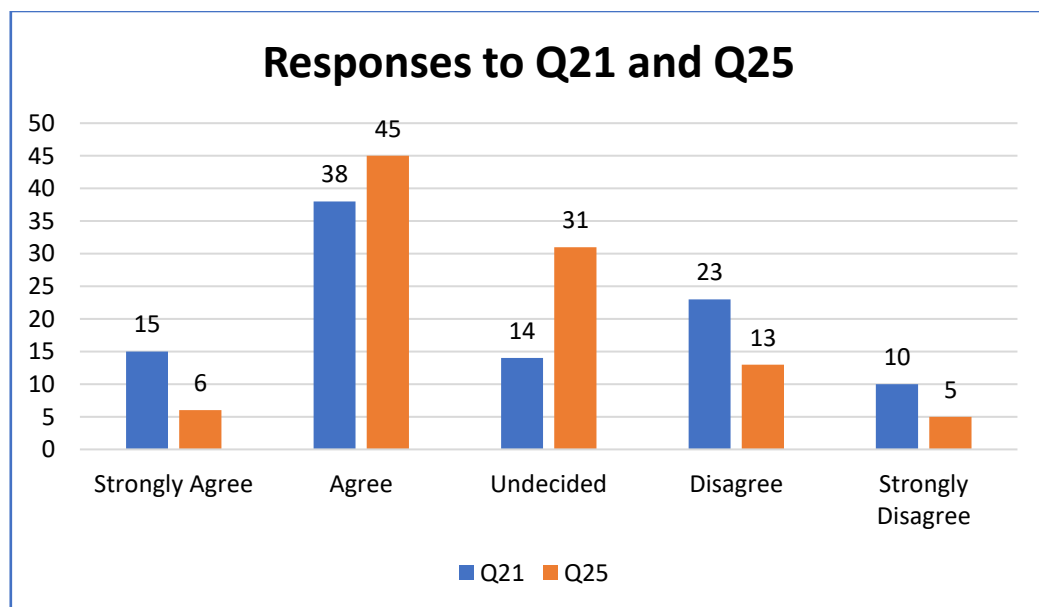
However, some students would have preferred to receive more support material from their teachers as this comment reflects:

'UK teachers rarely prepare documents in each class. On the other hand, Thai teachers are well prepared for teaching material.' [Questionnaire respondent: M109 T1]

What was particularly interesting in this study was the preference of many students to employ technology for research purposes. Plum mentioned in an interview that electronic dictionaries and translators were very popular 68% confirmed that they used the internet all the time compared to only 37% who used the library all the time as illustrated in the following frequency tables:

Table 5.2: Frequency tables showing responses to Q3 and Q4

Q3 DO YOU REGULARLY USE THE LIBRARY FOR RESEARCH?		
ALL THE TIME	23	37%
OFTEN	26	41%
OCCASIONALLY	5	8%
ONCE OR TWICE	7	11%
NEVER	2	3%
TOTAL	63	100%

Q4 DO YOU REGULARLY USE THE INTERNET FOR RESEARCH?		
ALL THE TIME	43	68%
OFTEN	17	27%
OCCASIONALLY	2	3%
ONCE OR TWICE	1	2%
NEVER	0	0%
TOTAL	63	100%

The use of technology by lecturers was appreciated by many respondents with 70% supporting the statement: 'The lecturer uses technology to aid learning':

Table 5.3: Frequency table showing responses to Q28

Q28 LECTURER USES TECHNOLOGY TO AID LEARNING		
STRONGLY AGREE	14	22%
AGREE	30	48%
UNDECIDED	13	21%
DISAGREE	4	6%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3%
TOTAL	63	100%

The university intranet [Blackboard] which enables students to access information independently was also recognised as a useful resource for international students:

'There isn't the site like Blackboard in Thailand'.
[Questionnaire respondent M36]

When asked to rate the overall quality and style of teaching in UK compared to Thailand 54% rated the quality of teaching in the UK excellent/good and 41% rated the style of teaching excellent/good.

- Q67 Quality of teaching experienced in UK compared to Thailand
- Q69 Style of teaching you experienced in UK compared to Thailand

Figure: 5.2:   Graph of responses to questions 67 and 69.
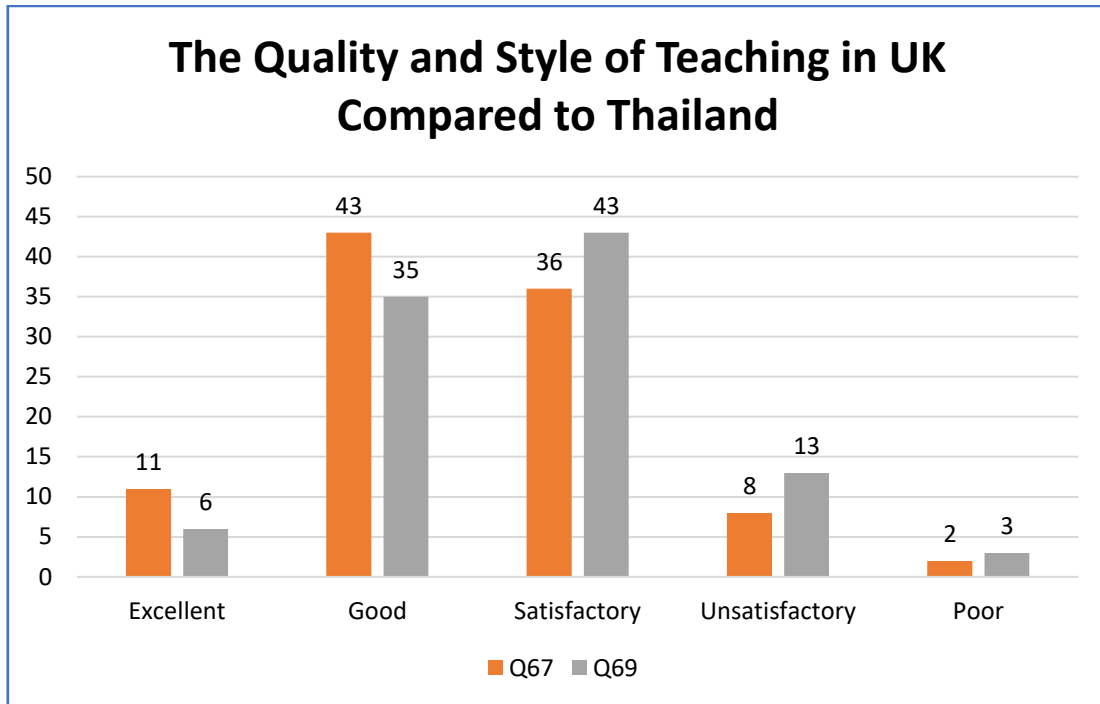
Plum made the point that the effectiveness of a lecture depends on the examples used to illustrate key points and whether they are understood by students from other cultures:

> 'What is interesting about giving a lecture is … making … examples that you can relate to like, you know, something current …. which are relevant to British people, British Society and we're from outside so we don't really know what's going on.' [Plum Interview Term 2]

Plum's perception of 'otherness' was reinforced by the unknown context of the lectures. She reflects that unfamiliar references used by teachers to illustrate particular academic topics made her feel alienated.   She identifies, in particular, British students who she believes have a distinct advantage as they would recognise the contextual references included in the lecture. However, it is possible that not all British students would be familiar with these particular references so they could experience a similar disadvantage.   Abe's Physics teacher explained his method of teaching:

> 'I keep on saying that first we should understand the simple things and then we will be able to answer the more complicated questions'
> [Interview Lecturer L02 /Abe].

During my observation of his class I noticed that he reined in the more eager students who strayed onto topics he had not yet covered. There appeared to be a tension between encouraging discussion and maintaining forward momentum by imparting factual information to complete a packed syllabus within the constraints of the very tight timeframe of a one-year UK Master's degree course. The comparative graph below indicates the results of responses to questions 22 and 31 which asks students to state a preference for either UK or Thai pedagogic styles.

Figure 5.3: Responses to Q22 and Q31

Preference for UK or Thai Pedagogy — bar chart comparing Q22 Prefer UK (blue) and Q31 Prefer Thai (orange) across Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.
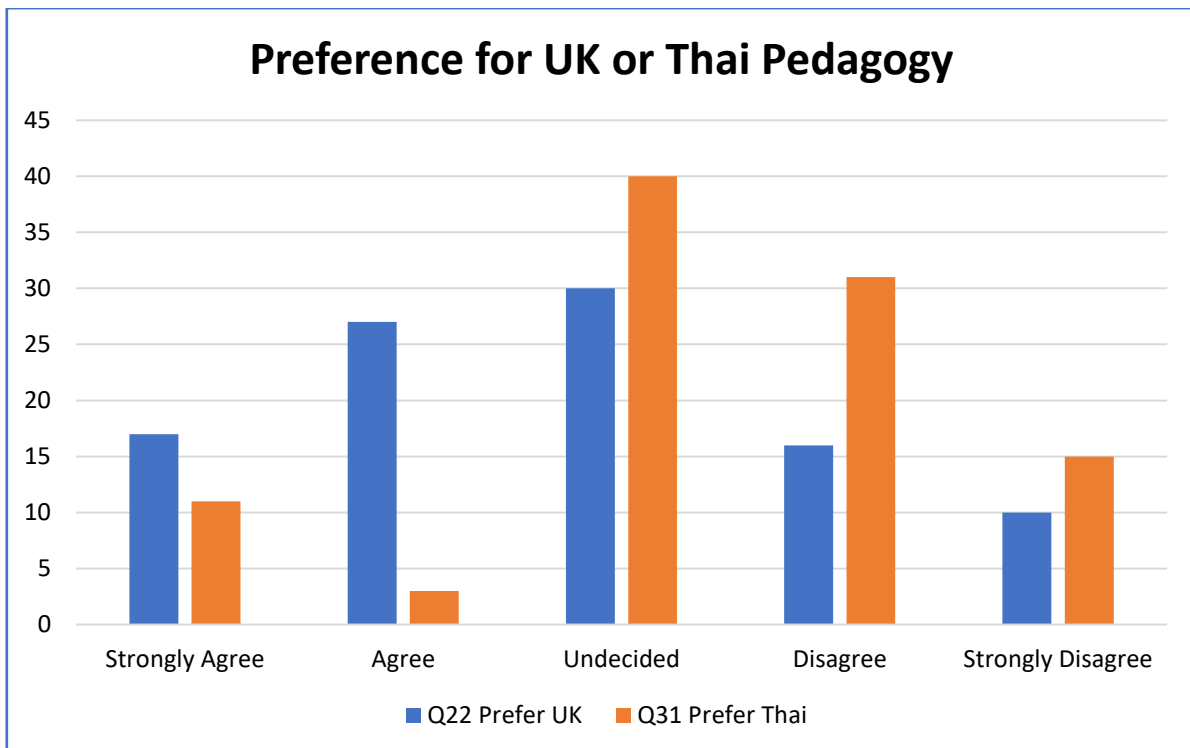
The results indicate that most Thai students in this study preferred the UK style of teaching. This is particularly interesting in light of the stress expressed by students in the previous chapter as a result of linguistic challenges and issues of self-confidence.

5.5   The challenge of krengjai

Abe reflected on the close, supportive relationship he experienced with his Thai supervisor and how she treated him like her family. His responses illustrate how his attitude to his UK teachers evolved over the academic year.

In his first interview he referred to 'krengjai' which roughly translated means to show deference, respect for authority and not losing face. He expressed his concern at the prospect of challenging his teachers:

> 'In Thailand we have …. k*rengjai* … is afraid of er criticise people and losing face …It's make something difficult but it's not bad at all it's … just kind of our culture. [In UK]…I barely barely ask question or criticise anything because it's higher level.   Seminar is really into the research field. For now no criticise but in future maybe.' [Abe: Interview Term 1]

By the end of the Term 3 Abe seemed to have modified his opinion and compares the attitude of UK lecturers towards Masters and PhD students:

> 'They don't care much about you [*Masters students*], they just care about doing their research yeh and when you can get in as a PhD then they'll care about you because you work for them.' [Abe: Group discussion Term 3]

Challenging the views of the teacher can be a cause of cultural angst for Thai students. Jin and Cortazzi (1997: 49) noted that '…while British students may ask as a way of learning (and this heuristic questioning is expected by British teachers), Chinese students may ask

after learning. For Chinese students, one has to learn something and know something about a topic before one can ask, otherwise a question will look foolish'.

Sid explained how he would respond if the teacher made an error in class:

> 'I would just keep it to myself and maybe do some research to confirm that OK he's done a mistake but then I wouldn't go and correct him'. [Sid: Interview Term 1]

In a later interview, he reflected on the different behaviour of Western students compared to those in Thailand:

> Students here [in UK] tend to ask more and seem to question the lecturers more than Thai students. In Thai we just we just sit and then we listen. But I notice that … the UK students … they don't they don't feel like… they don't think like that and no one takes the questions personally, I guess'. [Sid: Interview Term 3: Reflections]

This emic perspective is very interesting and reveals Sid's perception that UK students think and feel differently from Thai students and that in the UK 'no one takes the questions personally' however, in Thailand it would be disrespectful to question a teacher. He identifies with the Thai students 'othering' the UK students who he notes possess a different mind-set '…they don't think like that'.   One questionnaire respondent commented:

> 'Students in UK are brave to challenge their teachers' views'
> [Questionnaire respondent: M68]

The prospect of interactive participation and questioning teachers was also reflected in comments from Plum and Sid:

> 'I think the nature of Thai student which has been in, you know, kind of Thai traditional academic style we don't really expose ourselves in class. We just sit there and listen. That's just what we do… because … we're never encouraged to say something in class.' [Plum: Interview Term 1]

Plum describes 'the nature of the Thai student' and a reluctance to 'expose ourselves' by responding in class. Her comment 'that's just what we do' is linked to her observation that Thai students are not encouraged by their (Thai) teachers to participate / contribute vocally in class. In a separate interview Sid also voiced this view:

> 'I might be a bit scared of looking stupid if I ask something that is, you know, absurd or doesn't make sense and would be embarrassed'. [Sid: Interview Term 3 Reflections]

Tweed and Lehman (2002: 95) refer to an Australian study conducted by Mullins, Quintrell & Hancock (1995) who noted that '…serious difficulty with tutorial participation was four times as likely to be self-reported among a predominantly Asian group of international students as among local students'. Plum confirmed that small teaching groups were also unfamiliar to most Thai:

> 'We don't have tutorials at all [*in Thailand*] …we just got lectures'.
> [Plum: Interview Term 1]

In a separate interview, Sid also agreed that it was difficult to respond in these particular situations:

> 'When the teacher questions something, I might not be able to respond like in that moment but I have to take time, like maybe back home I read over again just figure it out for what he meant…. I might be a bit of a slow learner for lectures. [Sid: Interview Term 1]

The questionnaire responses in my study suggested that levels of stress were high during debates and discussions.

Table 5.4: Frequency table showing responses to Q. 78

Q78 DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS DURING SEMINARS		
VERY STRESSFUL	5	8%
STRESSFUL	22	35%
UNDECIDED	22	35%
HARDLY STRESSFUL	14	22%
NOT STRESSFUL AT ALL	0	0%
TOTAL	63	100%

Only 22% found these situations <u>not</u> to be a source of stress. This view was supported by

Plum and Sid:

'…it takes time for… Thai students to actually…contribute themselves in class, raising hand and asking questions … it is rare.' [Plum: Interview Term 1]

'Actually … I've never wanted to ask any questions in class before because I normally tend to ask my friends'. [Sid: Interview Term 2]

The frequency table below supports this view with only 10% of respondents agreeing

that they always offer to answer questions in lectures.

Table 5.5: Frequency table showing responses to Q. 39

Q39 I ALWAYS OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS IN THE LECTURES		
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0%
AGREE	6	10%
UNDECIDED	18	29%
DISAGREE	30	48%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	9	14%
TOTAL	63	100%

This opinion was supported by an Asian finance lecturer who informed me that he was of

Punjabi heritage but who had been educated in North America:

> 'Thai students are very quiet and it is difficult to know if they understand anything. Students from the U.S. talk anyway and tend not to be embarrassed speaking in public. Also older students tend to participate better, they don't care what others think of them and they are more self-confident. Students who respond the best in lectures tend to come from the UK, India and Germany. [Interview Lecturer 09 / Sid]

Teachers commented on the importance placed on interaction within the classroom e.g. Abe's

physics teacher:

> 'The only way I can assess their work is if they ask questions … this is an advanced studies and therefore they have the responsibility of coping with material … and ask questions. They should ask questions constantly. Seeing they absolutely understand and then they are able to move to the next topic.' [Interview Lecturer 02/ Abe]

Reflecting on Thai students, Sid's finance lecturer commented:

> 'The Thai students tend to feel embarrassed and do not participate. …If the Thai student asks a new question it is normally after the lecture on a specific point.' [Interview Lecturer 03/ Sid]

Questionnaire respondents however, appreciated the effort made by teachers to

encourage student engagement with 68% agreeing / strongly agreeing that the lecturer

makes students comfortable about asking questions.

Table 5.6: Frequency table showing responses to Q. 27

Q27 LECTURER MAKES STUDENTS COMFORTABLE ABOUT ASKING QUESTIONS		
STRONGLY AGREE	12	19%
AGREE	31	49%
UNDECIDED	13	21%
DISAGREE	4	6%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	3	5%
TOTAL	63	100%

5.6 Challenges of learning in a UK classroom

Plum debates the relative merits of attending class compared to studying in her room. What was interesting is that whether she was in class or in her room she felt alone. In fact she describes herself as 'alone in class.' There is no recognition of the positive contribution of her peers or her teacher or the academic stimulation and interactive social nature of being part of a multicultural learning group.

> 'I'm still thinking that if I'm reading it by myself I would much um better than listening like alone in class. But then again if you come to class you would get something more, extra that in the books they don't provide so I would say it it's always the best thing for students to … attend class, go back and revise it again.'
> [Plum: Interview Term 1]

Lesson observation: Plum

> Observing Plum in that particular class, I noticed that she made occasional notes but did not respond at all; either to the teacher or to her fellow class mates. She kept her head down, avoided eye contact and left it to two or three confident students to respond and interact with the teacher. It was clear from her behaviour and her comment that she was doubtful whether attending class enhanced her learning experience. She admitted that the teacher might provide additional information which may not be in the text book and so concluded that it was worth attending class but afterwards she needed to review the topic when she was alone.

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The Thai lecturer remarked:

'…they [Thai students] believe that they [are] learning but learning for them is equivalent to memorising the facts.' [Interview Thai Lecturer]

Referring to two Asian students in his class, Wendy's lecturer commented on their level of concentration:

'… they're just switched on and their concentration is much better than some other students and it's not the fact that Asian students can concentrate and home students can't but in that particular group those two have got skills that are a bit more associated with er with Asian students.' [Lecturer:08 History / Wendy]

Despite his protestations of not generalising he seemed to infer that the 'better' level of concentration was typical of Asian students and was not a proficiency which was generally prevalent in 'some other' students. However, Thai students also tended to generalise in their responses. Reflecting on the behaviour of UK students Sid commented:

'Students in UK seem to be more passionate about their studies'
[Sid: Interview Term 2]

Questionnaire responses also focussed on perceived differences in the learning styles and behaviour of UK students:

'UK students are more likely to attend the lectures…and better deciplin [*discipline*]' than students in Thailand. [Questionnaire respondent: M49]

'They [*UK students*] are relatively more responsibility [*responsible*] … they are more individual'… They love to discuss in class even though sometimes their idea aren't relevance [*relevant*] with what the teacher / seminar topic.' [Questionnaire respondent: M8]

'Students in UK like to discuss and debate' [Questionnaire respondent: M42]

'Students in UK always read and prepare for the lesson before class starts' [Questionnaire respondent: M109]

5.7   Challenges of working with others

Chalmers and Volet (1997: 92) noted that all of the South-East Asian students in their study, located in Australia, formed 'informal study groups' which provided opportunities to 'clarify their understanding of tutorials and course work'. The study groups provided 'social and emotional support…previously supplied by their communities and families'. Fischer (2011: 4) in her article in the US Chronical of Higher Education comments that 'Educators have mixed feelings about this propensity to cluster together' with fellow students from their home country. They [educators] recognise the need for mutual support and a shared first language (L1) but are concerned about '… closed sets forming, isolating students and robbing them of a truly international experience'.

Plum explained that in her experience, Thai students prefer to form study groups. She described how Thai students collaborate for their mutual benefit by distributing topics and constructing 'model answers' to be shared with the group. It is interesting that at first Plum distances herself from the practice of working in an exclusively Thai group and reports it as something carried out by others. She comments on behalf of Thai students:

> 'Thai students kind of gathering together to help each other on … all the issues. So … they tend to pick up … most likely topics is going to be in the exams and … they set practical preps and then they go off and do what they call a model for particular erm issues for each other … not from the book anymore … Yeh so they say to you … just remember the model.' [Plum: Interview Term 1]

Plum later identifies with the Thai group, explaining the benefits she experienced when others reviewed and summarised challenging topics in a familiar (L1) language.

> 'It is actually helpful because it just like a conclusion of everything. You hadn't to actually go in and you know erm hurting your brain on that any more. You just read it one time and understand it because they're gonna hopefully gonna put in a very simple language that makes it understand. But then again you have to bear

in mind that if erm erm, no offence, but mm whether it's right, you know what I mean.'   [Plum: Interview Term 1]

She used the phrase 'hurting your brain' to describe the effect of trying to understand complex academic language and vocabulary and how 'model answers' prepared by other Thai students were helpful to summarise challenging topics. Plum did not wish to cause offence when she commented on possible inaccuracies in the work produced by those in the group.

This could be another example of '*krengjai'* with an almost automatic preface of '…no offence but…' to precede a negative comment even when those concerned are not present. It was interesting that Plum felt she could express these views to this '*farang'* researcher with a very different cultural and educational background.

This positive view of collaboration is reflected by comments received in the questionnaire e.g.

 'Classmates in Thailand would share the lecture notes and reading lists, but in the UK it's very competitive'. [Questionnaire respondent: M36]

 'It's difficult to find good and helpful friends to help explain what I don't understand'. [Questionnaire respondent: M5]

However, this view was not shared by all the respondents and is exemplified by this response:

 'In Thailand students always learn by themselves but in UK students usually discuss about topics.' [Questionnaire respondent: M75]

As the academic year progressed and pressure of time and academic stress increased, Sid chose to join a Thai study group.   For Sid, the motivation to join fellow Thais appeared to

be pragmatic with a clear goal of working together to share the work load in preparation for end of year examinations. Sid explained:

'… some people find it quite easy to understand a subject while others find it easier to follow up on other subjects.' [Sid: Group discussion. Term 2]

Wendy missed the support of Thai class friends. In the UK she was expected to work independently and commented

'…. none of my class will tell me.' [Wendy: Interview Term 3 Reflections]

Wendy complained that her peers worked alone and did not share information unlike the Thai study group Sid had joined at his university.

Three Thai students in the study stated that they preferred to continue a group study practice with which they were familiar in Thailand. Abe, however, worked alone possibly due to the abstract nature of his subject and the fact that there were no other Thai nationals studying with him. He recognised the behaviour of students of a similar ethnicity choosing to group together. He described the behaviour as a 'problem' and identified Chinese and Europeans as cultural groups where this was most prevalent:

'Chinese have this problem as well they group they clustering with their own Chinese people nationality and er people er that that usually come together is European because they they have same cultural.' [Abe: Interview Term 3 Reflections]

In contrast to these views, were the responses of 63 Thai Master's participants to a questionnaire in Term 1.

- 67% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'I prefer to study with Thai students'.

- Confirming this view were the responses to the statement 'I find it difficult to work in a team with other nationalities' with only 16% agreeing / strongly agreeing with the statement and 55% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

These results conflict with Brown (2009: 188) in her study of international students at a UK university, which paints a bleak picture of co-national students being driven by '…shame and the desire to avoid anxiety [to] retreat from English-speaking scenarios into the comfort of the mono-ethnic ghetto'. When referring to SE Asian students she states, 'Thai students were seen to be the most entrenched and unapproachable' (ibid. 2009: 187).

Was the decision of some Thai students and their peers in this study to work in mono-ethnic L1 study groups from choice or necessity in order to successfully complete the one-year degree course as academic pressures and linguistic challenges increased throughout the year? The majority of Thai participants in the questionnaire did not support Brown's data and a more nuanced fine-focus is required in order to understand this particularly interesting yet challenging situation.

This view was initially supported by Sid:

> 'The people in my class they usually stick in groups anyway. They stay with friends … from their own country right.   And … that applies to me too. So…I won't approach anyone without a particular reason anyway but when I do it's just a brief talk so I don't require that they have to be that friendly with me.' [Sid: Group discussion Term 1]

Towards the end of the academic year, Sid's opinion appeared to have modified as he reflected on a situation when he was selected by his peers to work in a cross-cultural study group organised by the lecturer. He was obviously pleased to be selected and it boosted his self-confidence:

'…this term we had to … select our own groups and then somebody …approached me … and ask me if I wanted to join him. So I think erm well it's not that big a deal but then I I still felt erm quite good about it … so I'm not that bad to work with (laugh) after all!' [Sid: Interview Term 3 Reflections]

Plum also described a situation in Term 1, where the lecturer organised the students to work in groups and how she felt it was a positive experience:

'…he created this erm atmosphere where you have to talk to the others. He's put us in groups and make us discuss a particular topics … That is how we started to talk to each other and after that class we started to like [say] "Oh Hi"'. [Plum: Group discussion Term 1]

The responses of the Thai students in this study indicate that they feel positively about working with other nationalities. Sid and Plum recognised that intervention by the teacher organising students into mixed work / discussion groups assisted the integration of the students and also enabled friendships to develop within the small culture of the classroom.

5.8 Challenges of plagiarism

The preference of some Thais and other Asian students to work together and share notes can cause problems and misunderstandings when studying in a UK university. Wendy's lecturer [L08] described how they dealt with it at his UK university and he gave the example of an incident with an Asian student (not a Thai national) which I have included in detail as it is pertinent to this study:

'What it comes down to is just being very clear what we mean by plagiarism; you can use other people's work… as long as the person reading it couldn't possibly think that it was you that wrote it. I think that's the easiest way to put it'. [Interview lecturer L08 / Wendy]

He then gave an example where he had to deal with a clear case of plagiarism by an Asian

student [not Thai] and the effect it had on him '…there is a sort of indignant fascination when

you get an essay and you suddenly work out it's plagiarised'. He explained:

> '… her English was pretty ropey and I was reading this essay and there were bits that were very, very good and I though well 'ok something's clearly going on' … she'd written these sort of rather poor connecting sentences between paragraphs of this stuff.' [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

He described how he met with the student to review her work:

> 'What I did in that case was sit down and put the fear of God into her a little bit, just to give her a sense of the seriousness of it and say; 'well we can't give you any marks so you get a zero for this essay because it's not yours and the bits that you have written aren't really worth any marks anyway''. [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

I enquired how the student reacted:

> '…She said 'oh, she wasn't really aware' and she kind of wriggled out of it but she did really. Yeh, I think she just got caught.' [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

He explained the dilemma of a teacher when faced with a case of plagiarism:

> 'One of the problems that we have is that if you call it plagiarism suddenly you have to get out the big guns and there's this whole heavy procedure which is very serious.' [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

He provided another example of case of plagiarism, again by another Asian student, which

he found amusing:

> The most er (*laugh*) interesting case was a student…who … in a written exam had (*laugh*) … memorised alternate sentences from Wikipedia articles and this was quite a feat of memory. I think…he thought that because he had memorised alternate sentences that then it somehow wasn't nicking it or that we wouldn't catch him. I don't know what was going on. Anyway, it was it was quite fun working out what he'd done once you'd worked it out!' [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

I enquired how the Asian student reacted when confronted. He replied:

> 'I said, ''Look, this isn't your work'' and he said "oh yes it is" and I said "well look, clearly it is not" and he said "well yes it is, I wrote it". … all of a sudden you realise you were in this face off and there is nothing to win.' [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

I asked why he thought students were tempted to plagiarise. He believed the students were under great pressure academically and particularly in a one-year post-graduate degree course.

> 'When there's time pressure … the temptation to go and pinch something off the web must be quite great but as long as it's spelt out very clearly … that this is taken completely seriously and learning in a British university … it's not the memorisation of the texts.' [Interview lecturer L08 /Wendy]

Sid's Italian Finance teacher spoke positively when he described how some students preferred to work together in study groups which can be beneficial but there can be the risk of plagiarism:

> 'It's very healthy, it's good for their own skills, it's good to work in teams, it's good to exchange ideas; everybody has different insights. I think it is enriching in that sense. Plagiarism… it does happen sometimes when they hand in some written work; but I mean the college has a very strict policy on that…. they get very high highly punished for it. Some get kicked out.' [Interview lecturer L05/ Sid]

Another Thai student, Pop, whom I interviewed at the end of his Master's course, commented on the problems of plagiarism and how sharing work can be misunderstood in the UK. He explained:

> 'When I finish my work [in Thailand] I said to my friend: 'you can use my result because I don't mind'. … I don't mind, I just to send to many friends. I think it's … good to share.' [Pop: Interview Term 3]

He reflected on the difference between Thai and 'Western' culture:

'Yeh, they're [UK] very, very hot on plagiarism. They're very strict. The Thai culture of sharing everything can actually be looked on by the Western universities as cheating. Yeh, you see, so here you have a very different culture.' [Pop: Interview Term 3]

Sid considered this important issue and his experiences while studying at a university in Thailand:

'I think in Thailand we tend to overlook this kind of problem but I think it should be a problem and it is a problem. I think the focus isn't there in Thailand I guess they don't talk much about plagiarism.' [Sid: Interview Term 2]

Sid compared the emphasis placed on referencing work correctly and plagiarism when he studied for his undergraduate degree at a traditional Thai university and later when he studied for an international Master's degree also in Thailand:

'In my international degree, before I submitted my research, I had to check that my work is well referenced and no plagiarism is detected but that was in my Master's degree. Prior to that there was nothing. I think that should be fixed. Someone should do something about that.' [Sid: Interview Term 2]

In a group discussion towards the end of their degree course, Sid reaffirmed this view:

'When I did my bachelor's degree I wasn't aware of plagiarism at all' [Sid: Group discussion Term 3]

Abe agreed:

'If they did [mention it], I do not remember. I think not. I think that they didn't mention it'. [Abe: Group discussion Term 3]

Wendy, who had only studied at undergraduate level in Thailand, was made aware by her UK university of the serious nature of plagiarism. During an interview, she voiced her concern and anxiety:

'… plagiarism is a real problem, you know.   It's so difficult to try and phrase it so that it's not copying what they're saying but quoting key points.   Sometime my, like my skill are not good so it look like it's plagiarism.   Yes, I really afraid of this … (laugh).   So scary, it's like I committed a crime here in UK, so scared!' [Wendy: Interview Term 3]

Wan, a Thai student whom I interviewed in Term 3, was also worried about plagiarism and in an interview confirmed that the issue had never been addressed in her undergraduate degree in Thailand. She had attended a pre-sessional course in the UK before the start of the Master's degree and felt it was very helpful in preparing her for a different academic environment:

'Well I think it's Thai system … that we're not treated in this thing [plagiarism] but I was lucky that the pre-sessional course … focused on this. They focus on writing; so they have like one assignment for you and they used … software that detects the plagiarism. They try to encourage you to know the importance of plagiarism …what to do [and] what not to do.'   [Wan: Interview Term 3]

Questionnaire responses:

Students were asked to assess their confidence in avoiding plagiarism.

- Scores obtained from the students ranged from 100 (completely confident) down to 10 with an overall average of 64.2% (n = 63).

One student, responding to an open-ended question to identify their biggest concern, commented:

'Exercising academic standard on my assignments and comprehending the secondary sources and also avoiding plagiarism are the… biggest concern for me'. (Questionnaire respondent: M96 Term 1)

Another respondent commented on the support he had received from his UK university:

'[UK] university offer very good guideline and information to the students and also provide very good advice about plagiarism.' (Questionnaire respondent: M59 Term 1)

It is clear from the responses that most students had received clear information from their universities about the pitfalls of plagiarism and the severe consequences which could result.

5.9   Chapter summary

Evidence from this study presents the varied experiences of Thai students within the UK classroom and compares their relationship with their supervisors and teachers in Thailand. Using data from face to face semi-structured interviews and questionnaire responses this chapter illustrates the views of Thai students regarding their teachers and the pedagogy they experience while studying for their Master's degrees at UK universities. This chapter illustrates how Thai students negotiate their positionality within the UK classroom; the challenges they face and stress they experience within the unfamiliar environment of the small group seminar.   The students explain the concept of krengjai and how, to some Thai students, it may conflict with unfamiliar UK pedagogy when they are expected to challenge and question their teachers.

The participants describe the relationship with their teachers in Thailand and compare it to their experiences in the UK. They explain the position of teachers in Thai society and how these and other figures of authority are held in high esteem. The evidence in this chapter also records a lively debate which provides an interesting window on attitudes of some Thai students towards the external appearance of their teachers which Wortham and Reyes (2015: 51-52) refer to as 'evaluative indexicals', '… any signs that presuppose some evaluation of the people or objects being described'.   They discuss working with other Thai students in study groups to share the work load yet 67% of questionnaire respondents disagreed / strongly disagreed with the statement 'I prefer to study with Thai students'. In addition, only 16% of Thai students in this study agreed with the statement 'I find it difficult to work in a

team with other nationalities'. This is contrary to Brown's (2009) findings whose research reflects the negative responses of international students at a UK university to the formation of study groups by their Thai peers. However, Thai students in this study reveal the benefits of collaboration, in sharing talents and skills in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the subject content for the benefit of the entire group.

> '… some people find it quite easy to understand a subject while others find it easier to follow up on other subjects.' [Sid: Group discussion Term 2]

Some Thai students welcomed the pedagogic approach of some teachers at their UK universities to organise group work within the class and randomly choose the participants for each group. This separated co-national friendship groups and provided an opportunity for students to initiate other friendships within the small culture of the classroom.

Plagiarism proved to be an issue which caused some Thai students stress. They contrasted the collaborative learning style in Thailand of sharing notes and information with the very strict rules of plagiarism employed by UK universities. The experiences of plagiarism described by a UK teacher provided a different perspective and dimension.

This chapter illustrates the perceptions of Thai students as they negotiate their positionality within the culture of the UK university classroom. How their pedagogical and cultural heritage has moulded their learning style and how they have met the challenge of UK pedagogy which for some is very different from their previous experience. In addition, how the practice of collaboration, of sharing work and information can be misunderstood and conflict with the strict definition and rules governing plagiarism enshrined in UK higher education.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS
CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL LIFE

'Because they are Western they think in a Western way.'   [Wendy: Interview Term 1]

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
while studying in the UK?

6.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the adaptation of the Thai students in this study to multicultural UK

university life.   Thai students form an ethnic minority group within the UK university

community. Holliday (1999:249) describes how a small culture paradigm attaches 'culture'

to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour'.   He also

comments that '… cultural residues will be brought from many 'national' or 'ethnic'

experiences'.   Reflecting on the comments of Holliday; how did the Thai students in my

study, with their own 'cultural residues'   adapt to life in the UK and the complex mixture of

cultures within a UK university? I focus on the evidence of interviews and questionnaire

responses to shed light on how Thai student participants negotiated their positionality within

the complex multicultural social environment of a UK university and how they coped with

the challenges of living in the UK.

6.2.   Small culture: The support of friends

In a group discussion Plum, Sid and Abe reflect on relationships with their peers both socially

and academically.   Sid explains his motivation for choosing to work in a study group

composed of fellow Thai nationals:

> 'To tell you the truth maybe my confidence wasn't high at the beginning, at all,
> erm because I was, I wasn't always the top of the class. I've always been like
> that. But well it is hard, but *[a]* lot of Thai people are doing Finance this year,

ten, and I also have my friend from back in college that he did this programme last year so he was really able to help. He gave me his old materials and stuff erm previous past papers, exams. So erm when I don't understand a subject I just simply go to my friend and well we've got ten right so some of them should be able to explain.' [Sid. Group discussion. Term 2]

In my observations made during the discussion I note that:

Sid, openly admits that historically he has never been top of the class but it is interesting that he emphasises the great help and support of his Thai friends who are also studying the same course. Despite the fact that he plays football with a multinational group he sees academic strength & support in belonging to the Thai study group.

Sid uses the analogy of the 'confessional' to reveal in our group discussion his lack of confidence at the start of the course. He emphasises this disclosure by continuing "…to tell you the truth" which precedes a further 'confession' that he is not 'top of his class'. Sid negatively positions himself in relation to both his current and previous peer groups and contextualises the self-analysis of his academic ability by rationalising '…I've always been like that'. In this 'narrating event' (Wortham and Reyes, 2015: 3) which involved fellow Thai students and a '*farang*' interviewer, Sid risked 'losing face' which Goffman (2005:5) defines as the '…positive social value a person effectively claims for himself'. Yet Sid felt confident, within the environment of this small group, to reveal his personal feelings.

6.3.   Intercultural relationships

During a group discussion in Term 2 with Abe and Plum, Sid commented on a preference for socialising with students from a similar culture:

'I usually go for lunch with my South East Asian friends'
[Sid: Group discussion Term 2]

I specifically asked him about the nationalities of these students and how he identified the 'in-group':

> Sid: 'One's from Malaysia, oh actually, three from Malaysia and one from Indonesia and Singapore.'
>
> Interviewer: 'Not from Thailand?'
>
> Sid: 'Oh of course Thailand, yeh. There are ten of us on that course.'

Holliday (1999: 238-9) stresses the importance of differentiating between small culture and sub-culture with the latter implying '…something within and subservient to a particular large ethnic, national or international culture'. In my field notes I comment:

> Interestingly Sid does not mention Thai students until I remind him. It seems that Thai students are included as members of the small (SE Asian) culture by default. Sid relates to the Thai members of the group: 'There are 10 **of us** on the course'. He readily inhabits the smaller sub-culture of Thai students <u>within</u> the small culture of SE Asian students within the larger UK university community.'

In an interview during Term 1, Plum explained that she was one of many Asian students who attended the general two-week induction course prior to the start of the academic year arranged by the UK university for international students. However, the situation changed dramatically when she commenced her degree course. She was disappointed to discover that she was the only Asian in her chosen module classes:

> 'At first er oh so many Asians *(laughter),* entire class … oh my god I saw black hair everywhere but you know after two weeks it feels like it's only me.' [Plum. Interview. Term 1]

Plum's description of fellow Asians is evocative '...I saw black hair everywhere' focusing on a distinctive physical characteristic she felt identified Asian students from other

nationalities. At first, she seemed overwhelmed by the large number of Asian students on the pre-sessional course 'Oh, so many Asians', but in the same sentence she describes her reaction when the academic year commences and she discovers that she is the only Asian on her chosen course. Her positionality changed radically within two weeks from being part of the majority cultural group to being the sole representative of Asian culture.

During the interview, she employs humour when she describes her surprise at being one of a very large number of co-cultural Asian students in a UK university. However she reflects on her changing circumstance as she comments, 'it feels like it's only me' as she describes being the lone representative of her culture in the class. Her change of positionality from Holliday's large culture to small culture is dramatic. In a separate interview in Term 3 Sid reflects on how the various nationalities self-selected into regional friendship groups:

> '…us Thai students and Malaysian students, Singaporeans …we hang out with the Chinese speaking groups; Hong Kong students or mainland Chinese…. I think it's mainly divided between European and Asian.' [Sid: Reflections. Term 3]

During the same interview I asked Sid whether he had experienced a barrier to cross-cultural friendship groups:

> 'I don't think … that they [other students] are not open but it's just that erm we don't share the same interests.' [Sid: Reflections. Term 3]

Sid reaffirmed his allegiance to the Asian group by use of 'we' and 'othering' the 'European' students with his use of 'they'. He provided an example of how shared interests, whether social or academic, erode cultural barriers between nationalities:

> '…with the football team it's all about football…. Sometimes it's about studies and the course works… with that topic …can talk with them …because I'm involved.' [Sid: Reflections. Term 3]

Questionnaire responses:

The Term 1 questionnaire (n=63), focusing on views from the Thai student perspective, produced results which did not support Brown's (2009:4) findings i.e. that Thai students were '…close to the point of exclusivity' and '…to be the most entrenched and the most unapproachable'.   The following frequency tables illustrate the positive and confident attitude of Thai students in this study to widen their multicultural friendships:

Table 6.1: Frequency table showing responses to Q. 46

Q46 I FIND IT EASY TO MAKE NEW 'FARANG' (WESTERN) FRIENDS		
STRONGLY AGREE	7	11%
AGREE	19	30%
UNDECIDED	23	37%
DISAGREE	11	17%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	3	5%
TOTAL	63	100%

To the statement 'I find it easy to make new '*farang*' friends' 41% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement with only 22% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 6.2: Frequency table showing responses to Q. 53

Q53 I LACK THE CONFIDENCE TO MIX WITH OTHERS IN MY GROUP		
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0%
AGREE	5	8%
UNDECIDED	15	24%
DISAGREE	31	49%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	12	19%
TOTAL	63	100%

This evidence is supported by the responses to Q 53: To the statement 'I lack confidence to mix with others in my group' only 8% agreed. A noteworthy 68% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

However, even more interesting was their response to the questions of who they would contact if they had a problem.

Q. 47: If I had a problem I would seek help from the (UK) university
Q. 48: If I had a problem I would contact a Thai friend
Q. 49: If I had a problem I would contact my family
Q. 50: If I had a problem I would contact the Thai Embassy

Figure 6.1: Questionnaire responses (n=63) Term 1   Qs 47-50

Responses to Questions 47, 48, 49 & 50

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q47	10	38	29	17	6
Q48	10	60	20	8	2
Q49	27	48	9	11	5
Q50	10	44	31	10	5
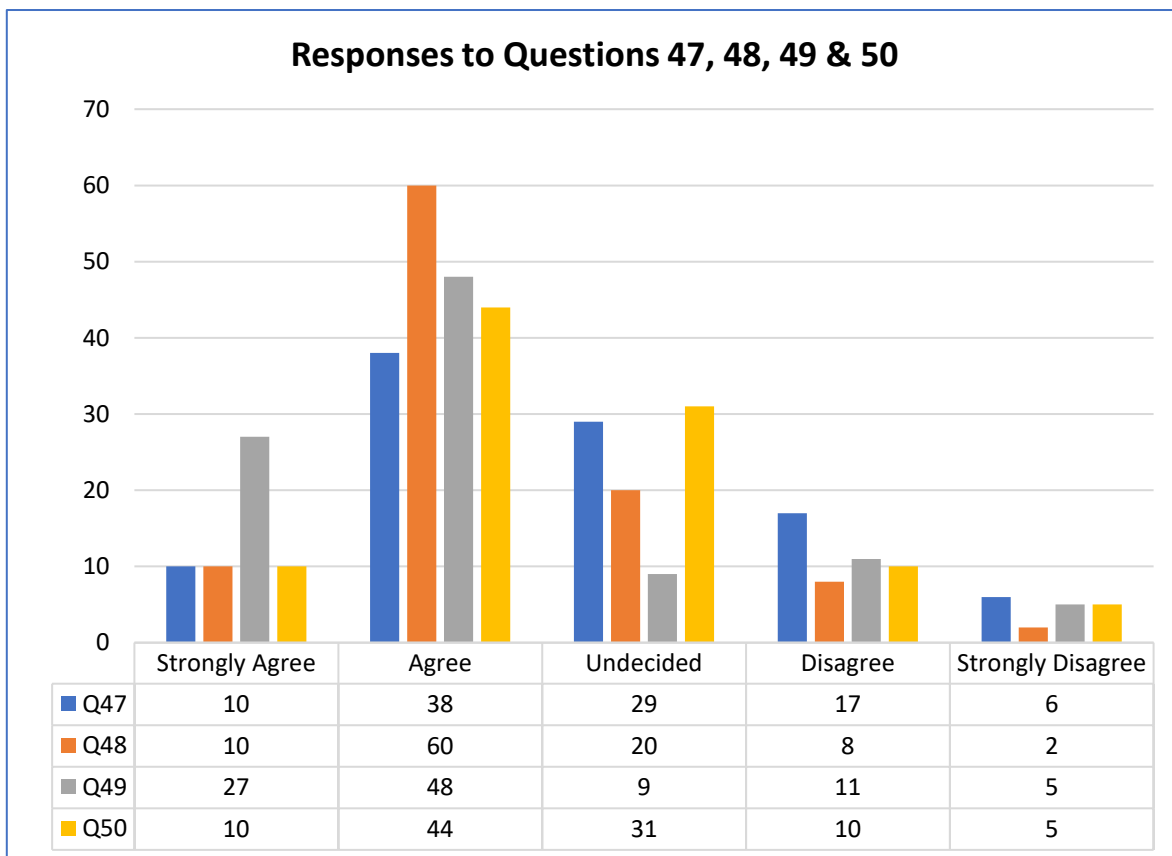
This is a revealing set of results indicating that if they were experiencing a problem, the Thai students in this study agreed / strongly agreed that they would contact the following for help:

1. Family   75%

2. Thai friend   70%

3. Thai Embassy   54%

4. UK university   48%

These results demonstrate that the Thai students would first turn to family and Thai friends rather than take advantage of the wide variety of support and assistance which is available within their UK university.

In what could be described as sweeping, essentialist generalisations, Abe describes his perception of the character of Thai nationals compared to other nationalities he has observed within the classroom environment:

> 'We [Thai] we are modest, quite modest compared to European…. American people is very, very show off! They would ask question; a lot sometimes it makes sense, sometime it doesn't. … I do ask if I think it's worthwhile [Abe Reflections Term 3]

Abe described the Thai character as 'modest' compared to Americans and Europeans. He was clearly irritated by students who he felt wasted valuable time in lessons with irrelevant questions and who in his opinion were 'showing off'. In a discussion with Plum and Sid, Abe commented on other nationalities within his class:

> '…the Italian is friendly and er other European people is quite friendly and I talk with German guy and American guy and Swiss guy…[he] ask me about the subject and I explain to him.' [Abe. Discussion. Term 1]

Abe found it easier to converse with other students when talking about work related topics. Plum agreed that in her experience some nationalities were friendlier than others saying:

> '…Turkish, from Switzerland, from Nigeria, from France, from Germany, erm these people … are quite friendly to me'. [Plum. Discussion. Term 1]

It was interesting to note how the Thai students referred to their multinational peers: Abe categorised the students into two distinct cultural groups: Asians and those which he collectively labelled as Europeans. As Reyes (2009: 56) explains '…stereotypes are formulated to be maximally applicable and available …as meaningful resources to form relationships and resources with which to identify'.

In the Thai language, the term '*farang*' meaning 'foreigner / Westerner' reflects how Thais view non-Asians. Yet when commenting on fellow-Asian students both Sid and Abe identify the particular nationalities. Similarly, when I interviewed the lecturers they tended to categorise Asians as one group and identified non-Asian students according to their nationalities. Plum, on the other hand, being the only Asian in the class identified the nationalities of her fellow students rather than collectively grouping them as '*farang*'. Reyes (2009: 43) comments '…stereotypes are simply typical features: at best, they are approximate descriptors that may or may not always be accurate or reliable'.

Sid commented on how nationalities grouped together and the challenge of approaching other a person from another nationality:

> 'The people in my class they usually stick stick in groups anyway. They stay with friends from their own country, right. And so erm that applies to me too. So I won't approach anyone without a particular reason anyway but when I do it's just a brief talk so I don't require that they have to be that friendly with me.' [Sid Discussion. Term 1]

I asked Sid to provide an example of when he might speak to a person from another nationality:

> 'When I'm listening to a lecture and erm somehow I got lost then maybe I'll just ask the guy next to me "ok what is he um where are we now?" and then he just answer and er that's it.'   [Sid Discussion. Term 1]

Sid explained that he initiated communication with students of other nationalities in the class out of necessity and like Abe, the interaction focussed specifically on the immediate enquiry related to classwork which Sid emphasised by stating '…and then he just answer and er that's it'.

In a separate interview, Wendy described a negative experience when trying to converse with a fellow Thai student in one of her classes. She discovered that after graduating, they would be working closely together in the future. She was shocked by the other student's response:

> 'I ask her and said I also had to work for *(name of Thai University)*, and er she doesn't seem interested didn't want to talk to me. I asked her what is your name and then after that she gone *(laugh)*. I think it is very weird. I don't know why she doesn't want to talk to me or want to know me because we have to work together for life *(laugh)* in Thailand.' [Wendy Interview Term 1]

Wendy smiled and commented on how unusual it was to receive this negative response from a co-national, stating '…I can tell that it's not about nationality.' In my field notes I comment: '…so in this case we must challenge the premise that students of the same nationality will naturally group together!' The incident between the two Thai students may require further investigation and a more nuanced interpretation of the interaction which may possibly reflect perceptions of differing socio-economic backgrounds.

6.3.1   Relationships with UK students

My field notes reflect the high proportion of non-UK nationals (students and teachers) in the classes I observed. This was a factor which emerged from questionnaire data: 45% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I expected more UK students in my classes'.

> '(UK) People (most of them) are not friendly at all'
> [Questionnaire respondent: M5]

During a discussion with Sid and Plum, Abe commented that UK students were 'difficult to approach':

> 'If they don't speak to me I am not going to speak to them. That's my policy but but erm I do say "Hi". I do say er "greeting friend" something like that … the British people is quite difficult to approach …there's one that's not very hard to talk to but he is British Malaysian so he's very friendly and I talk with him quite a lot yeh.' [Abe. Discussion. Term 1]

Abe referred to his peers as 'they' and so distances himself. They are the 'others'. He found it difficult to make friends with UK students and singled out the one exception which he later identified as British but of Malaysian heritage.   Referring again to the unapproachable UK students he comments:

> 'They [UK students] don't make the first move and I don't make the first move so no-one does'. [Abe. Discussion. Term 1]

Abe provided an example of how he spoke with a British student in his class about work:

> '...[a] British guy talking about some work that I I've known before … so I start a conversation with him about that work and we talk to each other ever since'.
> [Abe. Discussion. Term 1]

As in Sid's case, Abe restricted his communication to a specific work-related focus. Unlike Sid, Abe used this as a starting point in their relationship and commented that they had communicated 'ever since'. Abe had the advantage of previous knowledge of the academic topic under discussion which provided him with the self-confidence to engage with the British student.

Plum agreed with Abe on how unapproachable she found some UK students in her class but she made allowances as they [UK students] were in the minority in her class:

> 'One of them is actually like British others are like half British half something. (*Name*) she's from Ireland, she's Irish, she's not actually from here, you see what I mean? …But I kind of understand because look at the size of the class. We [*non-British*] are the majority anyway and they're just like minority. … I think they felt a bit of kind of difficulties getting along because they are minority'. [Plum. Discussion. Term 1]

In this situation, the host nationals were in the minority and formed the small group within a larger group of multinational students. Plum empathised with them as being the minority group and finding it difficult to interact with 'others' in the class with whom they had no cultural affinities. Plum explained why she believed some UK students found it difficult to socialise and reasoned that it might be because they had no personal experience of Asians or their culture:

> 'I think it depends on their experience as well. I mean, in my opinion, I think **some** of them they don't get along with Asian because of their experience. They never experience or they've never choose to be surrounded by Asian or even had … you know, get to know some Asians. But for some British, they get along really well with Asian people; they've been to Asia, they have their colleagues who are Asian, they used to have a girlfriend or boyfriend who are Asian; those people they just really friendly…. seriously approachable.' [Plum. Discussion. Term 1]

Plum concluded that each person is different and, echoing Wendy's earlier comments, that being unapproachable is not a national stereotypic description of all UK students.

> 'Yeh I've met both. Um you know I just think that it's just depends on the persons not just like, you know, this is characteristic of British. It just depends on the person'. [Plum. Discussion. Term 1]

Plum's comments call into question essentialist descriptions of national stereotypes which Piller (2012: 82) states as '…ignoring diversity within a nation, but also maximising differences between nations'. She comments that in a world of trans-global migration '…cultural and communicative styles and values have become diluted and have acquired a mix-and-match flavour as more people travel and migrate' (Piller 2012: 69).

Plum recognises the problems of finding 'common ground' and shared experiences with students from different cultural backgrounds. By the end of the course she had developed a pragmatic view and made the following comment:

> 'I don't blame people not talking to me as sometimes they just don't know what to talk about due to the different nationalities; some might see it as a barrier to be friend. One suggestion is just to say it is not the end of the world. You can always make friends though it is not as many as you expected, it is not the end of the world. For example, I only have a couple of friend who I officially hanging out with and I am happy with it.' [Plum: Reflections: Term 3]

6.4. Cultural challenges

Wendy commented that it would be very difficult to employ some UK teaching methods e.g. class debating, in Thailand. She provided a powerful example to illustrate her point. She was participating in a class debate organised by the teacher and it resulted in a serious cultural problem with a fellow Thai student who was speaking on the opposing side of the debate to Wendy:

'I think it it's hard to use the UK system in Thailand … it happen to me just two weeks ago. I attend the seminar *[in UK]* … and there is another Thai student in the class … we have to like debate on one topic … we are in a different side … and she said something and I just erm find some evidence to show that it's not true. **After that she she never speak to me again**.' [Wendy. Reflections. Term 3]

Wendy countered the Thai student's argument with evidence which she had researched to support her viewpoint. The Thai student took personal exception to Wendy's action. Wendy was very upset and I commented in my notes:

This is a very interesting example where Wendy feels she was instrumental in another Thai student 'losing face'. The other student never spoke to her again. Wendy reminds herself not to disagree with other Thai students.

We discussed this incident at length because the recollection clearly still upset Wendy.

'…this is just something that shouldn't have happened, right? I think this is just something in class it seem like she doesn't want to speak to me anymore. (*laugh*) Yes it's true it happen so I think it is not good… if I don't agree with Thai … I don't say nothing.' [Wendy. Reflections. Term 3]

It transpired that the other Thai student had been in the UK just one month prior to the incident. Wendy could not be consoled. Her vocabulary was charged with emotion as she explained how she had caused the other student to 'lose face' in front of her peers:

'…it's like I I I tear, I tear her face! ... if you do like this … other people fail…. but **it's not like that here** [in UK] right?' [Wendy. Reflections interview. Term 3]

As Goffman (2005: 14) comments '…the person will have two points of view - a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face'. Even though Wendy understood the concept and benefit of evidence based discussion

as a method of teaching in UK universities and how it reinforced the understanding of

opposing viewpoints, Wendy was devastated by her actions and lost self-confidence:

> 'I thought oh well, you know that you wrong because of this and this
> *[evidence] ....* but it's made me lose the confidence. (*laugh*). If you do it with
> Thai people it might not be good for you right, because we not used to this
> system.' [Wendy. Reflections. Term 3]

It could be argued that Wendy was deploying stereotypes of norms in British and Thai culture

to rationalise and make sense of this negative experience.

6.5. Culture and subject content

Plum commented that it was important for Thai students to prepare themselves for very

different cultural perspectives or viewpoints when studying in the UK. She found the sexual

content in some of her classes challenging in particular the focus on the law governing

obscenity and web sites which were deemed unsuitable for children:

> 'They give you opportunities…you actually expose yourself to different
> perception… different world than you know *(laughter)*

> It's like … last week it was about obscenity and indecency in the content …and
> show sexual kind of stuff and I was kind of shock.' [Plum Reflections Term 3]

I observed one of these classes and noted that the lecturer had restricted her presentation to

screen shots taken from websites showing explicit sexual content. Plum spoke on behalf of

Thai students and also commented from a personal perspective:

> '…you know because you choose to study here *[UK]* so you tend to know already
> that you will read a lot of culture shock … pretty much every day so I think it's
> OK. I think being there for so long they *[Thai students]* tend to kind of
> Westernise themselves in their thought, their perception towards certain things.'
> [Plum Reflections Term 3]

She made the point that after spending time in the UK, Thai students '…tend to Westernise themselves'. I commented in my field notes:

> Plum distances herself from this observation of Thai students by stepping outside Holliday's 'small group' /stereotype using 'they' instead of 'we' despite the fact that only moments before when referring to 'culture shock' she identifies with and inhabits the 'small group' culture of Thai students.

6.6.   Pub culture

The pub was identified by Thai students in this study as a focus of socialisation among UK university students. Montgomery (2010: 90) comments that '…the social life associated with the pub and drinking…may be another psychological barrier for international students'. She explains that the '…phenomenon of drinking heavily is seen…to be a 'Northern European' pattern of behaviour …designed to encourage people to become more sociable and friendly'. It was interesting to note that the cultural stereotyping described by Montgomery (2010) was reflected in comments made by some of the Thai students in this study. In a group discussion with Abe and Sid, Plum comments that in her opinion alcohol plays an important part in British life and social culture:

> 'I think **British people drink alcohol a lot** and they start drinking quite early as well. Like around [*name*] Street like I live there and it's kind of office area as well and most of the people they, I don't know why they do that. …it should be five o'clock right but they start drinking at one *[o'clock]* …. the thing is they don't go home they just sticking around sitting, chatting, smoking and drinking *(laugh)*. They smoke a lot as well'. [Group discussion: Abe, Plum and Sid   Term 3]

Plum, states that 'British people drink alcohol a lot' reflecting the stereotypic description of heavy drinking as a 'Northern European' pattern of behaviour (Montgomery 2010: 90).

Plum's views on excessive consumption of alcohol were also reflected in some survey responses comparing the main differences of life in the UK compared to Thailand:

'I definitely drink more alcohol in UK: more than in Thailand'
[Questionnaire respondent: M36]

'Students (maybe staff also) love going to the pub in the evening'
[Questionnaire respondent: M49]

'British people drink a lot and start early as well' [Questionnaire respondent: M33]

'My classmates love to go to the pub after library or the lecture'.
[Questionnaire respondent: M36]

Plum was shocked by the drinking culture in the UK and also by the large numbers of people who smoked cigarettes. Sid found it surprising that so many people smoked in the UK but reflected that in Thailand smoking and drinking were on the increase especially by Thai students:

> 'A lot more like younger people start smoking and yes university kids they do smoke more than before. I think now the alcohol consumption rate in Thailand is among the highest.   Well not exactly the highest but surely the top five, I'm not quite sure.'   [Group discussion: Abe, Plum and Sid   Term 3]

Sid recognises that Plum's stereotypic depiction of heavy-drinking UK students could describe the evolving drinking culture among students in Thailand. This discussion took place at the end of their course so Sid felt confident to raise a negative depiction of Thai behaviour rather than defending it to a farang researcher. This statement triggered a very interesting discussion between the students regarding the changing social and cultural behaviour of university students in Thailand. Each of the students re-positioned themselves in the light of Sid's comment as if collectively recognising the veracity of his observation and supporting his depiction of the evolving Thai student culture. This is an extract of the discussion between the students:

Abe: 'My university *[is]* surrounded by pubs now.'

Plum enquired the name of the Thai university and commented:

'…Oh yeh (*laugh*) I would say this is right.'

Abe described the tradition whereby 'some faculties take the 'freshers' *[newly enrolled students]* to drink'.

Sid who originally studied Engineering in Thailand for his undergraduate degree confirmed: '…Yeh that's how it is for my subject also.'

Plum: 'Yeh the Engineering group drink really hard, they've got reputation for drinking'.

Sid, took exception to this comment by Plum and distanced himself from the stereotype of the hard-drinking Engineering faculty. He explained: 'It's not that true. If you don't want to *[drink]* then you just explain that 'I don't want to' then they will leave you alone.'

Abe, disagreed and stated that at his Thai university '… if you don't drink it's kind of not look bad … *[but]* you look different from that that group of people; that's the majority of people.'

Abe clearly identified the 'in-group' of drinkers with the 'out-group' of non-drinkers.

Interestingly, he did not state an allegiance to either group.

Sid reverted to the original topic and commented '… I think the British they drink a lot more responsible.' He drew a similarity between UK and Thailand regarding drinking and driving which he commented was against the law: '…but people do it, right? Same in Thailand. We have road kills every night.'

Plum, defended her British friends '… whenever they drive they're not gonna drink that much. It's just a pint and then that's it. They just say 'I'm driving' and they're not gonna drink'.

Sid agreed and added: 'I think here the pubs close before midnight right? … but in Thailand it's two or three in the morning'. Identifying that the opportunity to drink longer in Thailand may be a mitigating factor.

Plum, clearly felt she had more experience of UK city night life interrupted and stated: '…No it's usually two or three, in [*name of area in UK*]'.

This exchange was interesting on many levels and illustrated how during the discursive process the students '…employed stereotypes to position themselves and others in relation to stereotypes or in relation to one another' (Reyes 2009: 58).

Abe's positioning and viewpoint when discussing 'pub culture' with the other Thai students is in marked contrast when speaking to me in a separate interview on the same topic when he explained that he resolutely refused to join his UK peers at the pub and commented that he was intolerant to alcohol. These two 'narrating events' illustrate how '…a learner has experience in one or more events and then behaves differently in subsequent events' or '…a novice experiences events characteristic of a group and then participates more competently in subsequent events' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 1).

Sid, who seemed to be the most gregarious of the participants in this study commented in a separate interview in Term 1:

> 'I go clubbing with my friends maybe once every two weeks and bank holidays; maybe on Fridays. It helps that you have many Thai students at [*name of university*]' [Sid: Interview Term 1]

It was clear that Sid enjoyed socialising. Plum, in a separate interview in Term I, found it more difficult to combine the demands of studying with late nights compared to when she was younger.

> 'It's just like, you know, living your life playing hard and studying hard as well … I would say when you getting old, I am not as young as before. I mean now I know that when I go out clubbing I need time to actually relax. I cannot be refreshed … like I used to.' [Plum Interview Term 1]

Plum identified the need to socialise in order to make new friends ''I still **have to go** clubbing for just socialising sake…like clubbings and other kind of social gatherings for beers'. She was aware of the consequences and the adverse impact this life style had on her studies:

> 'I still have to go clubbing for just socialising sake. I I came home late. I sleep like really late. So I wake up quite late … its noon already. You don't really have

time, I mean you have to get yourself ready, prepare for class, come to class in the afternoon and after class you just think that you're hungry and you have something to eat and when you get back home you just eat …and it's night already. At midnight you just have to go to bed already *(laughter)* so where's the time? '[Plum Interview Term 1]

Abe, restricted his socialisation to the daytime and stated '… I don't go out at night as Thai people don't'.   He spoke on behalf of Thai nationals, by stating that his social behaviour pattern was stereotypically Thai. It was clear from my interviews with Plum and Sid that they went clubbing in the evening with friends and enjoyed an alcoholic drink.

Abe explained: I go out during the day and I go to the restaurant… we usually have lunch together, dinner together and talk during the meal.' He commented that he had an intolerance of alcohol:

'I'm very bad at alcohol. Any type of alcohol, even the ice cream *(laugh)* … *[liqueur]* chocolate that that have some whiskey in, I try it once and I'm blushing.' [Abe Reflections Interview Term 3]

Abe explained how he had moved outside his social and cultural 'comfort zone' on one occasion when he was invited to the pub:

'There was one situation my German friend tell me that "we are going to the pub, will you join us? Come on let's try just one; if you don't like it you doesn't have to come again". So I go to the pub, yeh. They speak and erm I listen *(laugh)*. I do speak something but the conversation that that they have er it's something I don't have experience; they talk about …erm the *[TV]* soap, the TV and PhD student in our department but I don't know them'. [Abe Reflections Interview Term 3]

As Wortham and Reyes (2015: 58) state: 'when speakers presuppose a voice for a narrated character or narrating participant, they also position themselves with respect to that voice and evaluate it'. In this example, Abe 'voices' the German student' in his narrative and his

description appears to negatively evaluate the group of students 'They speak and I listen'. In this complex commentary to the *farang* interviewer, Abe positions himself as narrator but also repositions himself by voicing the German student. It was clear from Abe's reaction that he felt uncomfortable when recounting this event. Abe did not share the same cultural experiences as the 'Western' students so he felt unable to participate in the conversation. It was not only the cultural differences in the group. Abe did not know the post-doctoral researchers in the department so he had nothing in common with the other students or their shared cultural experiences. As Abe commented at the end of the course

> '…there are so little we have in common. My classmates usually talk about Western things like US politic, some sport tournament in Europe, the Simpson (that yellowish silly cartoon) and these kind of stuff that I'm clueless.'   [Abe: Reflections Interview Term 3]

Abe demonstrates a superior positioning against an alien 'Western' culture and negative evaluation in the disparaging and dismissive description of the 'yellowish, silly cartoon' but then he repositions himself with the deprecating comment 'I'm clueless'.

Abe then describes how one of the 'Western' students in the pub tried to include Abe in the conversation by describing a film he had seen about Thai kick-boxing.

> '…there's a guy saying about Thai movie … it's a movie about a guy er fighting, Thai boxing thing. That guy found it interesting but I'm not! That movie it's not great, it suck! *(laugh).*' [Abe Reflections Interview Term 3]

Abe explained to me that the 'Western'- made film was not well received in Thailand and stated '…every Thai people believe the same way I do' which may provide an illustration where 'cultural models or stereotypes…become potentially relevant context that participants

…use to interpret signs and make inferences about voicing, positioning and social action.' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 15).

> 'You know, when the *[Thai]* culture came to international level it's kind of fake; it's not true and every every people in that country *[Thailand]* will know that that's not our culture.' [Abe Reflections Interview Term 3]

Abe positioned himself as Thai in opposition to what he viewed as the negative stereotyping and depiction of Thai culture in a film which was made by 'farang'. By cultural association, he distanced himself from the group of 'farang' students within the university and host nation. For Abe the evening at the pub was not a success and he did not repeat the experience. As he commented at the end of the course:

> 'Maybe if I go to the pub with them more often would help me get more friends. Well, I never think that more friends will do any good. I prefer few good friends! Perhaps the only difficulty is I didn't want to join them in the first place.' [Abe: Reflections Interview Term 3]

In the light of this comment, it is helpful to reflect on Reyes (2009: 44) who states that '…some stereotypes may be hurtful towards individuals but these same individuals can also reappropriate such stereotypes as a *resource* for accomplishing new social actions'. She explains that '…positioning the self and other…is part and parcel of how stereotypes are used to resist oppression and celebrate identities.' Abe identifies himself and is identified by the group as a Thai national which the group associated with Thai boxing but as Reyes states Abe then '…uses the stereotype as a resource for creating relationships with the other interactants'. Abe exhibits resistance and reacts against the superficial broad brush strokes of the perceived Thai stereotype represented by Thai boxing and instead fine focuses on the film quality and content which he feels does not represent Thai culture accurately and in fact represents it negatively on the world stage. The German student innocently deploys a

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stereotype of 'Thainess' to initiate conversation in a social setting but results in miscommunication which has the opposite effect.

Reyes comments on 'widespread typification' whereby through the circulation of 'typification of behaviour' in this case 'Thai boxing' a stereotype can be maintained through 'discursive chains'. The situation in the pub is a good example where a group of 'Western' students are accepting the Thai stereotype and circulating it within a social context. As Reyes (2009: 57) explains, the 'vehicles' for perpetuating and disseminating stereotypes are diverse and not restricted to individual 'speakers and hearers'. She notes that '…stereotypes can circulate through various popular media, such as film, television…which can perpetuate the distribution of value…' in this case the global distribution of a film depicting Thai nationals. Importantly she comments that '...this process is not neutral' and she focuses on the responsibility of '…those who have power to control these signs and sign vehicles'.

Abe was offended by the stereotypic depiction of his culture and how this 'inaccurate fiction' was being disseminated among his peer group and to a widespread international audience by the film maker.

6.7.   Perceptions of discrimination and prejudice

Reyes (2009: 112) comments that sometimes, in participant narratives, the '…process of identification also emerges through the discursive accounts of objectification- moments in which individuals contemplate an event…through the eyes of another'.   Ward, Bochner and Furnham, (2001: 153) add to this perspective of distancing oneself from an incident or 'othering' those involved by stating: 'It is not uncommon for international students to perceive prejudice and discrimination, and these perceptions are often stronger in students

who are more culturally dissimilar from members of the host population. Perceptions of discrimination are also stronger in sojourners compared with immigrant students'.

Wendy described an experience in a history class which clearly upset her. She expressed her frustration at what she viewed as the biased, prejudiced 'Western' perspective taken by the lecturer, who was of North American origin, regarding the cause and effect of the war in neighbouring Vietnam.

> '… because **they** are Western, they think in a Western way. They never think about another side that I think quite important as well. For example, in (*name of History teacher*) class they always think what the US do in er in South East Asia, do **for us** South East Asians and why; but I think that why they have a right to do it in South East Asia because it's **our** country and why they can invade er Afghanistan or intervene in other country? … you know it doesn't seem fair to do it, but **they** never thought about it.' [Wendy Interview Term 1]

Wendy felt she had a valid viewpoint and identified with the geographical region and its people when she stated '…what the US do for **us** South East Asians' and '…it's **our** country'. She 'others' the US by stating '…**they** are Western, **they** think in a Western way'. She viewed the conflict from a very different perspective. As Wortham and Reyes (2015: 5) state '…distinguishing between "we" and "they" …does more than refer to two groups. It presupposes a boundary between one group that includes the speaker and another group that excludes him or her. This boundary sometimes becomes salient in social action when a speaker places some people beyond the boundary, in an out-group'

Although Wendy may have positioned the US in the 'out–group' she was aware of the nationality of the lecturer and so she did not wish to give offence by questioning his views. Yet she feels confident in the interview with this UK researcher to express her hurt and confusion by, in her opinion, the one-sided US perspective promoted in the lecture:

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'No they think that why U.S.… intervene to that country why you think why *(laugh)* why **they** have a right to do that but I I don't want to ask that question in the class… he is American.' [Wendy Interview Term 1]

In my field notes I comment:

As a UK teacher, I cannot help but wonder why the lecturer was not sensitive to the multicultural background of his international class and did not take the opportunity to open the topic for rich debate and provide a platform for varying viewpoints. It would have been so rewarding for all participants.

6.8.   Regional variations

The four key participants came from different regions in Thailand and their socio-economic backgrounds may have influenced their perspectives on UK culture. Abe was brought up in the poorer north of the country:

'I come from the northern part of Thailand so I am familiar with the Northern culture and er I live with my grand mum and granddad cos my my parents died around about ten years ago.' [Abe Interview Term 1]

Abe described cultural practices in the UK which he found challenging and commented on physical contact he had observed between strangers'… like hand shaking'. In Thailand the respectful 'wa*i*' greeting [*bowing with palms together*] is the norm so obviating the need for physical contact. Abe then continued

'I've been round and saw people kissing...in public! That's still that still surprising me every time I see that. That not happen I never seen that never seen that in Thailand.' [Abe Interview Term 1]

Wendy, who lived with her parents in a farming community in central Thailand commented in a separate interview:

'Holding hands … I think in Thai you can see but not kissing. Holding hands is quite common in Thailand' [Wendy reflections interview: Term 3]

Plum agreed with this view and stated in a separate interview

> '…holding hands that a lot already *[in Thailand]* but we don't kiss we don't hug … we just do them in private.' [Plum Interview Term 2]

In my field notes I comment:

> Abe believes this cultural difference which he has observed is important to mention. He laughs at this point possibly to mask his embarrassment. It takes courage especially in a first interview with a '*farang*'.

This 'narrated event' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 3) continued as a topic of conversation

when Abe returned to this subject in a group discussion later in the term with Sid and Plum:

> '…when I see people kissing in in the public I I do feel strange.   I feel wow kissing (laugh) and … I I not get used to this yet … but that it's good to see (laugh). [Abe Group discussion Term 2]

Plum, who was born in northern Thailand, and her parents moved to Bangkok when she was very young, explained:

> 'I mean if Thai, some Thai people …grown up, you know, in other countries or … you know, watching movies, those kind of stuff, this attitudes that they have towards people kissing in the public is not going to be a big deal for **them.** … **we've** known all along they do it here in the UK so it's not too weird. It's a movie. But actually people kiss at the airport. Yeh but at home *[in Thailand]* you wouldn't. We just know where the boundary is. We know because we've been raised in this.   I mean society expects Thai kids to behave. [Plum   Group discussion Term 2]

Plum demonstrates the complexity of positionality by initially taking the role of narrator

describing, to me, a '*farang*', the attitudes of 'Thai people'. She distances herself and 'others'

Thai nationals by referring to 'them' but then immediately switches positionality when

comparing Thailand and the UK 'we've known all along they do it here in the UK'. She

confirms her identity by referring to Thailand as 'home' and supporting the expectation of

Thai society for young people to respect tradition '…we just know where the boundary is'.

Abe reflected on his 'conservative' upbringing in northern Thailand and how his family would be shocked at the behaviour of young people in the UK. Borrowing a phrase from Plum he commented:

> 'I mean *[Thai]* society expects Thai kids to behave. It was strange when I first [*pause*] wow they're kissing (laugh) you can see it. And er my family it's much more conservative than from other families … this kind of action would be, in my family, they see much as offence, but for me it's ok it's ok.' [Abe Group discussion Term 2]

I commented in my field notes:

> The more I meet the students, the more confident they become in being able to express their opinions and feelings. Their individuality and diverse characters are a challenge to any essentialist theory / model of a stereotypic Thai student. In some ways they may reflect the fundamental changes / evolution that may be taking place in Thai society today: the tension between traditional values and the influence of the West / globalisation.

Bochner (2001) comments that '…the greater the degree of cultural distance the more difficult the interaction' (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 145). Coles and Swami (2012: 88) also comment that the '…success of a sojourn is often conceived…in terms of adjustment'. They explain that 'perceived cultural distance between a sojourner's home culture and host culture has also been reliably associated with sociocultural adjustment' and students with 'larger perceived distance' (ibid: 88) have more difficulties to overcome.

Abe concurred with this view and identified his traditional and conservative upbringing in northern Thailand as being a factor which made it difficult for him to accept young people kissing in public and for him to socialise with Western students in a pub. However, Wendy discovered that forming a friendship based purely on a shared nationality does not necessarily transcend subtle cultural practices and societal factors when students of the same nationality are co-sojourners in an alien environment.

6.9.   Impact on health

Issues related to health emerged as a surprising theme when I analysed the various data sets. The evidence of this study is supported by Lewthwaite (1997: 168) who comments that '…international students do appear to experience more physical and mental ill-health as well as academic problems than native students'.   He states that with only a short time to adapt to post-graduate study, '…it is important that these sojourners adapt to the new culture rapidly so as to function effectively'.

While 52% of the respondents to the questionnaire (n=63) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: 'I feel so homesick I would like to go home', health issues were a concern for many respondents.

Figure 6.2: Questionnaire responses (n=63) Term 1   Q 45

Q45: I FEEL SO HOMESICK I WOULD LIKE TO GO HOME

Strongly Agree 11%
Agree 13%
Undecided 24%
Disagree 30%
Strongly Disagree 22%
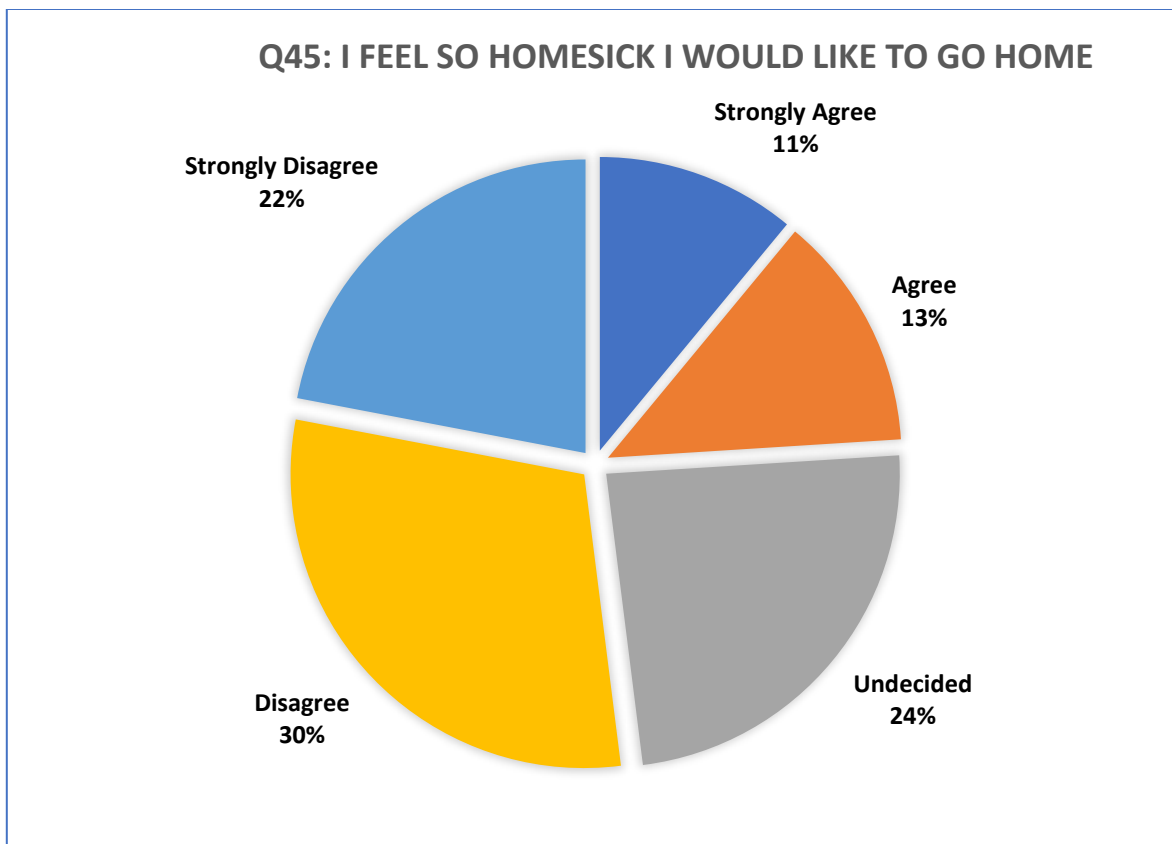
With a timescale of only one year for their UK Master's course, the stress and anxiety caused by sudden adaptation to a different culture and environment affected the health of some Thai students in this study.

Coding transcripts of various individual interviews and group discussions over the period of a year enabled me to identify '…pathways of linked events…across time and space' in order to '…illuminate important patterns' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 17). I was therefore able to identify this emergent theme across the various data sets and compare and contrast how each participant experienced and responded to health issues.

The following discussion was a particularly revealing example of how the individuals in this study '…made sense of their experiences…linking events within and across settings over time' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 73).   Plum employs 'the power of prediction' (Fairclough 2003: 176) to rehearse an imaginary conversation with her father in a future time and place. She employs humour to describe the serious concern expressed by her family about how she was coping with the pressure of studying in the UK.

> '…my dad is just like "oh you gonna have a grey hair (*laughter*) when you come back to Thailand. I'm going have to ask to see your grey hair" and I will say "I'm not that old!" *(laughter)(screech!)* ...Oh no what am I doing here?' [Plum Interview Term 1]

Plum inhabits two identities; she voices an imaginary dialogue between herself and her father. She uses stereotypic 'grey hair' as a visual metaphor for the physiological effects of stress. Plum employed similar corporeal imagery when she described a room of fellow-Asian students as 'black hair everywhere'.

Plum oscillates between Fairclough's 'irrealis' or predictive statement when she voices her father's concern: "you gonna have a grey hair when you come back to Thailand" and the 'evaluative statement' "I'm not that old!" in her exclamatory response (Fairclough 2003: 109 & 176).

As Aoki (2010: 302-303) notes '…sometimes speakers put life in a story by talking as if they were characters in the task' employing 'language intensification' which occurs when Plum voices the words of her father and her emphatic response in this imaginary conversation occurring in a future time and place.

Sid suffered from health problems in his first term causing him considerable anxiety which was compounded by the cumbersome administrative processes of the UK National Health Service [NHS]:

> 'I experienced a lump, no actually lumps … so I was kind of worried it might be something bad …the healthcare it works kind of different from in Thailand where in Thailand you can just go to Thailand doctors which um of course is higher than public doctors but it's still very low compared to the cost here. …Last month I I even went to see a private dermatologist cos according to my GP waiting for a NHS dermatologist is gonna take almost a month and I didn't think I could wait that long so I had to go to the private one. I would advise my friends that if they were to come [*to UK]* to seek private *[health]* insurance. [Sid Interview Term 1]

Sid '…oscillates between speaking impersonally and speaking personally' (Fairclough 2003: 176).   From a personal perspective he narrates the events which impacted on his health; later, he speaks impersonally but authoritatively imparting advice to prospective students based on his experience 'to seek private health insurance'.   As his health improved so he became less worried:

> 'It's getting better, at least I'm not worried about it like I used to be.'
> [Sid Interview Term 1]

Abe also experienced an adverse physical reaction when moving to the UK. During our first interview he showed me his hands. His skin appeared to be very dry and inflamed:

> 'It's always like this when the weather is cold and dry. That's er the worse thing here *[in UK]* I got it [*skin cream*] but it doesn't help much. I need to put it on very often like two times a day. [Abe Interview Term 1]

When I enquired whether it was painful he responded:

> 'It does (*laughter)* but but I kind of get used to this'. [Abe Interview Term 1]

Conversely, Wendy's health improved while living in the UK:

> 'I have health problem when I stay in Thailand. It's a lot of dust in Thailand and the weather are not good, like here [*UK].* I sick every day but when I came here I don't have that problem anymore. Yes it is very, very good. I think I got a good NHS near my house so I don't have that problem they are very good. [Wendy Interview Term 2]

Both Abe and Wendy provided 'evaluative statements' (Fairclough 2003: 176) based on their experiences in the UK. Abe's was negative '…the worse thing here' whereas Wendy's was positive '…they are very good'. Wendy made the following evaluative observation: '…but room it's very small and I don't think I exercise enough' which preceded the 'predictive statement':

> 'If I stay here for long, my health would be like getting worse.' [Wendy Interview Term 2]

This theme recurred across several individual pathways and Wortham and Reyes (2015: 160) explain, why it is important to analyse '…beyond the speech event in order to trace the emerging intersections and divergences of identities and capacities as individuals expand their repertoires and as group repertoires shift'. By collating and analysing separate pathways, health emerges as a key factor in this study.

Burns (1991: 73), researching first year international students attending an Australian university, noted that '…the additional role of being an alien exacerbates and magnifies the stress…involved in cultural adjustment'.   Wendy and Abe were continuing their studies in the UK at PhD level after their Master's degree so their perspective of life in the UK was long-term compared to Sid and Plum who, as short-term sojourners, knew they were returning to Thailand after only one year.   Wortham and Reyes (2015: 18) stated '…characterisations change in some respects from event to event but across the pathway of events the student's identity emerges and becomes durable'.   It would be interesting to investigate in more depth how perceptions of life in a host nation affect the health and stress experienced by Thai students.

6.10.   UK climate

Another surprising theme which emerged from analysing the various data sets was the effect of the UK climate.   Unlike Thailand, with its two seasons (hot summer and rainy months) and the same number of daylight hours throughout the year; in the UK Thai students experience four seasons, a wide range of temperatures and differences in the number of daylight hours during winter and summer.   Several questionnaire respondents commented negatively on the UK weather which affected them adversely:

'(UK) Food and weather: dull and boring!' [Questionnaire respondent: M5]

'The weather is colder than Thailand'. [Questionnaire respondent: M105]

'Rain in every season. Cool even though it is summer. Time and weather different so some season it dark early (very fast)'. [Questionnaire respondent: M105]

'Unpredictable weather causes mental illness'. [Questionnaire respondent: M69]

'Bad weather'. [Questionnaire respondent: M17]

'Weather is unpredictable'. [Questionnaire respondent: M50]

'Unbearable weather'. [Questionnaire respondent: M45]

'The weather sometimes make me feel down. I think I have a problem with the weather'. [Questionnaire respondent: M8]

Plum also reflected on the effect of the UK winter on her health and mental attitude but showed resilience and optimism at the onset of spring:

'…before December I was sick for almost two months… because of the weather I guess. You know it was gloomy, windy, raining and really cold at that time. I had this cough like for almost two months. It was really bad but then again I got better and erm when the weather is getting nicer and nicer I'm I'm kind of you know being healthy myself.' [Plum Reflections Term 3].

In this interview with Plum and in a separate interview with Abe (below) both students directly associate their health problems with the variable UK weather.

'I think the problem is the weather. The weather change very much and sometimes it's cold sometimes it's warm and er Thai people won't be able to tackle this but for me I have big heater in my room so that's not a problem…. No it happen when I go out. … I now I try to wear the glove when I go out *[in]* the cold weather that really help. [Abe Interview Term 2]

This interesting and unexpected development from the earlier discussion on health, illustrates the argument presented by Wortham and Reyes (2015: 19) defining '…linked speech events [which] change and branch unexpectedly – more like pathways than [predetermined] trajectories or chains'. The theme of this pathway continued in a group discussion with Abe, Plum and Sid during the Spring Term. Plum commented on the variation in the UK seasons and fluctuations in temperature which impacted on her emotional state:

'…this is so good [*Spring weather*] I mean compared to Thailand right now which is really hot, extremely hot, so it's better to stay here. But during the [*UK*] winter oh my god I was just like calling my mum almost every day "I wanna go

home, I wanna go home, I don't want to stay here, it is just too much for me!" I break down, just like winter, depressering! [*sic*]' [Plum Discussion Term 2]

This comment led to a general discussion about the UK weather. Abe as usual took an opposing viewpoint and quoted Plum but employed correct grammatical terminology:

'I really like that depressing weather.' [Abe Group discussion Term 2]

Fairclough (2003: 26) describes this positioning within a discussion as '…a style … [a] way of using language as a resource for self-identifying'. This may be a style employed by Abe, to take an opposing viewpoint in order to establish his position within the group interaction. In an earlier interview, Abe remarked how the UK weather adversely affected his skin. Abe's positionality switched when he was interacting with the other Thai participants and he voiced a viewpoint which contradicted previous comments and the physical evidence he showed me in an individual interview in Term I. He employed a similar strategy when he was discussing his attitude to alcohol earlier in the chapter. He risked losing face in front of me, a *farang*, in order to assert his positionality within the context of his peer group who were unaware of his previously stated viewpoint. As Wortham and Reyes (2015: 11) state 'relevant context gets established as speakers organised their messages systematically so as to foreground certain aspects and as other speakers subsequently presuppose the same aspects of context'.

Plum persisted in her view and adopted an emphatic style with emotive interjections which she employed in several interviews, possibly designed to emphasise her viewpoint and in this situation to possibly re-establish her positionality in the group discussion:

'I hate it (*laugh*) I do…..no sun! ...I like the sun! It's funny, it's been sunny for a couple of days and I'm so happy, I am so happy!' [Plum Group discussion Term 2]

Sid refused to be drawn into the argument; with the injection of humour he deftly defused the situation, changing the direction of the discussion by declaring:

> 'Well I do feel happier after the exams (*laugh)* but it's not the weather!'
> [Sid Group discussion Term 2]

Aoki (2010: 289), when comparing Thai and Japanese social talk during group discussions, notes that unlike Japanese participants who employ '…softening devices and conventionalized expressions' Thais '…tend to use intensifiers and spontaneous expressions to indicate involvement and create a friendly and fun atmosphere'. This was particularly exemplified in this discussion by Plum who relied on spontaneous exclamations to emphasise her viewpoint and to some extent by Sid who employed humour. Aoki also notes that '…speakers with this speech style respond quickly, shift topics abruptly, talk at fast speed, are animated and use personal topics…in this speech style, speakers control the conversation' (Aoki 2010: 303).

6.11.   Chapter summary

Stereotype is used as a resource by the participants to define their identity across various speech events and intersecting pathways throughout the study. Across various interviews and discussions the students comment on their relationships with others: By identifying linked events and '…describing how quotation, parallelism across events … create cross-event context - linked events' (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 66) key themes have been recognized and analysis of discussions have provided an effective vehicle for illustrating the complexity and diversity of the participating characters.

The Thai students in this study inhabited multiple 'niches' (Blommaert 2015) and affiliations according to the particular situation at that moment in time. Van de Vijver et al (2015: 2)

describe a 'network society' based on interaction between virtual peers across 'online communities' and the movement of people across the globe having '...reshaped social life around the world, generating identities and social relationships far more complex....and further characterised by an intense dynamic of change and mobility as a key functional characteristic'. As Reyes (2009: 53) commented, they used stereotypes and groups '…as a resource to reposition themselves … to celebrate identities.'

This study demonstrates the complexity and dynamism of the Thai student experience. Hua (2014: 218) introduces the 'emerging research paradigm' of 'interculturality' which examines '…to what extent participants bring about, align with each other, or resist cultural memberships oriented to by themselves or ascribed by others in interactions'. This is a rich area for further research. One might also investigate the notion of '**intra**-culturality' as illustrated by Wendy's conflict with two fellow-Thai students at her UK university which is even more nuanced and may possibly reflect subtle regional, cultural and societal differences between co-nationals.

The group discussions were instrumental in illustrating the interpersonal relationships and shifting positionalities of the participants. Aoki (2010: 308) considers rapport management by Thais in social discussions and comments on how Thai speakers may '…want to strengthen their relationship with hearers by disclosing themselves' which was a method employed by Sid when he confessed to not being particularly academic. Goffman (2005:16) supports this view by explaining that'…any claims regarding self may be made with belittling modesty…or with a note of unseriousness; by hedging in these ways he will have prepared a self for himself that will not be discredited by exposure'. Aoki highlights the importance to Thai of 'face management' with its twin aspects of quality face (personal values) and identity

face (social identity e.g. recognition by others as a group leader). As Aoki states '…Face in Thai connotes personal aspects of one's personality' (ibid: 308) and Goffman (2005) comments '…a person's face clearly is something that is not lodged in or on his body, but rather something that is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter' (ibid: 7).

Van de Vijver, Blommaert and Gkoumasi (2015: 2) also reflect on 'identity in times of superdiversity' and the comment on the '…intense dynamics of change'. They identify the exposure to and influence of social media and the internet combined with '…unprecedented work-related migration … which have reshaped social life around the world generating identities and social relationships' which are complex. This study illustrates the individuality of the Thai students and how each participant responded differently to similar experiences within the environment of a UK university; how their personal upbringing, geo-cultural and pedagogical experiences and cultural societal tenets helped define their responses when they were trans-located and immersed in a very different UK environment. What has been demonstrated in this chapter is that the picture is far more nuanced than I expected and, as Blommaert (2015) stated, the students in this study inhabited multiple 'niches' according to the particular situation and moment in time. As Montgomery (2010: 31) recommends '…more emphasis should be placed on variation …within ethnic and national groups of students'.

CHAPTER 7:
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

'I think if you were Thai you would have understood everything without needing to ask, right?' Sid [Group discussion Term 3]

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges while studying in the UK?

7.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, I review and explore key themes which emerged and developed from the rich accumulated data in relation to the cultural challenges experienced by Thai post-graduate students in UK. I consider the research question (above) which this study has employed as a vehicle to investigate key challenges experienced by the Thai students during their dynamic trajectory through the academic year.   By the end of the chapter I hope to have provided a full and detailed response to Sid's challenging question (*above*).

The research question acted as a directional compass to initiate my investigation and the map materialised as I explored further and deeper, following unfamiliar, convoluted pathways which I had not expected to navigate.   Through questionnaires, reading the published research of others, conducting interviews with the student participants and their teachers, I came to appreciate the complexity of the cultural challenges which the Thai students in this study experienced. The Thai students in this study revealed themselves as individuals who challenged stereotypic pre-conceptions and exposed a multidimensional, rich tapestry of emotions, cultural mores, tensions and challenges.

7.2.   Challenges of the classroom

The culture of the UK classroom proved challenging in many ways. Although the students in this study had achieved the required English language level for their post-graduate degree course, in practice some students found academic English very challenging and stressful. Data from this study reflect the participants' lack of confidence in their standard of English. Only 8% reported that their level of English was not a source of stress with 52% and 50% respectively identifying speaking and writing skills as being, in their opinion, unsatisfactory or poor.   Students also commented on the length of time it took them to read and understand academic papers and to write essays under the pressure of timed examinations compared to their UK peers.

7.2.1   Negotiating linguistic legitimacy

Kanno (2003: 130) describes the L2 learner as inhabiting multiple roles which 'he or she plays out, not just in the classroom'.   She 'endorses the notion of multiple identities…characterising the language learner as a multidimensional being'. So perhaps one needs to reflect on this complex depiction in order to understand the various roles being portrayed in different scenarios including the classroom.

Nomnian (2008: 31) referred to in Chapter 4, commented that Thai students in his study seem to '…position themselves as 'linguistically inferior' to their European counterparts and this discourages them from participating in class and group discussions.'   This could be a factor which may influence the behaviour of some Thai students. However, his findings were not replicated in this study. The Thai students in this study found learning through English stressful, and approximately half the participants rated their reading and writing skills

unsatisfactory or poor. In contrast to Nomnian's findings, the data in this study revealed that other, more subtle factors were also at work. Unlike Nomnian's students, the scholars in this study had attained high IELTS English language skills before coming to the UK which should have enabled them to feel empowered to communicate in a second language (L2). Apart from learning through a second language (L2) their cultural and pedagogical background may have influenced their behaviour in the classroom. This view is supported by the Thai teacher in this study who commented in an interview:

> '…your 'making meaning' system is handicapped if you are limited by the language, by the way you learn things.'
> [Excerpt: Interview Thai teacher of medicine Ch. 4]

Kanno (2003: 128) in her research noted that '…the prospect of returning to Japan …enabled the sojourning students to be less reliant on English to meet the needs of daily life than may be the case for immigrant students'. This would describe the positionality of the temporary sojourners in Nomnian's (2008) study and in this study. It is possible that the prospect of a short stay of just one year in a foreign country may mitigate the necessity of interacting socially or academically with 'others'. It would probably support Nomnian's assertion of an acceptance of 'linguistic inferiority' preventing his Thai students from participating in class '…because they may think they have not acquired 'standard' English varieties and therefore consider themselves as members of the 'outgroup' and speakers of 'standard English' as members of the 'ingroup' (Nomnian 2008 : 31), which I refer to in Chapter 4.

The Thai students in this study, like those in Nomnian's study, found it challenging to participate in class with only 10% indicating that they always offer to answer questions in lectures. This research suggests that the picture is more nuanced and challenges assertions of

feelings of linguistic 'inferiority'.   67% of the Thai students in this study reported an improvement in their academic vocabulary during the course and 66% an improvement in their academic writing.

7.2.2   Challenging accents

Compared to speaking and writing skills, listening was ranked higher by the students with only 37% rating it unsatisfactory or poor. Yet, students commented on the difficulty of understanding the content of lectures:

'I would understand not more than 30% - 40% in lectures [Sid: Interview T2]

'I can catch only 50% of the content taught in class' [Questionnaire respondent M31]

As I revealed in Chapter 4, some Thai students refer to the specific challenge of fast-paced delivery. Norton (2000:123) explains that '…oral activities take place in real time'. Some students commented that they needed time to translate into L1 to make sense of the content of the lesson.   Plum eloquently describes the panic she felt when she could not keep up with the teacher. Her brain became 'stuck'.   It is very possible that the fast-paced, interactive nature of the UK university classroom has a negative impact on the linguistic confidence of Thai students.

In addition, some Thai students in this study commented on the challenges they experienced in comprehending unfamiliar accents. This was an unexpectedly emotive theme which emerged from the recorded interviews and my classroom observations and which sparked surprisingly negative comments.

If Nomnian's (2008) assertion of an 'acceptance of linguistic inferiority' is correct, then Thai speakers of English, many of whom have a distinct accent, may identify with the 'outgroup'

compared to speakers of 'standard English'. Surprisingly none of the students in this study commented on their own pronunciation of English and how it might be a problem for listeners. Abe for example commented on UK regional accents, which he seemed to regard as socially inferior to perceived 'standard (neutral) English'.

Agha (2005: 51) makes the interesting point that '…prescriptive socialization within the family plays a critical role in the dissemination and early acquisition of many registers'. He develops this idea by explaining that '…by communicating register distinctions to children, such metapragmatic activity expands the social domain of register competence … [and] the process of register socialization continues throughout adult life'. He provides an appropriate example in relation to this study of how '…educational institutions…school boards and national academies – serve as loci of public sphere legitimation and replication of register stereotypes over segments of the population…the effect is particularly marked for prestige registers such as the Standard Language'.

In Chapter 4 I refer to an interview with Abe who took pleasure in trying to mimic the Mancunian accent when describing a conversation which took place when he visited a store. He identified the regional accent as the reason for not being able to understand what was being said and did not consider his own competency in the English language.

This incident mirrors an example Reyes (2009: 261) mentions when describing 'Mock Asian' taunts of those mimicking, in a humorous manner, the accent / pronunciation of Asians '…to overtly mark Asian racial 'difference''. She comments that '…such stereotyping of language practices not only typically derogate the speakers who are mocked but also simultaneously elevate the personas of those who do the mocking' (ibid: 270-271). What is particularly

interesting in this study is that Abe uses a similar strategy to mimic, in a humorous manner, the regional accent of a non-Asian resident of Manchester.

Agha (2005: 52) refers to the importance of the mass media in '…disseminating images of Standard British Received Pronunciation. Both Standard and non-Standard accents are objects of everyday commentary in public media in Britain'. He describes how in the media 'various social-characterological figures are explicitly linked to accents through *descriptions* of the speech and personality of public figures … in novels, accent is used to portray fictional characters…social types are formulated through *contrastive depictions* of accent in reported speech often with little or no independent description of personality characteristics'. The description and enactment by Abe of the incident in Manchester could be said to parallel the reported speech of the mass media to depict accent.

Abe used 'situational accounts (external causes) to save face' and deflect 'blame' to an external cause, in this case the speaker's regional accent. This is in contrast to Ting-Toomey and Kurogi's (1998) description of 'collectivist' behaviour using 'internal dispositional accounts to **accept** face loss' (ibid: 192). This provides another example of Thai individualism and diversity which challenges stereotypic depiction of Thai culture.

In Chapter 4, I reported some teachers recounted how they found unfamiliar accents of their students challenging. One teacher commented that it was difficult for the students to cope with so many different accents especially if their English language skills were not very proficient. Plum observed that the dual challenges of academic English and unfamiliar accents could be a problem to students who had just arrived from Thailand.

Testimony from the students in this study support Cummins (2001:131) who comments that L2 learners require '…considerable contextual support or scaffolding …to succeed'. The participants refer to the importance of the teacher providing relevant examples which are understandable by an international group of students thus aiding their comprehension of the subject material. They identified the advantage experienced by science and maths students whose teachers employ internationally known mathematical equations and scientific formulae to provide vital context that assists understanding of a lesson even if the teachers employ fast-paced delivery in L2 (English).

As Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001: 160) note 'pre-departure language ability and previous cross-cultural experience emerged as significant predictors' to successful sociocultural adaptation. They state that 'although language ability also influenced subsequent psychological well-being, pre-departure stress and under-met expectations were stronger predictors of post-arrival adjustment problems'. Of particular importance is their observation that '…avoidance coping styles used soon after arrival increased psychological distress later in the sojourn'. From a personal perspective, I cannot help but reflect that it is a pity that these talented students did not feel empowered to participate more actively within the classroom environment which would have greatly enriched the teaching and learning experience for all.

7.3. Challenges of pedagogy

Exposure to an unfamiliar pedagogy used within the UK classroom was another challenge experienced by the participants in this study. This finding supports the work of Jin and Cortazzi (1997) who noted how different teaching and learning styles can challenge some Asian students. Observations of classroom behaviour of participants in this study and a

review of questionnaire responses, support the findings of Tweed and Lehman (2002) and the Australian research conducted by Mullins, Quintrell & Hancock (1995). They found that unfamiliar teaching styles and scenarios e.g. small group seminars focusing on student participation and classroom debates can cause anxiety, adoption of avoidance strategies and, in some cases, result in cross-cultural or even intra-cultural misunderstanding.

7.3.1   Teacher-student relationship

An interesting theme to emerge for the testimony of students in this study is the relationship between Thai students and their teachers. By trying to describe it to a 'farang' the students present interesting analogies of family relationships.   Sid describes his teacher in Thailand as a caring parent who 'scolds you if you are not listening'.

The hierarchical positionality of the teacher and teacher-centred Thai pedagogy may result in Thai students avoiding any possible occasion to cause offence to their teacher by posing questions in class.   According to some students in this study, when Thai students relocate to a UK university, the relationship between teacher and student may blur and cause confusion and even stress to some students as demonstrated in Chapter 5 when I interview Wendy. Agha (2005: 51) comments on the '…interactional roles of sender and receiver of messages…the voicing structure of the message constitutes a set of directions for locating one's own speech in relation to those of others'.   Appropriate use in French of the pronoun 'tu' '…indexes "familiarity" of the speaker with the interlocutor. This form of linguistic etiquette could possibly be compared to the Thai title ''*Ajahn*' [teacher] which may overcome awkwardness and facilitate conversation by recognising the social register /positionality of the speaker [student] and interlocutor [teacher].

Wendy emphasises how important it is for her to adhere to her understanding of the social etiquette of Thai society and, in particular, the positionality of the teacher. She draws a sharp distinction between the role and elevated position of the teacher in relation to the student compared to relationships within her peer friendship groups. Employing an avoidance tactic, she defies the conventions of the UK university and ignores what she identifies as infringement of the strict code of teacher- student relationship. She therefore sets her own code of etiquette by avoiding the use of first names and persisting in addressing her teachers by their professional title. She compromises however and, pragmatically, in addition to employing their professional title adds their first name.

This study builds on the work of Wortham and Reyes (2015) and the concept of evaluative indexicals when considering the role and positionality of the teacher within a multi-cultural classroom. The animated discussion which I include in Chapter 5 exposed the contrasting views of the Thai students as they discussed how the attire / clothes worn by their teachers might influence their perception of the positionality and professionalism of their educators. The discussion initially focussed on the significance of the external appearance of teachers in reflecting their perceived elevated position in Thai society and competence in their subject. They extended the evaluative indexical of external appearance to occupations which they perceived as responsible and of a high status within society and then expanded the discussion further to include their perceptions of a possible hierarchy of academic subjects.

7.3.2   Protective manoeuvres

Evidence from this study illustrates that some Thai students who were educated in the traditional Thai system and translocated to a UK university for a short period of time, e.g. for a one-year Master's degree course, are faced with a perplexing pedagogy where the student

is expected to take an active part in the lesson by interacting in class and questioning the teacher whose role is more of a facilitator than a knowledge provider. As one questionnaire respondent explained:

> 'There isn't much interact between students and teacher in Thailand' [Questionnaire respondent: M36 T1]

The students in this study adopted various strategies to cope with the cultural and pedagogical pressures they were exposed to in a UK university classroom. Goffman (2005: 16) describes 'protective manoeuvres' whereby the person '…shows respect and politeness…[and] employs discretion…leaves unstated facts that might implicitly or explicitly contradict and embarrass the positive claims made by others'. This view is supported by Sid who explained in Chapter 5 that he would not correct a teacher who made an error in class. In a later interview he expands on the different behaviour of UK students compared to those in Thailand:

> 'Students [in UK] tend to ask more and seem to question the lecturers more than Thai students. In Thai we just we just sit and …we listen.' Sid [Excerpt: Reflections Interview: Ch. 5]

Sid also commented that UK students think and feel differently from Thai students and that in UK 'no one takes the questions personally' (Ch. 5); Sid may be reflecting on the preservation of 'ego' (Komin 1991: 134) which he considers as possibly irrelevant in the interaction between students and UK teachers. According to the participants in this study, it would be disrespectful to challenge a teacher and risk the teacher 'losing face'. By identifying with the Thai students he 'others' the UK students who he notes possess a different mind-set '…they don't think like that' (Ch.5). A similar view was expressed by a questionnaire respondent who commented:

'Students in UK are brave to challenge their teachers' views' [Questionnaire respondent: M68 T1].

His use of the term 'brave' could indicate fear of stepping outside the well-established cultural conventions of the Thai teacher-student relationship.

Abe supported this view but was open to the idea of adopting a different approach in the future:

> 'In Thailand we have …. krengjai … is afraid of criticise people and losing face …It's our culture. …For now no criticise but in future maybe.'
> [Abe: Excerpt: 1st interview Ch. 5]

7.3.3   Avoidance relationship

Goffman (2005: 15) considers the concept of rapport management and harmony when he states that '…the surest way for a person to prevent threats to his face is to avoid contacts in which these threats are likely to occur.'   The class debate, mentioned earlier, was a particularly challenging situation for Wendy because she was following the teacher's instructions and there was no opportunity for her to take avoidance action and minimise the confrontational positioning which resulted in cultural conflict with the other Thai student.

It was interesting to observe various avoidance tactics employed by the Thai students in this study in other classroom situations.   Abe varied his technique depending on the situation; for example, when he was unable to pronounce the teacher's name he then adopted an effective avoidance tactic:

> 'I try not to call him [*by*] his name.'   [Abe: Interview Term 1 Ch. 4]

This avoidance strategy may demonstrate krengjai i.e. by not wishing to embarrass either the teacher or himself; to risk losing face or being the cause of the high ranking teacher to lose

face in front of the lower ranking student.   In another situation recounted in Chapter 4 Abe found it difficult to understand the accent of a fellow-student in his class and demonstrated a different avoidance tactic where he physically removed himself from the vicinity of that student. This example illustrates what Goffman (2005:15) terms as 'avoidance relationship' and comments on the '…value of voluntarily making a gracious withdrawal before an anticipated threat to face has had a chance to occur'. Goffman (2005) refers to further 'defensive measures' explaining that '…any claims regarding self may be made with belittling modesty, with strong qualifications or with a note of unseriousness' (ibid: 16) as illustrated by Abe's humorous and self-deprecating comment regarding the other student's accent:

> 'It's, it's not his problem it's just my problem' (laughter).
> [Abe: Interview Term 1 Ch. 4]

Employing Goffman's idea of 'defensive measures', Abe '…will have prepared a self for himself that will not be discredited by exposure, personal failure or the unanticipated acts of others' (Goffman 2005: 16).

7.3.4   Defensive tactics

The concept of defensive measures challenges the stereotypic image presented in some research studies e.g. Brown (2009) and Montgomery (2010:15) of 'passive, unresponsive Asian students' in class. From the evidence of this study and the responses of participants, the motivation does not appear to be boredom with the content of the lesson; the students seem to be trying to employ strategies in order to avoid embarrassment and loss of face to themselves and the teacher. Questionnaire responses in this study suggested that levels of stress were high especially during debates and discussions in seminars and lectures. Only

22% found these situations <u>not</u> to be a source of stress. Superficially this behaviour may present as passive.

Plum was the only Asian in her class. When interviewing Plum, I found her to be confident and enthusiastic about sharing her ideas. However, I was surprised at the change in her behaviour when I observed her within the environment of a multicultural classroom which I describe in my field notes in Chapter 5. Her quiet demeanour and lack of eye-contact was commented on by her lecturer after the lesson:

> '…there's a number of responses the most annoying one is just to look down and pretend I've not actually made eye contact with you. (laugh) yeh. Er you know if you say "sorry I don't know" that's fine'. [Lecturer 01/ Plum]

Sid displayed similar behaviour in his lessons and Goffman (1966: 93) explains that 'eye-to-eye looks play a special role … ritually establishing an avowed openness to verbal statements'. By avoiding eye contact with the teacher Sid and Plum signal that they are not ready to engage in discourse as Goffman explains '…mutual glances ordinarily must be withheld if an encounter is to be avoided for eye contact opens one up for face engagement' (ibid: 95).

Abe, on the other hand, employed a different defensive tactic which is described in Chapter 4. He maintained eye-contact with the teacher when he was asked a direct question in class but did not respond. Abe explained that he knew the teacher would eventually move on when he received no response so it was a tactic he employed which he felt would not give offence or result in loss of face either to the teacher or to himself. It was an unusual strategy but to the teacher it may have reinforced the stereotypic imagery of the ''South-East Asian learner'

as a passive learner who is unwilling to offer spoken contribution to a group' (Montgomery 2010:15).

7.3.5 Challenges for teachers

The study demonstrates an understanding of the academic and cultural challenges faced by university teachers, many of whom spoke English as a second language and had themselves experienced different educational systems. They are under great pressure to complete an academically challenging one-year UK post-graduate syllabus with a diverse group of multinational students with varying pedagogical backgrounds. This study reveals that sensitivity and awareness of the cultural traditions of a multinational class is invaluable; that students need time to adjust to a different classroom environment and that some teaching methods may not be appropriate in a multicultural classroom especially where the pressure of limited time is a key factor.

> 'I feel some Thai students find that it takes a while to get used to and may be a year's quite short in the light of this'. [Lecturer L04 /Plum/ Law]

Educational transmigration is increasing and more students travel abroad to expand their education and experience new cultures. This study raises awareness of the diverse perceptions of curricular content within a multinational classroom which may not concur with a particular viewpoint taken by the teacher. Intercultural encounters provide an opportunity to share ideas and express different opinions. Piller (2011) remarks that '…nation-based ways of approaching intercultural communication have become obsolete' and she poses the timely question '…have globalisation and transnational migration …resulted in making the intercultural meaningless as dominant cultures impose their discourses on others as supposedly culturally neutral texts?' (Piller 2011: 72).

This study examines the issue of curricular content in relation to a multinational and multicultural student population providing examples of where Thai students found the subject content challenging. Approaches to certain topics posed challenges for Wendy and Plum which they mention (in Chapter 6) during interviews and which I witnessed during my classroom observations. Wendy explains how she was offended by, in her view, the one-dimensional perspective of SE Asian history taken by her North American teacher. She felt that no account was taken of the effect of the Vietnam war on the indigenous population and neighbouring countries.

In another example, Plum attended a lecture on Internet Law which focussed on the publication of sexual material. The lecturer provided screen shots of various websites as illustrations which resulted in banter between some of the male students. Plum admitted that she was very embarrassed by the images. In my field notes, I commented that the teacher explained to the class how she had restricted her illustrations to less explicit images from the websites. Despite the sensitivity shown by the teacher to her multinational students, Plum found the content particularly challenging.

7.4. Challenges of social life

The findings of this study paint a nuanced and complex picture of the cultural challenges experienced by Thai students studying in UK. The participants in this study found relocating to UK challenging on many levels. The goal of their temporary sojourn was to successfully complete their post-graduate degree course. However, the marked change of environment from a warm, humid Thailand to a bitterly cold UK winter may have contributed to health problems experienced by several students. The interviews in Chapter 6 revealed physical and emotional problems experienced by some students which distracted them from their studies

and induced emotional anxiety. As winter turned to a warmer, sunny spring in Term 2 so the students reported health improvements and their stress levels reduced. It is a concern that it took these students one term to adapt to the UK environment which is a major portion of their one-year Master's course.

7.4.1 Thai identity and diversity

McCargo and Hongladarom (2004: 220) state that '…identity is not fixed…[it] is consciously or unconsciously defined and constructed by groups and individuals, primarily by means of discursive strategies'. Referring to Thailand they reflect on the '…plurality of cultural identities in flux' and how the 'long-standing essentialism of Thai studies is now giving way to a new emphasis on the extraordinary diversity of cultural identity' (ibid: 220). Their research highlights the cultural diversity of Thailand which has never been colonised by a foreign power.

The four key participants in this study reflect this complex and nuanced situation. Each had a unique story to tell reflecting a personal trajectory which culminated in studying at a UK university situated thousands of miles from home, friends and family. Their shared nationality formed the backdrop to a rich multifaceted, tapestry highlighting their individuality, differences in regional and family backgrounds, socio-economic status, cultural mores and family values. These differences cannot be segregated or teased out. They are tightly intertwined and their combined influence form complex individuals which may explain their differing responses to the challenges of studying in the UK.

This study illustrates the conflicting identities some Thai students wrestle with as they try to adapt to a very different culture in the UK. During their interviews in Chapter 6 Abe and

Wendy comment on the 'culture shock' of relocating to the UK in particular witnessing kissing in public reflecting an upbringing in rural Thailand with its particular social and cultural mores.

Sid and Plum were raised in Bangkok and they comment on their exposure to foreign films and social media. Plum positions herself in the role of narrator describing the attitudes of 'Thai people' to a 'farang' who is unfamiliar with Thai society.

> 'We just know where the boundary is. We know because we've been raised in this. I mean society expects Thai kids to behave. [Excerpt: Plum Group discussion Term 2 Chapter 6]

Reading the studies of academic researchers and interviewing the study participants have helped me appreciate the regional diversity and the nuanced variations of cultural values in Thailand. This complex and ever-changing, multi-faceted mosaic challenges the essentialist depiction of a simplistic, one-dimensional mono-chromatic image of Thai nationals. This study provides a platform for the participants to self-reflect and to voice their thoughts, concerns, views and experiences. As Blommaert (2015: 1) comments '…difference in diversity presents us with an engaging reflection on the contemporary state of 'culture' and its discourses'.

7.4.2   Concepts of culture

Blommaert (2015: 3) states that '…traditional concepts of "culture" have passed their sell-by date'. So, for Blommaert, cultures are diverse; a 'world of encounters' as an individual interacts with others in different niches or arenas on a daily basis.

Kanno (2003: 11) in her in-depth research on the experiences of four young Japanese sojourners as they adapt to a 'Western' education system, recognises that '…group

membership is an indispensable part of what shapes our identities' including group membership to '…our linguistic and cultural identities'. Reflecting Blommaert's more fluid and flexible concept of culture, Kanno comments that '…cultural and linguistic self-positioning depends on the particular sociocultural context' and that '…all of us belong to multiple communities' (ibid: 11) which Blommaert refers to as 'niches'.

Kanno (2003: 130) observed that as time progressed she noticed that the students in her study were less worried about 'fitting in' to various groups. She explained that '…they shifted their focus to the question of who *they* wanted to associate with. They no longer expected to have all their needs fulfilled in one community and actively sought out diverse groups each of which responded to different interest and needs'

In my study, it could be said that Sid inhabited Holliday's 'small culture' (1999: 248) described as '…a dynamic ongoing group process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within these circumstances'. The participants of Sid's study group shared a common interest or activity.

The Thai study group was a dynamic entity with a shared focus / activity and could be described as a 'small culture'; however, there was the additional key dimension which was the shared cultural ethnicity of the participants in the group which Holliday (1999: 237) warns could be '…culturistic, ethnic, national or international stereotyping'.

Holliday explains: 'Small culture is …more to do with activities taking place within a group than with the nature of the group itself' (Holliday 1999: 250). So why did Sid choose to work with fellow-Thai students and not with a mixed international group of peers? Was he

identifying with the ethnic stereotype which Holliday warns against or was it a pragmatic decision to share the academic work load with those of a similar culture and language?

Holliday's earlier definition of 'small culture' emphasising the **activity** taking place within the group rather than '…the nature of the group itself' could possibly be disputed as in this case the 'nature of the group' (fellow Thai nationals) was a key reason for Sid joining the group.

Possibly Blommaert's (2015) more fluid and flexible concept of culture tends to reflect more fittingly the actions of Sid who inhabited multiple groups or 'niches' [football team, musical band, social and work groups] depending on his motivation and needs at the time.

The generalisation of Thai student behaviour is problematic. The outward appearance of Thai students being perceived as 'unapproachable' as reported by Brown (2009) in her study can be deceptive which is why deeper research is essential. Counter to this perception, Komin (1991) states '…definitely, the Thai are not xenophobic, which could possibly be due to the fact that they have never been colonised and thus adding to the friendly interactions with foreigners' (ibid:147). Although this comment could be perceived as essentialist in its generalisation, it presents a different perspective which contrasts with the findings of Brown (2009). In Chapter 6 Plum comments positively on her cross-cultural experiences being the only Asian in her class:

> '…Turkish, from Switzerland, from Nigeria, from France, from Germany, erm these people … are quite friendly to me'. [Plum: Group Discussion. Term 1 Ch. 6]

The students in Brown's (2009) study remarked on Thai students grouping together and in Chapter 5 Sid comments on how he has observed other nationalities behaving in this manner

but does not see anything wrong with it. Abe also recognised the behaviour of students of similar ethnicity choosing to group together but described the behaviour as a 'problem' identifying Chinese and Europeans where he noticed this practice was particularly prevalent.

Analysis of the responses to the bilingual questionnaire (n=63), showed 67% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'I prefer to study with Thai students' and in response to the statement 'I find it difficult to work in a team with other nationalities' 55% disagreed or strongly disagreed [ref. Chapter 5]. So the evidence of this research does not support Brown's (2009) finding that Thai students were particularly prone to distancing themselves from other students.

Sid explained the situation from his perspective as a Thai:

> 'I don't think … that they [other students] are not open but it's just that erm we don't share the same interests.' [Sid: Reflections Interview. Term 3 Chapter 6]

Successful strategies adopted by teachers to facilitate students working together in class were positively received by some participants in this study. Although Sid had earlier recognised his preference of working with fellow-Thai he was genuinely pleased to be invited to join a cross-cultural work group. He jokes about it but it is clear that he recalls this occasion as a very positive experience.

Plum described a similar situation in Term 1, where the lecturer organised the students into discussion groups which had the additional outcome of initiating friendships within the class. Both Sid and Plum found the experience of working in a cross-cultural group rewarding and it increased their self-confidence.

Unlike Wendy's experience of being compelled to take an oppositional stance in a debating scenario, against another Thai student, in these examples of group work there was no challenge to the 'self' or 'ego' and so Sid and Plum felt empowered to step outside their 'comfort zone' and enjoyed the encounter. These successful strategies might be considered by other teachers in order to encourage productive inter-cultural communication combined with positive teaching and learning experiences.

7.4.3   Challenges to culture

Blommaert (2015: 2) states: '…as soon as people achieve a level of understanding, they share something' and as the study progressed the participants became more confident in sharing their ideas with this 'farang'.   The stereotypic depiction of Thai culture in 'Western' media was distressing for Abe who felt that film producers did not represent Thai culture in a positive and realistic manner.

> '…it's not true … that's not our culture.' [Abe: Excerpt: Reflections Interview Term 3 Chapter 6]

As I mentioned earlier, Wendy encountered a culturally sensitive situation when she took exception to the views expressed by a North American lecturer addressing the causes and effects of the Vietnam War. She was surprised and upset by, in her opinion, the one-sided viewpoint presented by the lecturer who she felt did not consider the perspective of communities living within the region. Wendy identifies with the South-East Asians. She questions why the U.S. felt it was legitimate to invade another country:

> '…why they have a right to do it in South East Asia because it's **our** country' [Wendy: Excerpt: Interview Term 1 Ch. 6]

The experience caused her considerable distress but, like Abe, she kept her views to herself possibly out of respect for the feelings of others.

'Krengjai' was a most nuanced and difficult concept for a 'farang' like myself to comprehend and proved to be a key factor in underpinning the interactions and positionality of Thai students both in the classroom and socially. Other researchers who were of Thai origin themselves may not have recognised the influence of 'krengjai' but as a 'farang', I was able to present this elusive cultural concept by using examples throughout the study to illustrate its significance and complexity.

Through the testimony of the Thai students in this study I gained an understanding of how this elusive, invisible factor influenced the interactions and motivation of the students in this study and to present it in this thesis. It is possible, for example, that 'krengjai' may influence the subtle relationship and positionality between a teacher and student which may not be appreciated or understood by their university educators. Wendy found it impossible to address her university teachers on a familiar first name basis and so she compromised by prefacing their first name with their formal title. Students commented that they found it disrespectful to question a teacher and they admitted to employing various avoidance techniques in class, which I observed such as lack of eye contact with the teacher. As Goffman (2005: 14) comments '…the person will have two points of view - a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face'.

Evidence collected during interviews with the students in this study reveals the conflict of emotions experienced by Thai students when exposed to sensitive subject matter within the curriculum. Despite the sensitivity of her teacher in approaching a key aspect of internet law,

Plum found the sexual content embarrassing within the environment of a mixed international class.

Wendy was also emotionally challenged by the singular perspective taken by her history teacher when addressing the controversial topic of the Vietnam war. Despite being hurt and angry, Wendy suppressed her true feelings so the teacher was unaware of the effect his lesson had on this Thai student.

Abe was upset by the depiction of Thai culture by 'Western' media and the comments about a film on Thai kick-boxing made by his university peer group during a visit to the pub.

The Thai students explained that they did not speak out at the time because they did not wish to cause offence or embarrassment and so the students and teachers in the examples above were probably completely unaware of the effect their views and opinions had on the Thai students.

7.5.   Supporting internationalisation in HE

This study presents the testimony of a group of Thai students as they negotiate the cultural challenges they experience as they study within the UK higher education (HE) system. Based on the findings of my research there are implications on the teaching of international students which are reflected in the research and initiatives of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). I refer in the next section to key strategies designed to encourage best practice in the development of internationalisation within the UK HE.
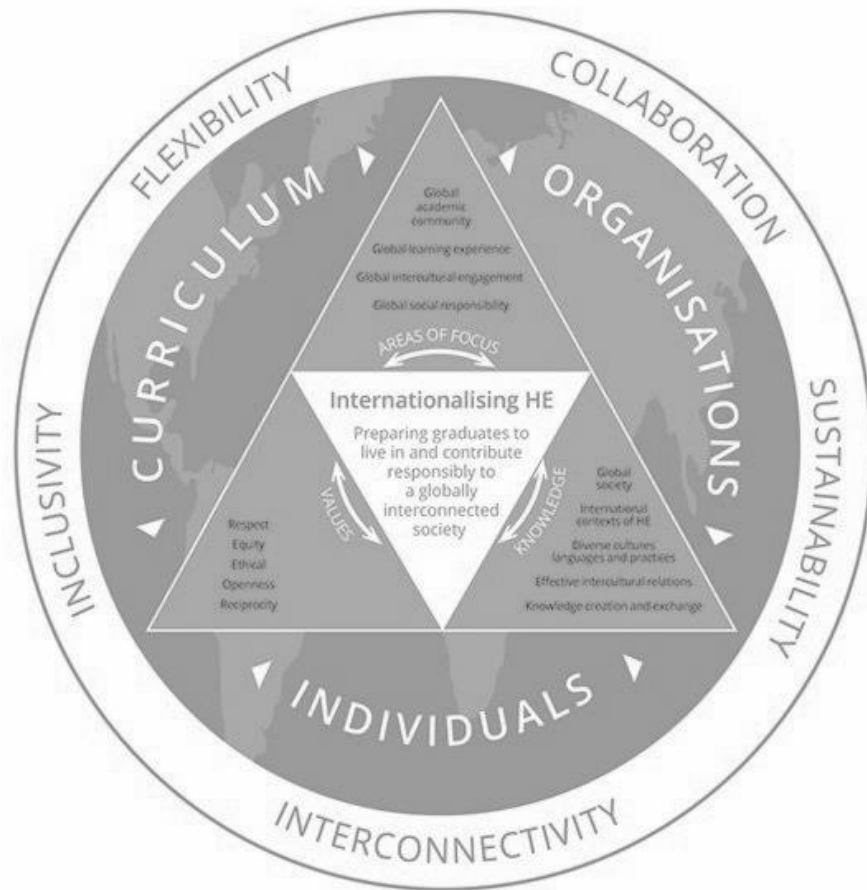
7.5.1   Internationalising Higher Education Framework

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is the national body for learning and teaching in higher education within in the UK. Their role is to work with HE providers to 'bring about

change in learning and teaching' (2014:16). HEA has published a wide range of resources to assist HE providers and their staff support international students in an outside the classroom. Recognising the growing importance of internalisation within UK higher education, the HEA developed the Internationalising Higher Education Framework (HEA 2014) '…with the purpose of inspiring and assisting the sector in a key aspect of internationalising HE: Preparing 21st century graduates to live in and contribute responsibly to a globally connected society' (HEA 2014: 2).

The goal of this strategic framework is to promote '…a high quality, equitable and global learning experience for all students studying UK HE programmes, irrespective of their geographical location or background' (HEA 2014: 2). Modelled on the UK Professional Standards Framework (HEA: 2011) the information is presented for three specific audiences: Organisations e.g. HE providers, Individuals e.g. staff and students and Curriculum e.g. the content design and delivery of programmes.

Figure 7.1: Internationalising Higher Education Framework (HEA 2015)

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For each of the three audiences, the framework presents responsibilities and potential benefits of engaging with internationalisation, the operational implications and '…a set of key questions that need to be considered' (HEA 2014: 4). The framework is designed to provide inspiration and practical resources to enable HE institutions to apply it to their own circumstances and enhance diversity and inclusivity socially, academically and pedagogically.

7.5.2 Teaching International Students (TIS)

The Higher Education Academy's Teaching International Students (TIS) project recognises the demands faced by university lecturers. Dr. Janette Ryan is the director of the TIS project which aims to support lecturers by providing ideas and resources for teaching international students and assisting them in delivering a 'good learning experience' (Ryan: 2011:1). The material is provided by experienced lecturers and educational developers founded on evidence from educational research and best practice.

In an article for the online Guardian Higher Education Network (2011) Ryan comments that '…overseas students can find it hard to cope as they adjust to different teaching approaches' (Ryan 2011:1).   Ryan identifies three categories of 'shock' which can be experienced by international students when they enter a UK university: culture shock: '…different physical environment, customs and practices', language shock: '…realising that their mastery of formal English doesn't prepare them for fast-paced, colloquial or discipline-specific language and vocabulary' and academic shock: '…different teaching and learning approaches such as relationships between teacher and students, forms of assessment ' (ibid: 2011: 1).

The testimonies of the Thai post-graduate students in my study, present compelling evidence to support the three categories of shock identified by Ryan.   Importantly she recognises that the '…effects of academic shock can persist much longer than the effects of culture and language shock' (ibid: 2011: 1). This is particularly relevant when considering international students who are studying a short one-year UK Master's course, as in the case of the Thai students in my research.

My research presents the testimony of university lecturers which illustrates the challenges of completing a demanding academic syllabus, when teaching a multicultural class with varying standards of English language and previous subject knowledge, within the very tight time frame of a one-year UK Master's course.

Evidence from my research illustrates how simple strategies employed by some teachers encouraged participation of international students in class e.g. allocating the students into cross-cultural groups not only encouraged debate but also provided opportunities for the students to develop inter-cultural friendships which the Thai students in this study greatly appreciated. Ryan also suggests strategies to encourage 'students to be more engaged and willing to answer' e.g. by 'turn-taking systems or moving about the classroom' (ibid: 2011: 1). Ryan recognises the importance to the reputation of UK universities and the financial impact on future recruitment if international students have a positive overall experience both socially and pedagogically.

7.5.3 Internationalising the curriculum

Part of the Higher Education Academy's (2014) TIS project focusses on internationalising the curriculum content and providing students with diverse and global perspectives on their particular subject areas. The project provides a framework and diverse cultural resources for teachers to utilise in their lessons. Teachers are encouraged to investigate ways of incorporating multicultural perspectives for example; internationalisation of the curriculum could mean '…providing a broader knowledge base through including conceptual and theoretical work from non-Western sources: providing opportunities for practice in diverse cultural contexts; or examining practice in the discipline in different parts of the world' (HEA 2014: 3). The project recognises the importance of integrating a global perspective to

curriculum development and preparing students for their future careers as global citizens. The following example illustrates how internationalisation can be incorporated not only into the curriculum but also within the teaching and learning experience.

The Higher Education Academy, in its Innovative Pedagogies series, conducted a project with the York Management School, University of York, entitled 'Transforming Teaching and Inspiring Learning'. The MSc International Business and Strategic Management course includes a module entitled 'International Political Economy (PIE) and Business'. Director of Postgraduate Programmes, Simon Sweeney, explains that the international themes within the module provide 'international students with opportunities to select, research, design and deliver course content that relates to their countries of origin and thereby broaden the geographic scope of the module in question' (Sweeney 2016: 3). The benefits to an 'internationally diverse cohort' provide opportunities for '…sharing knowledge and experience and developing understanding, while at the same time developing learners' confidence and self-belief that their prior learning and cultural background are significant assets in a learning community' (Sweeney 2016: 3).

Three years after its introduction, Sweeney reflects on this initiative and comments that student feedback 'indicates a positive experience'. He comments, 'I cannot think of a single subject that does not lend itself to inviting students to contribute content in this way, either individually or in groups' (Sweeney 2016: 8).

7.6. Chapter summary

This chapter discusses key themes which emerged from a range of data obtained from interviews with Thai students and their university teachers, questionnaire responses from

Thai students attending UK universities across the UK, field notes of lesson observations and the diverse research of others. It provides an insight into the experiences of Thai students as they negotiate an alien academic and social environment and how an understanding of the background of the culture, traditions and pedagogy experienced by some Thai students may assist UK educationalists better understand the behaviour of Thai students within the classroom situation and socially.

This study provides evidence of rich multifaceted diversity and cultural values which are reflected to some extent in the views and opinions of the participants from different socio-economic and regional backgrounds. This study combined with the research of others discussed earlier, challenges the stereotypic, essentialist concept of Thai national culture. The study illustrates subtle cultural differences which exist between individuals and paints a complex, nuanced picture of diversity and individuality as exemplified by the Thai students in this study.

Sid's challenging question as to the legitimacy of undertaking this research as a 'farang' which is posed at the start of this chapter, requires an answer. I can reflect on the study and conclude that overall I believe it was actually an advantage not to share a common culture and language with the participants. It enabled me to view their experiences with cultural distance and objectivity. It compelled the participants to voice their concerns and explain very clearly and precisely their experiences for the benefit of a 'farang'. This study enables a wider audience to appreciate the pressures and challenges experienced by the Thai participants while studying in a UK university.

This study highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships and the complexities of krengjai. The research of Komin (1991) and Goffman (1996 7 2005), together with the work

of Aoki (2010), Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) helped me understand the fine differences between, 'krengjai', 'face' and 'ego'.   This knowledge was essential to an understanding of what could possibly be regarded as the apparent negative behaviour of some Thai students which I and other researchers had observed. It enabled me to delve below the superficial layer of unapproachability and reveal a very different and unexpected depiction of Thai individuals who were fun, had interesting and compelling perspectives on global issues, who were friendly, easily hurt and strongly protective of their Thai culture and identity.

Investigating the initiatives and projects of the Higher Education Academy (2014 & 2016) have highlighted the excellent resources available to HE institutions and their teachers to encourage the inclusion of internationalisation in the curriculum. The inspiring work of Sweeney (2016) illustrates to perfection how embracing the prior knowledge and experience of international students can enrich the curriculum content of a subject and make an invaluable contribution to the teaching and learning experience of a UK university classroom.

CHAPTER 8:
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

'I keep in mind some words someone told me and I have never forgotten:

"I cannot change the direction of the wind but I can adjust my sail."'
[Sid: Reflections Term 3]

How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges
while studying in the UK?

8.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into five sections. In section one I present an overview of the study and the key challenges experienced by the Thai students during their dynamic trajectory through the academic year. In section two I consider the contribution of this original work to the existing body of research into the experiences of international students and in section three I focus on the limitations of the study and my own positionality as a UK researcher. In section four I review the implications of the study with recommendations for the direction of future research. Section five presents concluding remarks and some practical suggestions for universities to consider, based on this research, which might assist the smooth integration of international students into the university community.

8.2. Overview of the study

This final chapter provides an opportunity to reflect on the findings of the study and use them as a springboard to energise debate and discussion regarding the experiences of international students attending UK universities and to encourage future research by others into the challenges experienced by other international students attending UK universities. It was a privilege to share 'a particular moment in time and space' (Blackledge and Creese 2010: 4)

with talented Thai post-graduate students and their university teachers. Their invaluable contribution to this original study provided a rich source of information and data. This study projects a complex, dynamic and multifaceted prismatic image of vibrant colour, nuanced shades and depth of focus into previously unexplored areas which were unexpected, challenging and exciting. Unexpected, because as a 'farang' I glimpsed a 'hidden' world of cultural mores and observances which influenced the everyday interactions of the Thai students. Stimulating on many levels not least discovering the strong individuality of character exhibited by the four Thai participants and how each responded to the various challenging experiences each day brought. Exciting, because this study challenges stereotypic pre-conceptions of the 'Asian student' and illuminates the nuances and individuality of the Thai participants.

8.3.   The contribution of this study

In this section I consider how the findings of this study might inform and contribute to the research community. By using the testimony and experiences of the Thai students in this study, I suggest practical applications within UK universities to inform policy making and effectively utilise the positive contribution of students from diverse cultures to stimulate and enrich the learning environment of the UK university community.

This study supports Piller's (2011) argument against 'national stereotypes' which she dismisses as 'inadequate'. The individuality of the participants in this study illustrate the importance of Piller's observation '…we are never just members of a nation but perform many other identities too, simultaneously and at different points in our lives…national identity has lost some of the sway it once held in an age characterised by globalisation and transnationalism' (Piller 2011: 68).

This study builds on the work of Wortham and Reyes (2015) and the concept of evaluative indexicals when considering the role and positionality of the teacher within a multi-cultural classroom. The animated discussion between the students which I include in Chapter 5 was a pivotal moment which exposed the contrasting views of Thai nationals from different geographical regions of Thailand. The discussion centred on the perceived elevated position of teachers in Thai society and competence in their subject. By extending the evaluative indexical of external appearance the students widened their debate to include their perception of high ranking occupations within society and their perception of a hierarchy of subjects within the university faculties.

This study has demonstrated the challenges faced by students studying language-based subjects compared to those studying mathematics and sciences which rely more on formulae. The discussion by the Thai students (in Chapter 5) underlines the academic debate on culture which Piller (2011: 15) describes as 'fundamentally incompatible understandings of the status of culture'. The differences of opinion expressed by the Thai students, highlights the flaws in Hofstede's (2005) essentialist concept of a static national stereotypic culture when he defines culture on his website as '…the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group of people from another. This programming influences patterns of thinking which are reflected in the meaning people attach to various aspects of life and which become crystallised in the institutions of a society.' (http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html accessed 31 August 2015). This definition is in marked contrast to the non-essentialist description of cultures which '…flow, change, intermingle…regardless of national frontiers' (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman 2010: 3). The data which emerge from this study strongly supports the non-essentialist perspective on

culture and extends and fine focuses this argument further. It counters Hofstede's (2005) narrow essentialist perspective by demonstrating that culture is nuanced and displays variation across regional areas even within the same national boundaries. The study expands Holliday's (1999) 'Small Culture' paradigm and supports Blommaert's (2015) more fluid and flexible concept of culture which tends to reflect more fittingly the actions of Sid who inhabited multiple groups or 'niches' (football team, musical band, social and work groups) depending on his motivation and needs at the time.

8.3.1 Support network throughout the year

Many universities arrange introductory courses for international students for a few weeks before the start of the academic year. Unfamiliar study skills of critical thinking and analysis cannot be absorbed overnight, which is why 70% of questionnaire respondents (n=63) recommended that Thai students should attend a pre-Master's course in preparation for the intensive teaching and learning transition which they face when the academic year begins.

Students also mentioned that arriving before the start of term provided valuable time in which to request assistance in practical and stressful tasks for example, arranging accommodation, bank accounts, mobile phone contracts etc. which all can contribute to the pressure and distraction of starting an academically demanding degree course in a new country.

Even students who are in receipt of academic scholarships (like the Thai students in my study) and are high achievers in their home country commented on the difficulty in adapting to learning through a second language, being taught in a very different pedagogic style both of which they found frustrating and sometimes depressing.

This study demonstrates the challenges experienced by Thai students in adapting to a different style of learning. Participants in this study describe a more student-centred approach to teaching in the UK, which emphasises the importance of independent thought, research and class participation which they contrast to a more didactic teacher-centred pedagogy in Thailand, where students are expected to absorb and accept unquestioningly information provided by the teacher. Only 41% of the questionnaire respondents preferred the style of teaching in the UK compared to Thailand.

What is concerning is that of 63 questionnaire respondents only 45% rated the support provided to International students by their UK university as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Only 48% of questionnaire respondents would ask help from the university support team if they had a problem with 70% preferring to contact a Thai friend. The data from this research illustrates the continued need for effective implementation of the HEA initiatives and projects (mentioned in Chapter 7) by UK universities such as that successfully demonstrated by Sweeney (2016) of engaging with international students for the benefit of the entire teaching and learning community.

The testimony of Thai students in this study indicates that once the academic year begins the needs of international students change. When home students arrive on campus, virtually overnight the situation of the international students changes radically. From being the majority group they find themselves a minority within a much larger academic and social community. This can be a shock as Plum comments:

> 'At first er oh so many Asians *(laughter),* entire class … oh my god I saw black hair everywhere but you know after two weeks it feels like it's only me.' [Plum. Interview. Term 1]

41% of questionnaire respondents agreed that it was easy to make new 'farang' (Western) friends. It could be said that this situation reflects Holliday's '…two paradigms of 'culture' (1999: 237) which he describes as small and large cultures.   Holliday makes a timely warning that the '…large culture paradigm is by its nature vulnerable to a culturalist reduction of 'foreign' students, teachers and their educational contexts'.   Depending on the cross-cultural composition of a university community, the international student population may form a 'small culture' within the large culture of home students.

8.3.2   Departments for integration and academic exploration

This study poses the question whether more can be done to assist the integration of multinational students on an academic subject basis. It is clear from the testimony of Thai students in this study that they felt more confident when discussing subject-related topics with their peers. Common academic focus and subject-specific proficiency may encourage mutual sharing of experiences and knowledge which might prove more successful in establishing cross-cultural relationships during an intensive one-year university course compared to organising artificial social activities.

Department functions could enable students to meet and converse socially in the early stages of the academic year but which could grow into informal student-lead study groups or discussions on key topics within the subject area and which would help in the preparation of assignments. These informal occasions could provide an opportunity for students to meet their teachers and doctoral researchers which would greatly improve cross-cultural and inter-departmental relationships. Abe, for example, mentioned that he was at a disadvantage socially when, during the visit to the pub, some members of his peer group were referring to PhD students within the department who were unknown to Abe.

Department functions could provide a common basis on which to meet and would be to the advantage of the teachers who would get know the students outside the classroom. For the students, it would be a valuable opportunity to discuss academic issues with their peer groups and with their lecturers in a relaxed unintimidating environment. This recommendation is supported by the testimony of Sid and Abe who provided examples of how discussion on topics within an academic framework gave them the self-confidence to interact and converse with their peer group. Wendy also provides testimony which supports this recommendation:

> I do have a serious social problem because MA is a one year course and I have many essays to do. I don't have time to go out with other students. However, in my university especially in my major, they don't have any meeting for students in their department, so I don't [meet] many people. [Wendy. Reflections Term 3]

Testimony from Thai students in this study has illustrated how successful it was for the students to be arranged in discussion groups organised by the teacher rather than by self-selection. In Chapter 5 Plum describes a situation in Term 1, where the lecturer organised the students to work in groups and how she felt it was a positive experience:

> '…he created this erm atmosphere where you have to talk to the others. He's put us in groups and make us discuss a particular topics … That is how we started to talk to each other and after that class we started to like [say] "Oh Hi"'. Plum [Group discussion 1]

This pedagogical strategy employed by some teachers provided a framework for topics upon which to scaffold interactions. The students in this study commented on its effectiveness and how it helped them interact and communicate with other nationalities outside the classroom.

This study demonstrates that as Thai students progress through the academic year, so their requirements and needs change. Some Thai students, like Sid in this study, joined mono-

cultural study groups possibly reflecting Holliday's Small Group culture based on a specific activity. Sid explains that they came to rely on each other increasingly as the end of year exams approached. As I mention in Chapter 2, Brown (2009), in her study on international students at a UK university, noted a similar pattern of behaviour among Thai students '…to be close to the point of exclusivity' and 'Thai students were seen to be the most entrenched and the most unapproachable' (ibid: 4).

However, challenging Brown's (2009) findings, only 6% of questionnaire respondents in this study agreed that they would prefer to study with Thai students so more research is required in order to understand this particularly interesting yet challenging situation. For example, in Chapter 5, Sid comments how pleased he felt he when he was selected by his peers to work in a cross-cultural study group organised by the lecturer.

Regular Department meetings throughout the academic year could evolve from initially social 'ice-breaking' events to increasingly academic, encouraging cross-cultural work groups with different students taking responsibility for selected topics throughout the term. By taking the initiative, the university could provide a framework for students within subject areas to socialise, establish friendships and benefit from the experience of working with others and sharing ideas within the rich multicultural learning community.

I believe this study illustrates that the university Department is key to assisting all students to integrate socially and academically. The broad university community can be particularly intimidating for international students but meeting within the smaller Departmental community would encourage a rich and positive sharing of knowledge and experiences.

8.3.3   Pressure of time

The challenges experienced by the Thai students in this study were exacerbated by the tight time scale of the one-year UK Master's course. Some students were under greater pressure depending on the subjects they were studying. Wendy and Plum who were studying History and Law respectively, commented on the length of time it took to read academic papers, research topics before their lectures and write lengthy analytical essays. This view was supported by Wendy's history teacher:

> 'Planning your time, planning your work, nobody's going to tell you when to do what homework particularly for these big essay courses… if you're not managing your time there's this huge spike in workload and you've got to produce something 5,000 words long... to do anything decent you've got to have read 10 highly theoretical very difficult book chapters'. [Lecturer 08 UK/ Wendy]

This study provides evidence that certain subjects which are less language-based are more suited to the time constraints of a one-year UK Master's degree course than language-based courses which rely heavily on extensive background reading and writing lengthy essays, which often take international students considerably more time than their UK peers. Both Sid and Abe commented that prior exposure to the international language of mathematics and scientific equations provided beneficial scaffolding and context to enable them to understand topics even if at times they struggled to understand the lectures.   Abe's physics teacher commented:

> '…if I write a formula, or if I draw a figure, it captures a lot and and if they want to to relate to it, I mean, or to remember what I said, it's much easier to do it either with a formula or with a picture or a graph. … my colleagues prefers to use equations and my way of doing this is to replace equations by graphs.' [Lecturer 02 Middle-East /Abe]

Lack of experience in critical thinking, essay writing, academic English including citations, and the dangers of plagiarism all contributed to high levels of stress throughout the intense one-year postgraduate course.

> 'I think that what really affects our students more particularly, [is to] discuss what it could mean and … criticise the available opinions which is a different skill and I felt sometimes students find that it takes a while to get used to, and may be a year's quite short.' [Interview: Plum's German Law Lecturer]

This study was specifically undertaken because of the condensed timescale and it poses the possibly controversial question of whether UK universities should consider reviewing the time allocated to Master's courses especially for international students for whom English is a second language (ESL). For example, Humanities and Law which are heavily language-based could have the option of a two -year course and those which rely on the international language of scientific and mathematical equations and formulae of which students have prior knowledge could retain the current one-year course.

Of the 63 questionnaire respondents, 74% found revising effectively for examinations, stressful and 65% found meeting assignment deadlines stressful. In addition, universities may wish to consider allowing extra processing time for ESL students in examinations to enable the students to read and translate the questions and process the information before planning and writing their answers appropriately in L2.

This research study has opened windows on the experiences of the Thai students and it illuminates the challenges faced by university teachers. From the interviews, it is clear that teachers face considerable demands when trying to complete a Master's course syllabus against the clock for a class of many students with varying levels of academic experience and language capabilities. One teacher explained how he taught five parallel lectures to large

classes. Some teachers commented that they did not know the students sitting in front of them and this was felt as a negative factor, both by the teachers and the students as there was no rapport or personal involvement with these large classes.

Thai students commented that the role of the teacher is very important but in some cases they did not have enough time or opportunity to meet with them. This is a logistical challenge and a difficult situation to resolve. The notion of mentoring small groups of Master's students by PhD research students within the Department might provide a framework of support to reduce anxiety and enable the students to appreciate the experience of studying in a multicultural academic environment and sharing ideas with students from other backgrounds.

8.4. Critical reflections on the study and its limitations

At this point I feel it is important to subject myself and the process of this research to 'self-scrutiny' and to '…objectively stand outside one's own writing and to be reflexive about it' Hellawell (2006: 483). As a teacher educated and trained in the UK I again return to Sid's challenging question:

> *'I think if you were Thai you would have understood everything without*
> *needing to ask, right?'* Sid [Group discussion Term 3]

Sid was voicing what I had considered carefully before I set out on this investigation and I feel the need to revisit it. These were the key arguments as I debated whether to commence this project: I am not a Thai national and I do not speak the language. I have not experienced the same education system as the students in this study and I do not share their culture or religion. What mandate did I possess to carry out this research and what did I hope to achieve? What really motivated me to take the very first step of this investigation was a

strong desire to understand the challenges facing Thai students in the UK and that the outcome of the research might be helpful to HE providers and to the Thai students themselves.

8.4.1 Positionality and identity of researcher

In the introduction to this thesis, I reflected on my own positionality and background and how this might influence my interpretation of data and my interaction with the Thai participants in this study. As I mention in the introduction, Mannay (2010: 93) comments '…insider/outsider discourses are important because they place the researcher at the centre of the production of knowledge'.   I am 'farang', female, and a UK trained teacher but contrary to Sid's challenging question, I believe that it may have been an advantage in this study. Although I did not share the background and culture of the Thai participants, it may have provided me with distance and objectivity. Hellawell (2006: 487) also considers the standpoint of the researcher in terms of 'insider' vs 'outsider' and comments that some researchers favour the positionality of the 'outsider' as '…observing from a considerably more favourable analytical vantage point than the insider'.   In his view '…ideally the researcher should be both inside *and* outside the perceptions of the 'researched'.   Blackledge and Creese (2010: 89) describe how researchers 'navigate these positions' and state that '…processes of self-representation in research are crucial to ongoing data collection and perpetuation of trust and confidence … they involve the researcher in a dynamic interplay of individual identities as they skilfully position themselves in relation to the researched' (ibid: 86).

8.4.2 Language (L1)

Unlike Kanno (2003) and Nomnian (2008) who shared first language (L1) with their research participants, in my situation the absence of a common first language was a particular issue upon which I deliberated very carefully before I undertook the study. As it turned out, I was very fortunate in that the four volunteer participants in the study had achieved a good level of IELTS and so conversational English was less of a problem than anticipated. I was also interested in the larger picture and how other postgraduate Thai students were coping with the challenges of studying in the UK so I arranged for the in-depth questionnaires to be translated into Thai by fluent bilingual Thai / English graduates who then tested the translated questions on L1 Thai speakers to ensure the phraseology of the questions was accurate. I recognise that ideally it would have been beneficial to be fluent in the students' first language in order to obtain more accurate vocabulary and sense of their responses. However, I was faced with a similar challenge when interviewing university lecturers whose first language was not English.

8.4.3 Narrative and identity

I was keenly aware of possible cultural barriers that might exist between the Thai students and myself as a 'farang' and whether this would prevent the students revealing their true opinions and challenges. My concerns were unfounded. I was fortunate to have four generous Thai scholarship students who volunteered to participate in this research project. As the year progressed I came to know the Thai participants very well and they came to know me. We met regularly; I hosted meals and we discussed various issues which included academic challenges, health problems, cultural differences and friendships. With their permission and that of their teachers I observed their lessons and we discussed them

afterwards, reflecting on the teaching style, subject content and particular problems they had encountered. It was noticeable how, as time progressed, the Thai students became more relaxed and open in their discussions with me, revealing more of their unique characters, views and opinions. They were keen to explain to a 'farang' how difficult it can be for Thai students studying for a short period of time in the UK. They expressed a wish to inform future Thai students who might learn from their experiences and help them adjust perhaps more quickly to the various challenges of studying in a UK HE environment.

What emerged from these interviews was a clearer understanding of the positionality and individuality of the interviewees as they recounted their stories or narratives. As Kanno (2003: 10) states '…a narrative view of identity … allows us to think of identity as a movement.' With an audio recording of each interview, I was able to capture and authentically represent the voices of the individuals as they narrated their life story at that moment in time and space. As the academic year progressed I noticed that some interviewees contradicted earlier remarks '…re-visiting their interpretation in the light of more recent developments' (Kanno 2003: 11). This was noticeable when comparing some individual interviews with contradictory views expressed by the same individuals during group discussions at a later time. It would be very interesting to pursue this line of research in the future and investigate whether over the passage of time there was a genuine re-interpretation of a past incident by the student in light of ongoing experiences within the UK academic environment or whether a change of view was perhaps influenced by dynamics, personalities and positionality within a discussion / peer group.

8.4.4 Diversity vs stereotype

I came to realise that to some extent I was guilty of Western stereotypic preconceptions of 'what a Thai student was like'. This generalisation was also reflected in several interviews with their Western teachers who tended to include Thai students within the collective 'Asian' group which was vast and diverse. This proved a salutary lesson because as time progressed and the research data was analysed, it became very clear that each of the participants in this study was a distinct individual with a strong personality and convictions. The broad stereotypic descriptor of Thai nationals faded over time as evidence gathered during this study revealed nuanced regional and societal differences. The Thai students in this study were not a homogenous group but were individuals influenced by socio-economic differences, family background, local regional culture and customs.

This study strongly supports Piller's (2011) argument against 'national stereotypes' which she dismisses as 'inadequate'. The individuality of the participants in this study illustrate the importance and veracity of Piller's observation '…we are never just members of a nation but perform many other identities too, simultaneously and at different points in our lives…national identity has lost some of the sway it once held in an age characterised by globalisation and transnationalism' (ibid: 68).

An unforeseen outcome of this research was how seemingly innocuous pedagogical and social interactions within the UK university community could adversely impact on Thai students who had varied exposure to UK pedagogy and culture. Unexpected revelations described in previous chapters illustrate how Thai students in this study exemplified their diversity by their varied responses when faced with the challenges of UK 'pub culture', the

behaviour of UK students in the classroom, social interactions and representations of Thai culture in 'Western' media.

Another interesting outcome of the study was the discovery that some Thai students in this study employed stereotypic language; for example, Wendy states '… because **they** are Western, they think in a Western way. They never think about another side' (Chapter 6) and in the same chapter Abe comments 'I don't go out at night as Thai people don't' stating, that his social behaviour pattern was stereotypically representative of all Thai nationals. Yet Plum and Sid did socialise in the evenings and 'went clubbing'. The Thai students also employed stereotypic imagery when they referred to 'hard drinking' UK students during a group discussion (Chapter 6) until they reflected on the emerging drinking culture of university students in Thailand. They then modified their initial views.

Building on the work of Reyes (2009), employing stereotype as a resource was one of the most interesting and unexpected themes to emerge from the study. Inhabiting the stereotype and acknowledging membership of a wider 'Asian' group provides support for minority groups within a UK university '…invoking the Asian stereotype foregrounds the potential for inhabiting this stereotype' (Reyes 2009: 53) for example when Sid states '…I usually go for lunch with my South East Asian friends'

8.4.5 Participants

Another aspect to reflect upon as I review this study is that all the students involved in this research were recipients of scholarships to study for Master's degrees in the UK. This study does not therefore reflect the full spectrum of Thai students studying at various academic levels at universities in the UK. It is important to note that in the UK, the Master's degree

course is just one year in duration. It is therefore possible that the challenges of this course may not necessarily be experienced by Thai students studying for a Master's course of longer duration in other countries.

Additionally, the three UK universities attended by the four key participants in this study are prestigious and internationally renowned, so they attract students, researchers and teaching staff from across the globe. This particular situation may not therefore mirror the experiences of Thai students attending other universities in the UK. To address this issue, bilingual questionnaires were sent out to 93 Thai scholarship Master's students who were attending universities across the UK and of these, 63 responded which enabled their opinions and experiences to be represented in this study.

8.5.   Future directions

This investigation addresses genuine problems experienced by Thai students and witnessed by work colleagues and university teachers. It was not clear at the outset of the investigation which issue had the greatest effect on the Thai students. I therefore took the decision to carry out the study without preconceived hypotheses or predicted outcomes. The investigation developed throughout the year and information from triangulated data sets was revealed which justified my decision. The study not only provided a rich source of data but unexpectedly revealed the subject of stereotype. Had I chosen to focus on only one predetermined theme then I believe this web of interconnecting threads would not have been revealed and the study would lack its rich, multidimensional perspective. It also invites further in-depth exploration.

This research shows that both Thai students and their teachers have stereotypic images of unfamiliar 'others'. This study has touched the tip of the stereotype iceberg. It demonstrates the rich individuality and diversity within Thailand's national boundaries. The stereotypic depiction and categorisation of the Asian student requires clarification and further investigation. The Thai students in this study have illustrated a diversity and individuality which challenges stereotypical depiction of Thai nationals.

I have learned from this study that stereotype is a subtle trap which ensnares the unwary. As Holliday admits '…the stereotype of Chinese culture was so deeply embedded in my thinking that I had to bracket it' (2011: 31). The fact that stereotype was present throughout the study demonstrates its pervasive nature and reveals the necessity to continue this line of research in more depth.

8.6. Concluding remarks and practical suggestions

I described embarking on this study as an adventure into uncharted territory. As the investigation progressed I was privileged to explore diverse and fascinating areas from new and varied perspectives. Now, as I reach this final stage, I recognise that this is not the end of the research. While I believe this study has contributed to the pool of documentation recording this fascinating area of research it has also raised more questions, more challenges and illuminated yet more paths to be explored.

This study highlights the challenges of teaching and learning within a multicultural HE population and shines a spotlight on the opportunities for UK universities to capitalise on the gifts and talents of the multinational individuals within their communities. In this age of

increasingly popular and lucrative transnational education, UK universities attract bright, motivated students and teachers from across the globe.

The Thai scholarship students in this study represent a major financial investment by their sponsors. They travelled to the UK to learn from experienced academics and subsequently share their acquired knowledge and expertise for the benefit of their country. The participants in this study have eloquently demonstrated that international students and teachers provide UK universities with an exceptionally rich resource including languages, academic expertise and cultures.

There is great potential for the UK university community to benefit from the abundant diversity of talents which these international individuals bring with them. As Preece (2016: 36) recommends '…there is a need to discuss ways of imagining higher education as a multilingual space' and how '…diversity of the student body can be used as an asset'. However, there is an expectation that UK universities should fulfil their duty of care and responsibility towards the international members within their community. Preece (2016) comments that '…efforts in this direction will contribute to a more effective and rewarding educational experience for minority ethnic students in the sector' (ibid: 36).

Universities already have in place the infrastructure to put into practice many of the recommendations proposed in this research. They may therefore wish to address the challenges arising from this study by actively monitoring Inclusion Policies, challenging stereotypic views of 'others', implement HEA initiatives and provide opportunities for international sojourners '…to speak with an authoritative voice' (Preece 2016: 35) to share their experiences, cultural heritage and academic expertise with their teachers and peers and actively promote intercultural awareness.

It was noticeable from this research that Thai students and their teachers were placed under stress by the tight time scale and academic demands of the one-year UK Master's degree course. UK universities might wish to review the practical support for international students and teachers throughout the academic year by providing pedagogic mentors and sharing best practice with international colleagues to maintain high quality of teaching and learning across the Departments.

In addition, evidence from this study highlights the additional stress of a one-year Master's degree at a UK university studied through a second language. Thai students in this research valued the pre-sessional courses prior to the start of the academic year but commented on the importance of adequate access to teachers and EFL support throughout the year. In light of the evidence from Thai students in this study who had already achieved high IELTS levels, UK universities may wish to consider allowing extra time in examinations and to extend deadlines for assignments to enable international students to mentally process (L2) language and demonstrate their academic abilities.

The challenges of academic English were particularly commented on by students in this research who were studying Law and History and who were expected to read lengthy documents and write in-depth essays which critically analyse case histories and world events. They commented on the much longer time it took to complete these tasks compared to their (L1) peers. UK universities might therefore wish to consider establishing a two-year or eighteen-month Master's course for International students studying more language-based subjects.

This study highlights the experience and knowledge which international students bring to UK university classrooms. They provide a potentially rich pedagogic resource of multi-

dimensional perspectives and context which universities may wish to investigate with their teaching staff. This study also invites universities to review syllabus content and identify potentially controversial or sensitive areas for students from different nationalities or cultures; to present balanced arguments and provide opportunities to air contrasting viewpoints within a multi-national classroom. It also notes the successful strategy employed by some teachers to facilitate mixed discussion groups within the classroom in order to encourage intercultural communication and sharing of ideas.

Evidence from the students in this study reveal they were more confident interacting with others within a classroom environment when supported by prior knowledge of subject material and a contextual framework. This study invites universities to review the role and function of existing Departmental structures in providing essential academic and social scaffolding to facilitate the cross-cultural integration of its students.

Finally, this study highlights the individuality of international students and resists generalisations about national groups. It illustrates the complex challenges and pressures faced by overseas students as they seek to adapt to norms and expectations of HE in the UK. Hopefully this study will encourage more research into the challenges experienced by students from other nationalities which will further demonstrate the diversity within the international student population and inspire UK universities to recognise and utilise this rich resource within their learning community.

Abe, Plum, Sid and Wendy have walked with me on this journey of discovery and we have shared an amazing experience. They have demonstrated to this 'farang' the rich diversity and individuality of Thai students within the UK university population and they have

revealed with honesty and candour the cultural and academic challenges they experienced. It has been a privilege and for this I thank them

.

APPENDIX 1: Thai students in the UK: Historical links

Thai students have been studying in the UK for many decades illustrating the strong links between the two kingdoms. Prince Prisdang, (born Feb 23rd 1851 to Prince Jumsai, the fourth eldest son of King Rama III), was sent to England to study engineering.
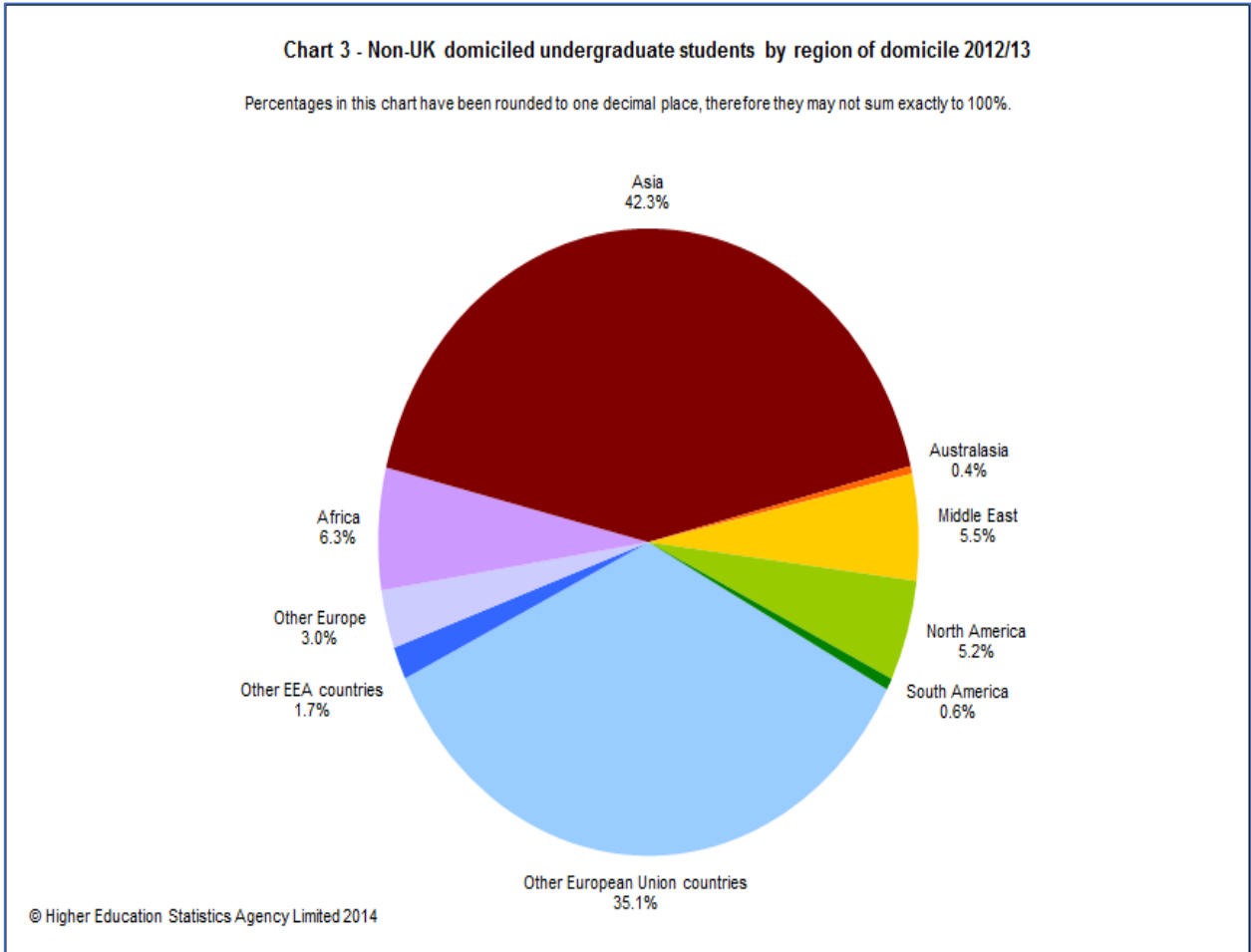
Prince Prisdang

The Times Magazine (1876) reported that Prince Prisdang became '…the first known Thai to study and graduate from a Western University' and won many distinctions and awards '…taking the first prizes in so many fields of studies upon his graduation at King's College in 1876' (ref. M.L. Manich Jumsai 'Prince Prisdang's Files on His Diplomatic Activities in Europe 1880-1886'). Prince Prisdang, become the first resident Siamese minister to London and brought the first group of nine students in 1881, finding schools for them and supervising their studies.
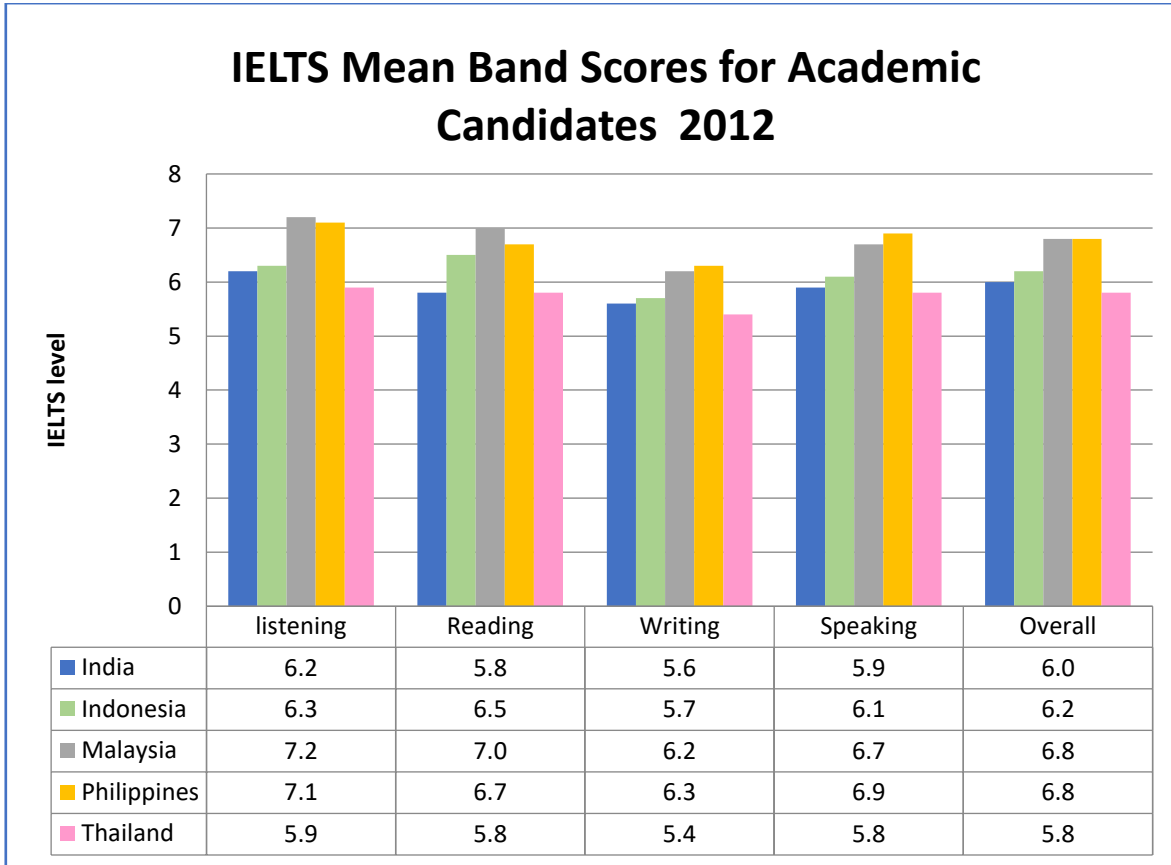
Thai students have been coming to the United Kingdom ever since, except during the war years. During World War II a number of Thai students remained in the United Kingdom and were decorated by the British Government for their contribution to the war effort. As Thailand's prosperity has flourished so increasing numbers of Thai students have translocated to the UK to continue their studies. Many of these students return home to take up important and distinguished positions in various aspects of Thai life; nine former students who were educated in the United Kingdom have become Prime Minister of Thailand.

Chart 3 - Non-UK domiciled undergraduate students by region of domicile 2012/13

Percentages in this chart have been rounded to one decimal place, therefore they may not sum exactly to 100%.

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APPENDIX 3: IELTS mean band scores 2012

IELTS Mean Band Scores for Academic Candidates 2012

	listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall
India	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.9	6.0
Indonesia	6.3	6.5	5.7	6.1	6.2
Malaysia	7.2	7.0	6.2	6.7	6.8
Philippines	7.1	6.7	6.3	6.9	6.8
Thailand	5.9	5.8	5.4	5.8	5.8

APPENDIX 4: EF English proficiency index scores 2012

http://www.ef.co.uk/epi/downloads/ [Accessed 6 January 2015]

Very High Proficiency			**High Proficiency**			**Moderate Proficiency**		
Rank	Country	EF EPI	Rank	Country	EF EPI	Rank	Country	EF EPI
1	Sweden	68.91	6	Belgium	62.46	14	India*	57.49
2	Denmark	67.96	7	Austria	62.14	15	Switzerland	57.39
3	Netherlands	66.32	8	Hungary	60.39	16	Slovakia	56.62
4	Finland	64.37	9	Germany	60.07	17	Pakistan*	56.03
5	Norway	63.22	10	Poland	59.08	18	Spain	55.89
			11	Czech Republic	58.90	19	Portugal	55.39
			12	Singapore*	58.65	20	Argentina	55.38
			13	Malaysia*	57.95	21	South Korea	55.35
						22	Japan	55.14
						23	France	54.28
						24	Italy	54.01
						25	Hong Kong*	53.65

*Countries where English is an official language

Low Proficiency			**Very Low Proficiency**					
Rank	Country	EF EPI	Rank	Country	EF EPI	Rank	Country	EF EPI
26	Uruguay	53.42	39	Chile	48.41	5	Panama	44.68
27	Indonesia	53.31	40	Venezuela	47.50	5	Saudi Arabia	44.60
28	Iran	52.92	41	El Salvador	47.31	5	**Thailand**	**44.36**
29	Russia	52.78	42	Syria	47.22	5	Libya	42.53
30	Taiwan	52.42	43	Ecuador	47.19			
31	Vietnam	52.14	44	Algeria	47.13			
32	Turkey	51.19	45	Kuwait	47.01			
33	Peru	50.55	46	Brazil	46.86			
34	Costa Rica	50.15	47	Guatemala	46.66			
35	Morocco	49.40	48	Egypt	45.92			
36	China	49.00	49	United Arab Emirates	45.53			
37	Qatar	48.79	50	Colombia	45.07			
38	Mexico	48.60						

ASIA EF EPI Rankings 2012

*Countries where English is an official language

Rank	Country	EF EPI	Level
12	Singapore*	58.65	High Proficiency
13	Malaysia*	57.95	High Proficiency
14	India*	57.49	Moderate Proficiency
17	Pakistan*	56.03	Moderate Proficiency
21	South Korea	55.35	Moderate Proficiency
22	Japan	55.14	Moderate Proficiency
25	Hong Kong*	53.65	Moderate Proficiency
30	Taiwan	52.42	Low Proficiency
31	Vietnam	52.14	Low Proficiency
36	China	49.00	Low Proficiency
53	Thailand	44.36	Very Low Proficiency

APPENDIX 5: Hofstede's comparison of cultural dimensions of Thailand & UK
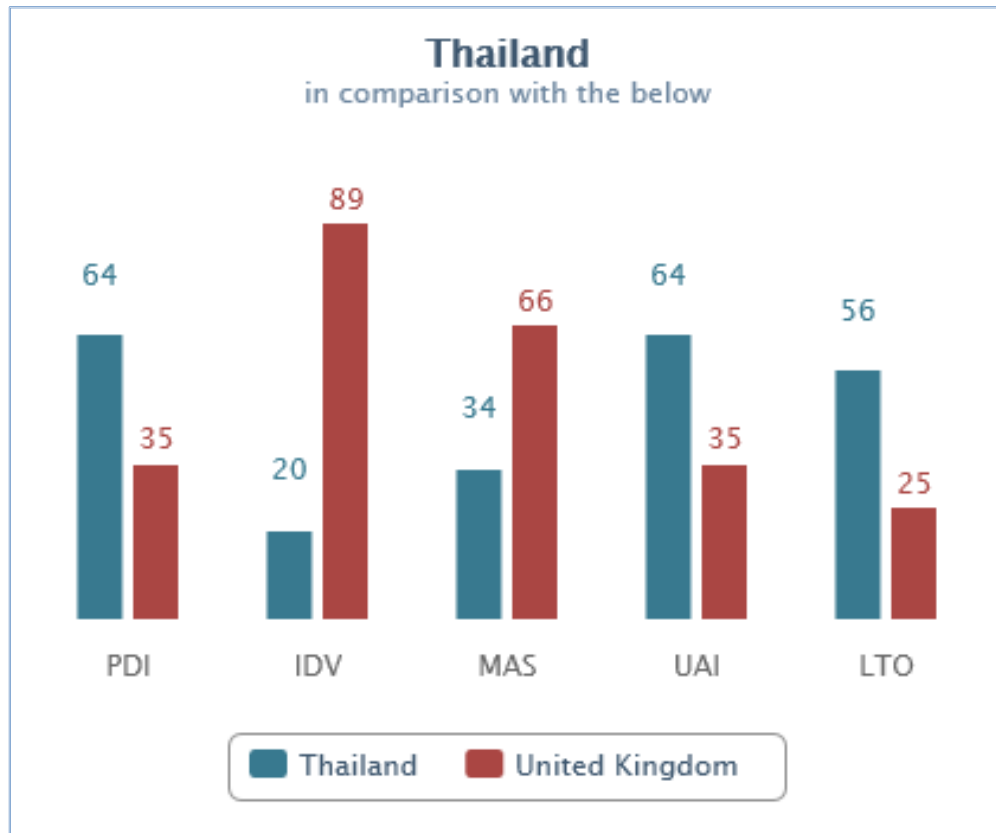
Source: http://geert-.com accessed 29 March 2013

The five cultural dimensions are described below

1. **Power distance** (PDI)**:** *the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed **unequally**.*

2. **Individualism/Collectivism** (IDV): *the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members.*

3. **Masculinity/Femininity** (MAS)**:** *The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).*

4. **Uncertainty Avoidance** (UAI)**:** *extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these.*

5. **Long Term Orientation** (LTO) added in 1991**:** *the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.*

APPENDIX 6a: Post-graduate questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire

ขอบพระคุณที่ช่วยสละเวล่ตอบแบบาอบถาม ฉบับนี้

PG: ID

Use of English and use of research facilities:
การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษและการใช้สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกเพื่อการวิจัย

☑	All the time ตลอดเวลา	Often / บ่อยครั้ง	Occasionally บางครั้ง	Once or twice/ ครั้งหรือสองครั้ง	Never ไม่เคยเลย
1. Have you had difficulty with the use of English in assignments? คุณเคยมีปัญหาในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการทำรายงานหรือไม่	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Have you had difficulty understanding Academic English which has caused you to misinterpret a question? คุณเคยมีปัญหากับการทำความเข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษในเชิงวิชาการซึ่งเป็นสาเหตุทำให้เกิดการความเข้าใจคำถามผิดหรือไม่	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Do you regularly use the university library for research คุณใช้บริการห้องสมุดของมหาวิทยาลัยเพื่อการวิจัยเป็นประจำหรือไม่	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Do you regularly use the internet for research คุณใช้สื่ออินเทอร์เน็ดเพื่อการวิจัยเป็นประจำหรือไม่	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Level of English:

ความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของคุณ

☑ **How much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements….** **คุณเห็นด้วยหรือไม่กับข้อความต่อไปนี้**	Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
5. My social English is of a good enough standard for me to converse easily and confidently with the lecturer and other students คุณสามารถใช้ภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างดีพอที่จะใช้ในการสนทนากับอาจารย์ผู้สอนและนักเรียนคนอื่น ๆ ได้อย่างราบรื่นและมีความมั่นใจ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. My academic English and subject vocabulary is of a good enough standard for me to achieve good grades in my assignments คุณสามารถใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการและใช้คำศัพท์เฉพาะได้อย่างดีพอที่จะสามารถทำคะแนนดีในรายงานของคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I find it difficult to understand the lecturer when he speaks เวลาอาจารย์ผู้สอนบรรยาย คุณไม่ค่อยจะเข้าใจ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I find taking notes in the lectures difficult as I do not understand the content of the lecture คุณจดบันทึกไม่ได้เนื่องจากไม่เข้าใจเนื้อหาของการบรรยาย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I unable to write assignments in English using correct academic vocabulary คุณไม่สามารถเขียนรายงานภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการได้อย่างถูกต้อง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I find it difficult to communicate my ideas in classroom discussions คุณไม่สามารถสื่อสารความคิดเห็นได้อย่างที่คุณต้องการเวลามีการถกเถียงกันในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I am unable to read academic documents and articles in English คุณไม่สามารถอ่านเอกสารและบทความวิชาการเป็นภาษาอังกฤษได้	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. I find writing essays very difficult คุณมีปัญหาในการแต่งเรียงความ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. There are not enough opportunities for discussions in the lessons คุณรู้สึกว่าไม่มีโอกาสเพียงพอที่จะอภิปรายกันในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. The lecturer does not check to ensure international students understand the content of the lecture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	อาจารย์ผู้สอนไม่ได้ตรวจสอบให้แน่ใจว่านักศึกษาต่างชาติมีความเข้าใจในเนื้อหาการบรรยายหรือไม่					
15.	I read academic books and research articles every day คุณอ่านหนังสือวิชาการและบทความวิชาการทุกๆวัน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	My academic writing had improved during the course ความสามารถในการเขียนทางวิชาการของคุณได้พัฒนาขึ้นในช่วงเวลาที่ได้ศึกษาที่สหราชอาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	My academic vocabulary has greatly improved during the course. ความสามารถในการใช้คำศัพท์วิชาการของคุณได้พัฒนาขึ้นอย่างมากในช่วงเวลาที่ได้ศึกษาที่สหราชอาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.	My English grammar has improved during the course. ความสามารถในการใช้ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษของคุณได้พัฒนาขึ้นอย่างมากในช่วงเวลาที่ได้ศึกษาที่สหราชอาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	My pronunciation has improved during the course. คุณสามารถออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างถูกต้องและมีการพัฒนาขึ้นในช่วงเวลาที่ได้ศึกษาที่สหราชอาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	My English conversation has improved during the course. คุณสามารถสนทนาเป็นภาษาอังกฤษและมีการพัฒนาขึ้นในช่วงเวลาที่ได้ศึกษาที่สหราชอาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Teaching Style in UK University:
รูปแบบการเรียนการสอนของมหาวิทยาลัยในสหราชอาณาจักร

☑ **How much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements….** **คุณเห็นด้วยหรือไม่กับข้อความต่อไปนี้**	Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
21. The lecturer provides extra materials e.g. notes or tapes to help international students understand and keep up with the work อาจารย์ผู้สอนจัดเตรียมสื่อการเรียนการสอน เช่น โน้ตจากการบรรยาย หรือ เทปบันทึกเสียง เพื่อช่วยนักศึกษาต่างชาติให้มีความเข้าใจและทันกับการบรรยายของอาจารย์	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I prefer the teaching style in the UK to that of Thailand คุณชอบรูปแบบการเรียนการสอนแบบสหราชอาณาจักรมากกกว่ารูปแบบการเรียนการสอนแบบประเทศไทย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. The lecturer prepares lectures well อาจารย์ผู้สอนเตรียมเรื่องที่จะบรรยายได้อย่างดี	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. The lecturer answers questions carefully and completely. อาจารย์ผู้สอนตอบคำถามได้อย่างรอบคอบและสมบูรณ์แบบ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. The lecturer makes the course material interesting and easy to understand อาจารย์ผู้สอนทำให้เนื้อหาหลักสูตรให้น่าสนใจและง่ายต่อการเข้าใจ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. The lecturer is experienced in his subject. อาจารย์ผู้สอนมีประสบการณ์ความรู้ในวิชาที่ท่านสอน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. The lecturer makes students feel comfortable about asking questions. อาจารย์ผู้สอนทำให้นักศึกษารู้สึกสบายใจกับการตั้งคำถามในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. The lecturer uses technology to aid learning. อาจารย์ผู้สอนใช้เทคโนโลยีเพื่อช่วยส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. The lecturer makes a great effort to explain the work so I fully understand อาจารย์ผู้สอนพยายามอย่างมากเพื่อที่จะอธิบายให้คุณเข้าใจในงานที่ได้รับมอบหมายอย่างสมบูรณ์	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
30.	I would prefer to be given the facts to learn rather than be expected to provide information คุณชอบเป็นผู้รับข้อมูลมากกว่าการหาข้อมูลด้วยตนเอง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31.	I prefer the teaching style in Thailand คุณชอบรูปแบบการเรียนการสอนแบบไทยมากกว่าสหราช อาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Academic learning in UK:
การศึกษาในสหราชอาณาจักร

☑	**How much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements….** **คุณเห็นด้วยหรือไม่กับข้อความต่อไปนี้**	Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
32.	I dislike challenging the lecturer's views คุณไม่ชอบการถกเถียงกับความคิดเห็นของอาจารย์ผู้สอน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33.	I feel embarrassed to ask questions in the lectures คุณรู้สึกอายเกินไปที่จะตั้งคำถามในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34.	I find the written assignments easy คุณรู้สึกว่าการเขียนรายงานหรือเรียงความเป็นเรื่องง่าย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.	I find it difficult to participate in group discussions with non-Thai students คุณรู้สึกว่าการมีส่วนร่วมในการอภิปรายกับนักศึกษาต่างชาติเป็น เรื่องที่ยากสำหรับคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36.	I prefer to study with Thai students คุณชอบเรียนกับนักศึกษาไทยมากกว่า	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37.	I find it very stressful being asked questions by the lecturer คุณรู้สึกกดดันเวลาอาจารย์ตั้งคำถามให้คุณตอบ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38.	I never offer to answer a question in the lectures คุณไม่เคยเป็นคนอาสาตอบคำถามในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39.	I always offer to answer questions in the lectures คุณเป็นคนอาสาตอบคำถามในห้องเรียนตลอดเวลา	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40.	I find it easy to be self-motivated and work independently คุณรู้สึกว่าการที่คุณจะมีความตั้งใจเรียนและทำงานด้วยตนเองโดย ไม่ต้องพึ่งคนอื่นเป็นเรื่องที่ง่ายดายสำหรับคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
41.	I find it difficult to give presentations to the class คุณรู้สึกว่าการนำเสนอต่อหน้าเพื่อนร่วมชั้นเป็นเรื่องที่ยากสำหรับคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42.	I find it difficult to work in a team with other nationalities คุณรู้สึกว่าการทำงานร่วมกันเป็นกลุ่มกับนักศึกษาชาติอื่น ๆ นั้นเป็นเรื่องที่ยากสำหรับคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43.	There is a good atmosphere of learning in the class. ในห้องเรียนมีบรรยากาศการเรียนการสอนที่ดี	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Adaptation to academic environment:
การปรับตัวต่อสภาพแวดล้อมทางการศึกษา

☑	**How much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements….** **คุณเห็นด้วยหรือไม่กับข้อความต่อไปนี้**	Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
	44. I feel relaxed and able to discuss work problems with the lecturer คุณรู้สึกสบายใจและสามารถที่จะปรึกษาปัญหาเรื่องเรียนกับอาจารย์ได้	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	45. I feel so homesick I would like to go home คุณรู้สึกคิดถึงบ้านจนอยากจะกลับไป	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	46. I find it easy to make new 'farang' (western) friends คุณสามารถผูกมิตรกับเพื่อนฝรั่งได้ง่าย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	47. If I had a problem I would seek help from the university support team ถ้าคุณมีปัญหา คุณจะไปใช้บริการจากศูนย์สนับสนุนช่วยเหลือนักศึกษาของมหาวิทยาลัย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	48. If I had a problem I would contact a Thai friend ถ้าคุณมีปัญหา คุณจะติดต่อเพื่อนคนไทย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	49. If I had a problem I would contact my family ถ้าคุณมีปัญหา คุณจะติดต่อครอบครัวของคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	50. If I had a problem I would contact the Thai Embassy ถ้าคุณมีปัญหา คุณจะติดต่อไปยังสถานทูตไทย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	51. Most of my friends are inside the university เพื่อนส่วนใหญ่ของคุณคือเพื่อนที่เรียนด้วยกันในมหาวิทยาลัย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
	52. I gained confidence and participated in the discussions. คุณพัฒนาความมั่นใจและมีส่วนร่วมในการถกเถียงในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	53. I lack confidence and find it difficult to mix with others in my group คุณขาดความมั่นใจและคิดว่าคุณไม่ค่อยเข้ากับเพื่อนคนอื่น ๆในกลุ่มเดียวกัน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About your academic course:
เกี่ยวกับหลักสูตรวิชาที่คุณศึกษา

☑ **How much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements….** **คุณเห็นด้วยหรือไม่กับข้อความต่อไปนี้**		Strongly disagree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	Disagree ไม่เห็นด้วย	Undecided ไม่แน่ใจ	Agree เห็นด้วย	Strongly Agree เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
	54. I feel well prepared for this degree course คุณรู้สึกว่าคุณเตรียมความพร้อมมาอย่างดีสำหรับหลักสูตรนี้	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	55. I found the university induction course for new international students very useful คุณคิดว่าการปฐมนิเทศที่ทางมหาวิทยาลัยจัดให้สำหรับนักศึกษาต่างชาตินั้นมีประโยชน์มาก	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	56. I feel the university has not done enough to help international students คุณรู้สึกว่ามหาวิทยาลัยของคุณนั้นไม่ได้ให้ความช่วยเหลือแก่นักศึกษาต่างชาติอย่างเพียงพอ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	57. I think all Thai students should attend a pre-master's course to acquire western study skills e.g. presentation & analytical skills คุณมีความเห็นว่านักศึกษาไทยทุกคนที่จะมาเรียนในสหราชอาณาจักรควรเข้าเรียนหลักสูตรเตรียมการศึกษาระดับปริญญาโทเพื่อเรียนรู้ทักษะการเรียนแบบตะวันตก เช่น ทักษะการนำเสนอและการวิเคราะห์ ก่อนเข้ารับการศึกษาจริง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	58. The course is more difficult than I expected หลักสูตรที่คุณเรียนยากกว่าที่คุณคาดไว้	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	59. The library resources and computers in the university are well maintained and modern	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Very Poor ไม่ดีเลย	Unsatisfactory ไม่น่าพอใจ	Satisfactory น่าพอใจ	Good ดีมาก	Excellent ยอดเยี่ยม
	ห้องสมุดของมหาวิทยาลัยมีทรัพยากรทางความรู้และคอมพิวเตอร์ ที่อยู่ในสภาพดีและทันสมัย					
60.	I find the work interesting and stimulating. คุณพบว่าหลักสูตรนี้น่าสนใจและน่าเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
61.	The difficulty level of this course is appropriate for me. ระดับความยากของหลักสูตรนี้เหมาะสมต่อความสามารถของคุณ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
62.	This course is one of the most difficult I have taken. หลักสูตรนี้เป็นหลักสูตรที่**ยาก**ที่สุด**ที่คุณเคย**เรียนมา	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
63.	The text books and other materials required for the course are modern and of a good standard. **ตำราเรียนและ**อุปกรณ์อย่างอื่น**ใช้สำหรับหลักสูตรนี้ ทันสมัยและมีมาตรฐานที่ดี**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
64.	I would recommend this course to others. **คุณจะแนะนำให้ผู้อื่น เรียน**หลักสูตรนี้	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
65.	There is a good balance of international students in the class. ในห้องเรียนมีนักศึกษาต่างชาติผสมผสานกันอย่างหลากหลายและ ลงตัว	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall academic experience:

ประเมินประสบการณ์ทางด้านวิชาการทั้งหมด

✓	Based on your experience how would you rate: ประเมินความพึงพอใจตามประสบการณ์ของคุณที่ คุณได้รับในการศึกษาที่สหราชอาณาจักร	Very Poor ไม่ดีเลย	Unsatisfactory ไม่น่าพอใจ	Satisfactory น่าพอใจ	Good ดีมาก	Excellent ยอดเยี่ยม
66.	The quality of your degree course **คุณภาพของหลักสูตร**ที่คุณเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
67.	The quality of teaching you experienced in UK compared to Thailand **คุณภาพของการ**เรียนการ**สอนที่**สหราชอาณาจักรที่คุณได้ สัมผัส**เปรียบเทียบกับ**การเรียนการสอนที่**ประเทศไทย**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
68.	The support you received at the university as an international student **ในฐานะที่เป็นนักศึกษาต่างชาติคุณได้รับบริการ สนับสนุนของมหาวิทยาลัย**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

69. The style of teaching you experience in UK compared to Thailand รูปแบบการเรียนการ**สอนแบบ**สหราชอาณาจักร**เปรียบเทียบ****กับ**รูปแบบการเรียนการสอน**แบบไทย**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
70. Your learning experience in UK **ประสบการณ์การ ด้าน การศึกษาของคุณ**ในสหราชอาณาจักร	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
71. Your improvement in understanding and using Academic English **การพัฒความสามารถของคุณในการเข้าใจและการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษทางวิชาการ**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Based on experience so far please enter a score of 1-5 for how stressful you find the following activities?

จากประสบการณ์ของคุณ กรุณาระบุระดับความเครียดต่อปัจจัยต่าง ๆ ระหว่างการเรียนใดต่อไปนี้

1	2	3	4	5
Very stressful				**Not stressful at all**

Please enter a score of *1 to 5* for each activity(ระดับความเครียดเท่าไร)

72. ▢ **My level of English**
ความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของคุณ

73. **Meeting assignment deadlines**
การส่งงานที่ตรงเวลา

74. ▢ **Academic level of the course**
การเรียนการสอน

75. **Revising for exams effectively**
การทบทวนบทเรียนอย่างใดให้ได้ผลเพื่อเตรียมสอบ

76. **Understanding lectures**
การเข้าใจบทเรียนที่เรียน

77.   **Giving presentations in front of the class**
การนำเสนอในห้องเรียน

78.   **Debates and discussions during seminars**
การถกเถียงและการแสดงความคิดเห็นในห้องเรียน

79. **Making new non-Thai friends**
ทำความรู้จักกับเพื่อนชาวต่างชาติ

80. **Homesickness**
คิดถึงบ้าน

81. **Adapting to your surroundings in England i.e weather, food, Culture**
การปรับตัวให้เข้ากับสิ่งแวดล้อมของประเทศอังกฤษอังกฤษ
เช่น อากาศ อาหาร วัฒนธรรม

Other/ อื่นๆ ☐

82. What is the main source of pressure during your studies? (_please select one_**)**
ความกดดันนั้นมาจาก (_เลือกข้อเดียว_)

☐ **Family Expectations/ ความคาดหวังของครอบครัว**

☐ **The demands of the course / ความยากของหลักสูตร**

☐ **University lecturers or Seminar leaders / อาจารย์ผู้สอน หรือ ผู้นำสัมมนา**

☐ **Your classmates / เพื่อนร่วมชั้นเรียน**

☐ **Other อื่นๆ (please specify/ ระบุ)**

Your current confidence levels

ระดับความมั่นใจของคุณในขณะนี้

83. How well do you feel you are adapting to the academic teaching and studying style in the UK?
คุณปรับตัวให้เข้ากับรูปแบบการเรียน การสอน แบบสหราชอาณาจักรอย่างไร

| 100 | ⟵————————————⟶ | 0 |

I am adapting perfectly

คุณปรับตัวได้ง่ายมาก

I cannot adapt at all

คุณไม่สามารถปรับตัวได้เลย

What is your confidence score <u>at the moment</u>?

<u>ในขณะนี้</u>คุณมีระดับความมั่นมากน้อยเพียงใด

(Please enter a score of 0 – 100 in the box)

84. When writing essays, how difficult do you find it to avoid plagiarism?
ในการเขียนบทความระหว่างการเรียนคุณสามารถหลีกเลี่ยงการคัดลอกบทความต่างๆ ซึ่ง
ก่อให้เกิดการละเมิดทรัพย์สินทางปัญญา ยากง่ายเพียงใด

| 100 | ⟵————————————⟶ | 0 |

Extremely easy

ง่ายมาก

Extremely difficult

ยากมาก

(Please enter a score of 0 – 100 in the box)

85.   How confident do you feel at this moment about the standard of you English language?
ความมั่นใจในการใช้ภาษาก่อนเข้าเรียนระดับปริญญาโท

Summary:

บทสรุป

86.
a)   What is your biggest worry/concern <u>at the moment</u>?
<u>**ขณะนี้**</u> อะไรเป็นสิ่งที่คุณกังวลมากที่สุดสำหรับการมาศึกษาในสหราชอาณาจักร

---

b) What has been the **best** experience while studying in UK?
ประสบการณ์ไหน<u>**ที่เป็นประสบการณ์ที่ดีที่สุด**</u>ที่คุณได้รับขณะที่คุณศึกษาในสหราช
อาณาจักร

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
1. Speaking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Reading	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Listening	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Using Academic English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for kindly completing the questionnaire. Your responses will be a great help.

**ขอขอบพระคุณที่ให้ความร่วมมือในการทำแบบสอบถามนี้ ความร่วมมือของท่านเป็น
ประโยชน์ต่องานวิจัยอย่างมาก**

I sincerely apologise if there are any errors / omissions in the Thai script for

which I take responsibility.

APPENDIX 6b: Post-graduate questionnaire responses

Ref	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Undecided	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	% Total
English Language						
Q5	6	38	42	14	0	100
Q6	2	30	56	10	2	100
Q7	2	8	24	58	8	100
Q8	3	2	30	49	16	100
Q9	5	13	23	51	8	100
Q10	8	13	36	35	8	100
Q11	3	2	7	37	51	100
Q12	5	14	34	41	6	100
Q13	6	17	30	33	14	100
Q14	8	30	27	24	11	100
Q15	24	46	11	11	8	100
Q16	17	49	24	5	5	100
Q17	13	54	23	5	5	100
Q18	11	43	30	10	6	100
Q19	2	45	42	6	5	100
Q20	10	48	31	8	3	100
Teaching						
Q21	15	38	14	23	10	100
Q22	17	27	30	16	10	100
Q23	19	47	23	6	5	100
Q24	16	40	35	6	3	100
Q25	6	45	31	13	5	100
Q26	33	63	1	0	3	100
Q27	19	49	21	6	5	100
Q28	23	48	20	6	3	100
Q29	17	46	18	13	6	100
Q30	14	19	32	24	11	100
Q31	11	3	40	31	15	100

Ref	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Undecided	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	% Total
Learning						
Q32	3	14	29	40	14	100
Q33	0	23	24	50	3	100
Q34	0	5	29	49	17	100
Q35	5	24	30	35	6	100
Q36	0	6	27	48	19	100
Q37	3	30	25	37	5	100
Q38	5	25	8	51	11	100
Q39	0	10	27	48	15	100
Q40	17	35	29	14	5	100
Q41	3	24	30	33	10	100
Q42	8	8	29	44	11	100
Q43	10	57	15	13	5	100
Adaptation						
Q44	14	56	25	2	3	100
Q45	11	13	24	30	22	100
Q46	11	30	37	17	5	100
Q47	10	38	29	17	6	100
Q48	10	60	20	8	2	100
Q49	27	48	9	11	5	100
Q50	10	44	31	10	5	100
Q51	21	49	14	14	2	100
Q52	5	52	36	5	2	100
Q53	0	8	24	49	19	100
Degree Course						
Q54	2	19	50	24	5	100
Q55	11	52	19	13	5	100
Q56	10	14	19	49	8	100
Q57	33	37	13	11	6	100
Q58	19	16	23	32	10	100
Q59	30	41	17	10	2	100
Q60	22	62	10	3	3	100
Q61	16	45	35	2	2	100
Q62	18	21	26	24	11	100
Q63	16	52	23	6	3	100
Q64	14	52	26	3	5	100
Q65	18	32	23	16	11	100

APPENDIX 6c: Additional questions for seminar attendees

S a: **Please describe in a few sentences 4 MAIN differences you notice in the style of Teaching employed by UK teachers compared with Style of teaching employed by Thai Teachers.**

1	
2	
3	
4	

S b: **Please describe in a few sentences 4 MAIN differences you notice in the style of Learning and behaviour of students in UK compared to Thailand:**

1	
2	
3	
4	

S c: **Please describe in a few sentences 4 MAIN differences you notice about life in UK compared to Thailand:**

1	
2	
3	
4	

APPENDIX 6d: Summary of responses from seminar attendees

S a: Main differences in teaching style between teachers in UK and Thailand

LECTURERS IGNORING STUDENTS WHO NEED HELP	DISCUSSIONS	TALK MORE	MORE INTERACTIVE LEARNING E.G BLACKBOARD	MORE INTERACTION	DISCUSSIONS	MORE CASE STUDIES	LESS EXPLANATIONS	MORE STUDENT ORIENTATED	EMPHASISE GROUP SEMINAR
READING FOR CLASS	SELF-LEARNING	MORE INDEPENDENT	TUTORIALS	MORE SPEAKING UP	HIGH EXPECTATION FROM LECTURERS	MORE DISCUSSIONS	MORE BACKGROUND READING	HAVE TO READ A LOT	MORE READING LISTS
UNCLEAR EXPLANATIONS	INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS	MORE WORK SET AND READING TO DO	CHALLENGE STUDENTS MORE	MORE TECHONOLOGY	MORE REQUIRED MATERIALS	MORE QUESTIONS	BROAD EXPLANATIONS	GROUP ASSIGNMENTS	CRITICAL ANALYSIS
NO SUPPORT FROM LECTURERS	CRITICAL ANALYSIS	MORE SELF-DISCIPLINED	VERY MODERN COURSES	UK IS VERY COMPETITIVE	HAVE TO TAKE NOTES	MORE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK	MORE WORKLOAD	SELF STUDY	MORE OPEN MINDED

S a: Main differences in teaching style between teachers in UK and Thailand (cont)

FASTER SPEED OF TEACHING	ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION FROM EVERYONE	UK MORE OPEN MINDED	TEACH OURSELVES	ASK FOR STUDENT OPINION	SPEAK TOO FAST	MARKING CRITERIA IS DIFFERENT	MORE ASSIGNMENTS	MAKE MORE EFFORT	USE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING
DENSER CONTENT	TEACH ONLY PRINCIPLES	MORE CRITICAL THINKING	MORE DISCUSSIONS	EXPECT MORE READING	MORE EXPERIENCED	LECTURES AND SEMINARS	ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION	MORE UNPREPARED	MORE ASSIGNMENTS
DIFFICULT TO APPROACH LECTURER	MORE QUESTIONS	ACTIVE LEARNING	MORE TEACHING MATERIAL	SPEAK TOO FAST	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR IS DIFFERENT	LONG STUDY DAYS	ACCEPT OPINIONS	WELCOME TO ASNWER QUESTIONS	VARIETY OF COURSES
SUBJECTS ARE BETTER CONNECTED	MORE ASSINGMENT	INDEPENDENT STUDY	PATICIPATION IN CLASS	SELF LEARNING	SHORT TIME FOR ACADEMIC YEAR	EVENING MODULES	PUNCTUAL	REVIEW CLASSES	NO TUTORS IN THAILAND

S b: Main differences in learning style between students in UK and Thailand

UK STUDENTS PREPARE FOR CLASSES	INDIVIDUAL AND MORE RESPONSIBLE	MORE SELF DISCIPLINED	SPEAK MORE AND CHALLENGE MORE IN CLASS	MORE TALKTIVE AND WILL SHARE IDEAS	LIKE TO DISCUSS AND DEBATE	EAGER TO EXPRESS OPINIONS	MORE RESEARCH	MORE PASSIONATE ABOUT STUDIES	MORE EAGER TO ASK QUESTIONS
NO RESPECT FOR TEACHERS	UK STUDENTS LOVE TO DISCUSS	MORE INDEPENDENT	UK STUDENTS LOVE TO BE IN THE LIBRARY	UK STUDENTS LOVE THE PUB	THAI STUDENTS LIKE READING AND LISTENING MORE	KEEN TO ASK QUESTIONS	CONFIDENT TO ARGUE WITH LECTURER	CHALLENGE THE TEACHERS VIEW	MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND LECTURES
HARD TO FIND FRIENDS WHO HELP	FINDING KNOWLEDGE FROM SOURCES	MORE SELF-STUDY	TUTORIALS AND DISCUSSIONS	GROUP DICUSSIONS	NOT SHY TO ASK QUESTIONS	MORE INTERACTION	READ VERY FAST	HIGHER READING SKILLS	BETTER DISCIPLINE

READ MORE	PARTICIPATE MORE	MORE RESPONSIVE	ASK WHEN HAVE QUESTIONS	SELF STUDY	ASK MORE QUESTIONS	MORE CONFIDENCE TO DISCUSS IN CLASS	SELF STUDY	SHOW IDEAS WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT	SELF LEARNING
SELF STUDY	ASK QUESTIONS AFTER CLASS	ENJOY GROUP DISCUSSION	SELF LEARNING	MORE DISCUSSION	GROUP STUDY IN THE UK	APPROPRIATE TIME MANAGEMENT	CRITICAL ANALYSIS	DARE TO ASK QUESTIONS	MORE DISCUSSIONS
MORE DISCUSSION	READ AND PREPARE FOR CLASS	READ MORE	MORE PATICIPATIO	MORE INTERACTION	MORE FREE TIME	MORE RESEARCH	ASK MORE QUESTIONS	TUTORIALS AND DISCUSSIONS	LESS ACADEMIC CONTENT

S c: Main differences between life in UK and Thailand

LIVING EXPENSE IS TOO EXPENSIVE	SELF-RELIANT COUNTRY	EXPENSIVE	HAVE TO BE PROACTIVE TO GET WHAT YOU WANT	DRINK MORE ALCOHOL	UNBEARABLE WEATHER	UNHEALTHY	HIGHER COST OF LIVING	LUNCH AT 1PM INSTEAD OF 12PM	HIGHER COST OF LIVING
BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT	UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER	BAD WEATHER	MAKE RESERVATIONS	BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT	GOOD FOOD IS EXPENSIVE	EXPENSIVE	BETTER PUBLIC FACILITIES	STUDENTS AND STAFF GOING TO THE PUB	BAD WEATHER
MOST PEOPLE VERY UNFRIENDLY	HIGHER QUALITY OF LIFE	MULTI CULTURAL	START DRINKING EARLY AND DRINK A LOT	PEOPLE ARE MORE DEPRESSED	GOOD PUBLIC TRANSPORT	WEATHER	FOOD AND WEATHER IS BAD	PEOPLE FOLLOW THE LAWS	INTERNET BANKING IS EVERYWHERE

MORE WEIGHT GAIN	EVERYTHING HERE IS MORE TECHNOLOGICAL	EXPENSIVE ACCOMMODATION	CLEAN PLACES	BAD WEATHER	CONVENIENT TRANSPORT	MORE INDIVIDUAL	EXPENSIVE COST OF LIVING	BAD WEATHER	MORE EXPENSIVE
HIGH COST OF LIVING	BAD FOOD	PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS BETTER	GOOD WEATHER	BAD FOOD	HIGHER LIVING EXPENSE	HIGHER COST OF LIVING	BAD WEATHER	HIGH COST OF LIVING	LESS SECURE
UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER	STUDENTS GET PRIVILEDGES (DISCOUNT	BAD WEATHER	CONVENIENT TRANSPORT	EXPENSIVE	SAFER	MORE PRESSURE	MORE IT USE	OFFICE HOURS AND SHOP HOURS	MULTI-CULTURAL

APPENDIX 7: Bilingual participant consent form

[Note the design of the study evolved and was modified due to practical constraints]

Research Participation Information & Consent Form – Confidential Participantข้อมูล
เกี่ยวกับการมีส่วนร่วมในการวิจัยครั้งนี้   และใบยินยอมเพื่อเข้าร่วมกับวิจัยครั้งนี้

Angela Cleary
PhD Student (*Student ID number*)

School of Education

Birmingham University, UK

Contact:

(email address)

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Blackledge

(email address)

(Draft) Research Title: What are the learning experiences of post-graduate Thai students in UK?

หัวข้อ เพื่อสำรวจประสบการณ์ในด้านการเรียนรู้ของนักศึกษาไทยที่เดินทางมา
ศึกษาต่อในระดับปริญญาโทที่สหราชอาณาจักร

I am conducting research into the learning experiences of Thai post-graduate students at UK universities. Many of our students have received a traditional Thai education which is very teacher focussed and didactic in style and this does not prepare them for the very different teaching and learning styles they will meet at UK universities. The level of academic English, methods of teaching, methods of learning and study and literacy skills are possibly stressful challenges for Thai students to overcome in order to achieve a good result at the end of their studies.

ดิฉันทำการวิจัยที่มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจประสบการณ์ในด้านการเรียนรู้ของนักศึกษาไทยที่เดินทางมาศึกษา
ต่อในระดับปริญญาโทที่สหราชอาณาจักร   นักศึกษาคนส่วนใหญ่นี้ได้รับการศึกษารูปแบบไทย   ซึ่งเน้น
กระบวนการเรียนเป็นแบบการรับฟัง   ไม่ต้องตอบโต้   ที่ไม่ได้เตรียมนักศึกษาพอต่อรูปแบบการเรียนการสอน
แบบสหราชอาณาจักร ดังนั้นทั้งปัญหาในแง่ของระดับภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ วิธีการเรียนและทักษะทางการ
รู้หนังสือ   อาจเป็นปัญหาที่เกิดความเครียดต่อนักศึกษาไทย   และที่นักศึกษาต้องประสบการณ์เพื่อได้
ความสำเร็จ

My research questions (draft)

This study is in collaboration with Thai post-graduate students in order to help achieve a true and clearly defined outcome which I hope will help future Thai students cope with these pressures and adaptations. In addition I hope it will aid the UK universities in their support for Thai students and to provide valuable information for the Thai government in how to prepare Thai scholarship students who are coming to UK for high level academic studies.

There are certain questions I would like to answer, that could best be articulated as the following:

- How do the students adapt to Western pedagogy and use of academic L2?

- What are the challenges and stressful experiences encountered by Thai students in a UK academic environment

- How does the UK university provide L2 and study skills support and demonstrate pedagogical awareness of the traditional Thai education background and language needs of its Thai students?

คำถาม

การวิจัยครั้งนี้จะเก็บข้อมูลจากนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาโท เพื่อให้ผลชัดเจนที่จะให้การเรียนในสหราช อาณาจักรมีความราบรื่นและลดระดับความเครียดที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างในสภาพสังคมและ การศึกษา นอกจากนี้ดิฉันหวังว่า ผลงานเหล่านี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อ**มหาวิทยาลัย**สหราชอาณาจักรในการ สนับสนุนนักศึกษาไทย และรัฐบาลไทยในการเตรียมตัวนักศึกษาทุนไทยที่จะเดินทางมาศึกษาต่อในระดับ ปริญญาโทที่สหราชอาณาจักร

คำถามเฉพาะซึ่งดิฉันอยากทราบคือ

- นักศึกษาปรับตัวให้เข้ากับรูปแบบการเรียนการสอนและรูปแบบการเรียนตะวันตกได้อย่างไง

- อะไรเป็นสิ่งที่เกิดความเครียดหรือประสบการณ์ไม่ดีต่อนักศึกษาไทยในสิ่งแวดล้อมทางการศึกษา แบบสหราชอาณาจักร

- **มหาวิทยาลัย**สหราชอาณาจักรให้การสนับสนุนทางการศึกษา และแสดงให้เห็นถึงความเข้าใจในการ สอนพื้นหลังแบบไทยและความต้องการทางภาษาของนักศึกษาไทย

What information (data) do I collect in my research?

ข้อมูลที่ดิฉันต้องการจากการวิจัยฉบับนี้คือ

My research involves collecting information (data) from Thai students in the following ways and these will be with your consent.

การเก็บข้อมูลสำหรับงานวิจัยฉบับนี้จะจัดเก็บข้อมูลจากนักเรียนไทยที่แสดงความจำนงที่จะให้เก็บข้อมูล ผ่านวิธีการดังที่จะ กล่าวต่อไป

How you can help?

คุณสามารถช่วยงานวิจัยนี้ได้อย่างไร

I am inviting your kind help and participation and hope you are able to become involved in the various ways set out below. The first section is for All scholarship students who have just enrolled in a Master's Course at a UK university (Questionnaires and online discussion).

คุณสามารถเข้าร่วมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการเก็บข้อมูลสำหรับงานวิจัยฉบับนี้ได้ในหลายส่วน โดยกลุ่มแรกคือ กลุ่มของนักเรียนทุนทุกประเภทที่กำลังจะเริ่มการศึกษาในระดับปริญญาโท ณ มหาวิทยาลัยในสหราชอาณาจักร (สำรวจโดยแบบสอบถาม และการสัมภาษณ์ออนไลน์)

The second section includes a request for additional help from the students studying in London.

กลุ่มที่สอง คือ กลุ่มที่ต้องการสำรวจเพิ่มเติมจากนักเรียนที่กำลังศึกษา ณ กรุงลอนดอน

1. <u>**For ALL Scholarship Students attending Masters Courses in UK 2011-2012**</u>

Questionnaires: This is a simple form which can be completed using the computer and will be sent to you by e-mail each term. It will focus on how you are feeling as the course progresses and will be a great help for future students as you identify areas which are becoming more challenging or less of difficult. *Please tick* ✓*the box if you are happy to help.*

☐ Completing a questionnaire each term

<u>1. สำหรับนักเรียนทุนที่กำลังศึกษาระดับปริญญาโท ในสหราชอาณาจักร ปี 2011-2012</u>

แบบสอบถาม:ในแต่ละเทอมแบบสอบถามจะถูกส่งถึงท่านผ่านทางอีเมล์ ซึ่งท่านสามารถกรอกข้อมูลลงในแบบสอบถามโดยใช้คอมพิวเตอร์ได้ โดยแบบสอบถามจะเน้นข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับความรู้สึกที่ท่านมีต่อกระบวนการสอนในหลักสูตร ซึ่งจะนำไปสู่การพัฒนาเพื่อประโยชน์แก่นักเรียนไทยในอนาคต กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ในช่อง หากท่านมีความยินดีที่จะร่วมตอบแบบสอบถาม

☐**ยินดีร่วมตอบแบบสอบถามในแต่ละเทอม**

Discussions via secure Facebook page each term: You will be notified each term of the date and time of a 'live' discussion of about 15 minutes online which will have a theme. It would be most appreciated if you could kindly participate in the debate and contribute your ideas, views and feelings about the way the course is going and how you are adapting to university life in UK. *Please tick* ✓*the box if you are happy to help.*

☐ Participating in an online discussion each term

การสัมภาษณ์ ผ่านหน้าเว็บไซด์Facebook ในโหมดรักษาความปลอดภัย ในแต่ละเทอม: ท่านจะได้รับการแจ้งวันและเวลาที่จะทำการสัมภาษณ์สดออนไลน์ในแต่ละเทอม โดยการสัมภาษณ์จะใช้เวลาประมาณ 15 นาที และจะมีหัวข้อในแต่ละครั้ง หากท่านสามารถร่วมการอภิปรายและให้แนวคิด และความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับการดำเนินการเรียนการสอนของหลักสูตรที่ท่านกำลังศึกษาอยู่ และเสนอวิธีการปรับตัวของท่านให้เข้ากับชีวิตการเรียนในมหาวิทยาลัย ณ สหราชอาณาจักร กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ในช่อง หากท่านมีความยินดีที่จะร่วมการสัมภาษณ์

☐ **ยินดีร่วมการสัมภาษณ์ออนไลน์ในแต่ละเทอม**

2. <u>**London-based Scholarship Students attending Masters Courses in UK 2011-2012**</u>

2. **นักเรียนทุนระดับปริญญาโทที่กำลังศึกษาอยู่ ณ มหาวิทยาลัยในกรุงลอนลอน ปี** 2011-2012

Focus Group Discussion & Interviews:

I would like to talk to you, to find out your feelings, impressions and experiences relating to your experiences as Thai post-graduate students in UK. This would involve meeting occasionally, probably about every 6 weeks during your academic year from September 2011 to July 2012. We would meet as a group for about an hour, however there may be times when we decide on less time or decide on more time (this would depend largely on your availability).

The discussions will relate to how you have adapted to academic study in UK and how you feel you are coping with the various challenges of studying at a high level in a second language. What differences you have noticed in the teaching styles of UK lecturers compared to your experiences in Thailand and how you are managing with academic English and subject-specific vocabulary.

It is important for you to be able to express your views accurately and specifically so I will be asking for the help of my Thai colleagues whom you will meet socially and so they will be able to help me by conversing with you in Thai if you wish.

การสัมภาษณ์และการสนทนากลุ่ม (Focus Group interviews):

การสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มมีจุดประสงค์เพื่อทราบถึงความรู้สึกและประสบการณ์ในฐานะนักเรียนไทยที่มีต่อการศึกษาระดับปริญญา โท ณ สหราชอาณาจักร ซึ่งอาจจำเป็นต้องมีการนัดพบเพื่อทำการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่ม เป็นครั้งคราวในทุกๆ 6 สัปดาห์ระหว่างช่วงปี การศึกษา นับตั้งแต่เดือน กันยายน 2011 ถึง กรกฎาคม 2012 การนัดพบในแต่ละครั้งจะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมง อย่างไรก็ตาม การนับพบในบางครั้งอาจจะใช้เวลาน้อยกว่า หรือมากกว่าเวลา 1ชั่วโมง (ทั้งนี้ขึ้นอยู่กับความสะดวกของท่าน)

การอภิปรายจะเกี่ยวกับวิธีการในการปรับตัวเข้ากับการศึกษาใน สหราชอาณาจักร และวิธีการจัดการกับความท้าทายต่างๆ สำหรับการศึกษาในระดับสูงโดยใช้ภาษาที่สอง สิ่งใดที่แตกต่างระหว่างวิธีการสอนของมหาวิทยาลัยในสหราชอาณาจักร เทียบ กับประสบการณ์ที่ผ่านมาในการศึกษาในประเทศไทย และวิธีการทำความเข้าใจกับคำศัพท์เฉพาะและคำศัพท์วิชาการ

การสำรวจครั้งนี้จำเป็นที่ผู้ร่วมอภิปรายจะสามารถแสดงความคิดเห็นได้อย่างชัดเจนและเฉพาะเจาะจง ดังนั้นเพื่อนชาวไทย ของดิฉันจะเข้ามาช่วยเหลือหากท่านมีความประสงค์เพื่อให้ท่านสามารถสื่อสารโดยใช้ภาษาไทย

I would like to record the discussions. This is for a number of reasons:

- It would help me remember the things we talked about
- It means that my supervisor and examining committee can check the verity of the information I collect and upon which I base my thesis
- I will keep your identity confidential which means if I use something you say in my thesis, it will be attributed an ID code or alias.

If you do not wish to be recorded for all or part of any interview, simply make this known at the beginning of each interview. Also, at the beginning of any interview, I will ask you if I may record. If you wish to say something unrecorded during the interview, you simply have to indicate that you want me to stop recording. This could include something that you feel would help me understand the situation better, but something you do not which to be quoted as saying. *Please tick ✓the boxes if you are happy to help.*

☐ Interviews (taped) in Thai and /or English depending on your preference 40 minutes about every 6 weeks

☐Participating in discussion groups: 1 hour about every 6 weeks

ดิฉันมีความจำเป็นต้องบันทึกบทสนทนา ด้วยสาเหตุดังต่อไปนี้

- เพื่อช่วยในการทบทวนในสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นระหว่างการสนทนาและอภิปราย

- เพื่อใช้สำหรับโดยที่ปรึกษางานวิจัยและคณะกรรมการตรวจการวิจัยในการตรวจสอบความถูกต้องและความ
  น่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูลที่ได้จัดเก็บในการทำวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้

ข้อมูลส่วนตัวของท่านจะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับ โดยหากต้องมีการอ้างอิงคำพูดของท่านในตัววิทยานิพนธ์ ชื่อของท่านจะถูกแทน
ด้วยรหัส หรือนามแฝง

ถ้าท่านไม่ประสงค์ให้มีการบันทึกเสียงการสนทนา ท่านสามารถแสดงความจำนงก่อนเริ่มการสนทนา และก่อนการสนทนาทุก
ครั้ง ดิฉันจะอนุญาตก่อนทำการบันทึกเสียง ซึ่งหากท่านมีความประสงค์ที่จะไม่ให้มีการบันทึกเสียงในบางช่วงของการสนทนา
ท่านสามารถแจ้งให้หยุดการบันทึกเสียงได้ เช่นในกรณีของการอธิบายเพื่อให้เข้าใจสถานการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้นได้ชัดเจนยิ่งขึ้น แต่ไม่
ประสงค์ที่จะให้นำไปใช้อ้างอิงในวิทยาพนธ์

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✔ในช่อง หากท่านมีความยินดีที่จะร่วมการสัมภาษณ์

☐ **ยินดีให้สัมภาษณ์ (และบันทึกเสียง) เป็นภาษาไทย หรือ ภาษาอังกฤษ** (ตามความสะดวกของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์)
เป็นเวลา 40 นาที ทุก 6 สัปดาห์โดยประมาณ

☐**ยินดีเข้าร่วมการสนทนากลุ่ม** (discussion groups): **เป็นเวลา1 ชั่วโมง ทุก 6 สัปดาห์โดยประมาณ**

Visiting the university & attending your lectures (one every 6 weeks)

การขอเข้าเยี่ยมชมมหาวิทยาลัย และร่วมสังเกตการชั้นเรียน (ทุก ๆ 6 สัปดาห์)

I will also observe 6 of your lectures to see how the lecturers adapt their style to teaching international students.
We will be using these lectures as a basis for our discussions and in particular your reflections about your learning
experience, use of academic English and the style of teaching. *Please tick ✔the box if you are happy to help.*

☐ A visit to 6 lectures throughout the year

**ดิฉันขอเข้าสังเกตการณ์การเรียนการสอน จำนวน 6 คาบวิชา เพื่อสังเกตการการปรับวิธีการสอนของอาจารย์
สำหรับการสอนนักศึกษาต่างชาติ และเพื่อนำไปใช้เป็นประเด็นการสนทนา และสะท้อนประสบการณ์ของท่าน
เกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอน การใช้คำศัพท์ทางวิชาการ และวิธีการสอน** กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✔ในช่อง หากท่านมี
ความยินดีที่จะให้สังเกตการณ์และเยี่ยมชมมหาวิทยาลัย

☐**ยินดีให้เข้าสังเกตการณ์การเรียนการสอน 6 คาบวิชา ตลอดปีการศึกษา**

Reflections on your thoughts and feelings:

การแสดงความคิดเห็น

Provide a diary of personal reflections on your UK degree course for 2 weeks each term. This can also include poems, pictures, photos, film and voiced recordings using your smart-phone and emailed to me. Please tick ✔☐the box if you are happy to help.

☐Providing a diary of personal reflections

เขียนบทความ รูปภาพ ถ่ายภาพหรือภาพยนตร์ หรือบันทึกเสียง เพื่อแสดงความคิดเห็น หรือความรู้สึกราย วันที่ท่านมีต่อหลักสูตร วิชาที่ท่านกำลังศึกษาอยู่ เป็นระยะ 2 สัปดาห์ในแต่ละเทอม และส่งข้อมูลดังนั้นให้กับ ดิฉันทางอีเมล์ กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✔ในช่อง หากท่านมีความยินดีที่จะแสดงความคิดเห็นต่อหลักสูตร วิชาที่ท่าน กำลังศึกษาอยู่ ด้วยวิธีดังกล่าว

☐**ยินดีที่จะการแสดงความคิดเห็น แบบรายวัน ด้วยวิธีด้งกล่าว**

How I may use the information you provide

การนำข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสำรวจไปประยุกต์ใช้

The information you provide may be used directly (i.e. quoted) or indirectly (as background information) to help me understand the learning experiences of Thai post-graduate students in UK. This could appear in my final PhD thesis or in articles for academic journals (aimed at people working in the social sciences, e.g. linguistics, sociology or anthropology). However, the thesis or articles may be available to the general public. The detailed report will be made available to participants as well as to the Thai Government. The research report and thesis will be accessible in hard copy and electronic format for 10 years. The study will also be available as a public document.

ข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสำรวจจะถูกนำไปใช้ทั้งการอ้างอิงโดยตรง(Quoted)   และโดยอ้อม   (สำหรับกล่าวความเป็นมาของข้อหัว งานวิจัย) ที่สร้างความเข้าใจถึงประสบการณ์การเรียน ระดับปริญญาโทของนักเรียนไทย ในประเทศสหราชอาณาจักร ซึ่งข้อมูล เหล่านี้อาจปรากฏในวิทยาพนธ์ระดับปริญญาเอกของดิฉัน หรือ บทความในวรรณสารวิชาการ (ในหมวดสังคมศาสตร์ เช่น ภาษาศาสตร์ สังคมวิทยาและมนุษยวิทยา) อย่างไรก็ตามวิทยานิพนธ์หรือบทความวิชาการดังกล่าว อาจจะถูกเผยแพร่แก่ สาธารณชน ทั้งผู้เข้าร่วม และ ข้าราชการ จะได้อ่านวิทยานิพนธ์หรือบทความวิชาการดังกล่าว เป็นเวลานานสิบปี

Consent to participate & consent to record

การยินยอมเพื่อเข้าร่วมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการวิจัย และ การยินยอมให้มีการบันทึกเสียง

If you decide to participate, there is no obligation to continue: if you feel you cannot help further, if your other life commitments make it difficult to continue, or if you simply wish to stop participating.

To comply with the ethical regulations of Birmingham University, I need your permission to conduct the interviews with you. You can do this by signing below. In signing, you indicate that I have explained my project and that you have agreed to participate. HOWEVER this is not a contract or legally enforceable obligation to participate.

To withdraw from the research at any time, simply let me know in writing. The reasons for withdrawal may be kept private. It is enough to write 'I wish to withdraw from interview participation in the learning experiences of post-graduate Thai students in UK', including your name and the date.

การยินยอมเข้าร่วมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการวิจัย ไม่ได้สร้างข้อผูกใดๆ ในการบอกเลิกการร่วมการวิจัย หากท่านไม่สามารถเข้าร่วมได้ไม่ว่าในกรณีใดๆ

เพื่อปฏิบัติตามกฎข้อบังคับของมหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิ่งแฮม ดิฉันมีความจำเป็นต้องได้รับการยินยอมจากท่าน ก่อนทำการสัมภาษณ์ ท่านสามารถแสดงความประสงค์ได้โดยการลงชื่อด้านล่าง ทั้งนี้ท่านได้รับการอธิบายและเข้าใจรายละเอียดของการทำงานวิจัยฉบับนี้ และยินดีที่จะเข้าร่วมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงานวิจัย อย่างไรก็ตามเอกสารฉบับนี้ไม่ใช่หนังสือสัญญา และไม่มีข้อบังคับตามกฎหมายเพื่อให้เข้าร่วมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงานวิจัย

ท่านสามารถถอนตัวจากการเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงานวิจัยได้ในทุกโอกาสโดยการทำหนังสือแจ้ง พร้อมระบุชื่อ และวันที่ ท่านสามารถเขียนว่า "ข้าพเจ้ามีความประสงค์จะขอถอนตัวจากการเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการสัมภาษณ์ เพื่อศึกษาประสบการณ์ของนักเรียนไทย ระดับปริญญาโท ณ สหราชอาณาจักร" ซึ่งสาเหตุของการถอนตัวจะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับ

Angela Cleary has explained the objectives of the research, 'learning experiences of post-graduate Thai students in UK' what would be expected of me and how I may withdraw at any time:

Angela Cleary ได้อธิบายวัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัย "การศึกษาประสบการณ์ของนักเรียนไทย ระดับปริญญาโท ณ สหราชอาณาจักร" สิ่งที่คาดหวังจากข้าพเจ้า และวิธีการขอถอนตัวจากการร่วมทำการวิจัย

Signed ลงชื่อ

Print Name ตัวบรรจง   **Date**

I give consent to be recorded during interviews and I am fully aware that I can ask recording to stop whenever I wish:

ข้าพเจ้ายินยอมให้มีการบันทึกเสียงระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ และ ข้าพเจ้าสามารถให้หยุดการบันทึกเสียงได้ทุกเมื่อที่ข้าพเจ้าต้องการ

Signed ลงชื่อ

Print Name ตัวบรรจง   **Date**

I sincerely apologise if there are any errors / omissions in the Thai script for

which I take responsibility.

APPENDIX 8a: Lesson observation: Field notes

Observation five: Lecture

17 February 2012: 16.00 -17.30

Subject: Finance

Lecturer: ITALIAN

Student: Sid

Lecture Theatre

The lecturer had a strong accent which did not affect delivery of the academic language, for example Gamma, Delta etc. However, it did affect the pronunciation of other key words, for example I discovered later that the topic was on 'Hedge Risks' but he pronounced it 'Hadge'. This was very confusing as the key word was repeated frequently and was essential to the understanding of the topic. It was only when I saw the word written on the board that the meaning became clear.

The students had been asked to prepare answers to several questions beforehand. The lecturer worked out the set questions by introducing each one with a few general questions to the group. He then described the sequence of the equations as he wrote them on the board with his back to the class. At the end of the equation he then stopped to explain the key points. He did not ask questions of the class. He continued to write on the board with an accompanying narrative.

The Thai student was seated at the back of the lecture theatre. He did not take notes but paid attention to the lecturer. At the start of the lecture he was speaking with a female Asian student who sat next to him. She took notes occasionally during the lecture. They were happy and smiling.

There were clear labels on the door of the lecture theatre prohibiting eating or drinking. This was not enforced as many students brought in both food and drink which they consumed openly throughout the lecture. There were four recycling bins painted in bright colours in the room by the door.

The Thai student brought with him a bottle of orange juice and water, which she sat on the desk in front of him. He also brought a cake in a wrapper which he was consuming during the lecture. The Asian female student was also eating and drinking as were several other students in the room.

There were fewer students in this lecture, which was the last class of the day and on a Friday. The occasional question posed by the lecturer was answered by two of the four students seated at the very front of the room. (I later discovered that these were Russian students who the teacher commented were very keen to do well in the subject).

The majority of the students paid full attention. One student used a stylus and tablet to make written notes electronically.

The theme of the lecture was on the stock market and performance of a portfolio of shares. The lecturer seemed aware of the lethargy in the group as he said 30 min into the lecture "this is my last question and then I promise I won't bother you!"

The lecturer started late because the previous one had run over time. This lecture followed directly from the previous class given by the same lecturer. (I later discovered that this was one of five similar lectures he had given that day).

The lecture hall had no windows and the colour scheme was red and grey. The lighting was good and there were no shadows to affect writing notes.

The lecturer's accent caused some misunderstandings. When he said "additional shares purchased" he did not pronounce the words clearly. But luckily the lecturer was projecting a spread sheet from the computer at the time and so the terminology was visible on the board for those who were looking. It would not have been clear to students who were looking down at their notes and only listening to him. The use of ICT was used very briefly for a maximum of 10 min.

45 min into the lecture, the Thai student made a couple of very short notes in his exercise book.

The lecturer did not pick on any one student to question but continued with the occasional open or general question which he then proceeded to answer himself.

None of the students posed a question at all until one of the four Caucasian males in the front row posed a question three quarters of the way through the lecture. An Arab female student left the lecture after 50 min and took all her belongings with her. A Caucasian female seated near the front left the room to make a telephone call and returned 10 min later. She was not making any notes at all and did not seem interested in the lecture. It was obvious that the lecturer was not happy with two students walking out of the room.

The lecturer showed the same spread sheet for a further 5 min and then switched off the computer, which did not give the class a chance to see the very detailed information. Two Caucasian male students were not paying full attention throughout the lecture. They were talking quietly and laughing (I believe they were Scandinavian).

The lecturer was smartly dressed, wearing a shirt and expensive looking jeans and was in his mid-30s.

After an hour the Thai student leaned back in his seat is arms folded across his chest. His legs were stretched forward. He then lent forward arms folded on the bench with his head down. Then a short while later he sat up again but he was not taking much notice of the lecturer. His head was propped up by his arm. The Asian girl next to him was text thing on her mobile. She also lent back and did not seem to be interested in the lecture at this point.

The lecturer used rhetorical questions and phrases such as "let us ask ourselves what will happen if..." He then proceeded to answer his own questions, not waiting for a response from the class. He also used the words "we, us and our" to include the class in the narrative, but it was not a collaborative effort! The class seemed passive and one felt that the lecturer was keen to cover all the topics set rather than ask for participation from the group.

25 min before the end of the lecture, he looked at his watch. He then posed a further question to the group, which required detail and knowledge of the topic. Rather than wait for them to respond he again showed them the spread sheet very briefly projecting it onto the board and confirmed that he would be posting this spread sheet (used in the lecture) and also a further three questions on the 'Blackboard'

(university intranet) for the group to "... become familiar with it". I believe he said this because the group was rather passive and it was late on a Friday evening.

His basic pedagogical strategy was to write on the white board using three colours to highlight key areas. He frequently used a magnetic board wiper which stuck to the board. When he said "this is the answer to the last question" the Asian girl sitting next to the Thai student put on her coat (it was 30 min before the end of the lecture). The lecturer then said "any questions guys? I see you're tired! It's time to wake up because it's time to go!"

A group of three Asian girls stayed behind to ask him to explain a few points after the class. One of the girls returned to another Asian student who was sitting and explained the point to her in her first language. The other two girls asked a further question and the lecturer reminded them that he had covered it the previous week. However, they did not understand it so he referred them to the university intranet and the 'Blackboard'. The group of three girls then went over the explanation together. When the lecturer left the room to wash his hands, one of them took a photo of the answer on the whiteboard with her mobile phone.

APPENDIX 8b: Seating plan: Law seminar [Plum]

L MC

S4 MC

S5 MC

S6 MC

S7 FB

S8 FB

S9 FB

TABLE

S 1 FC

S2 F T

S3 MB

OB
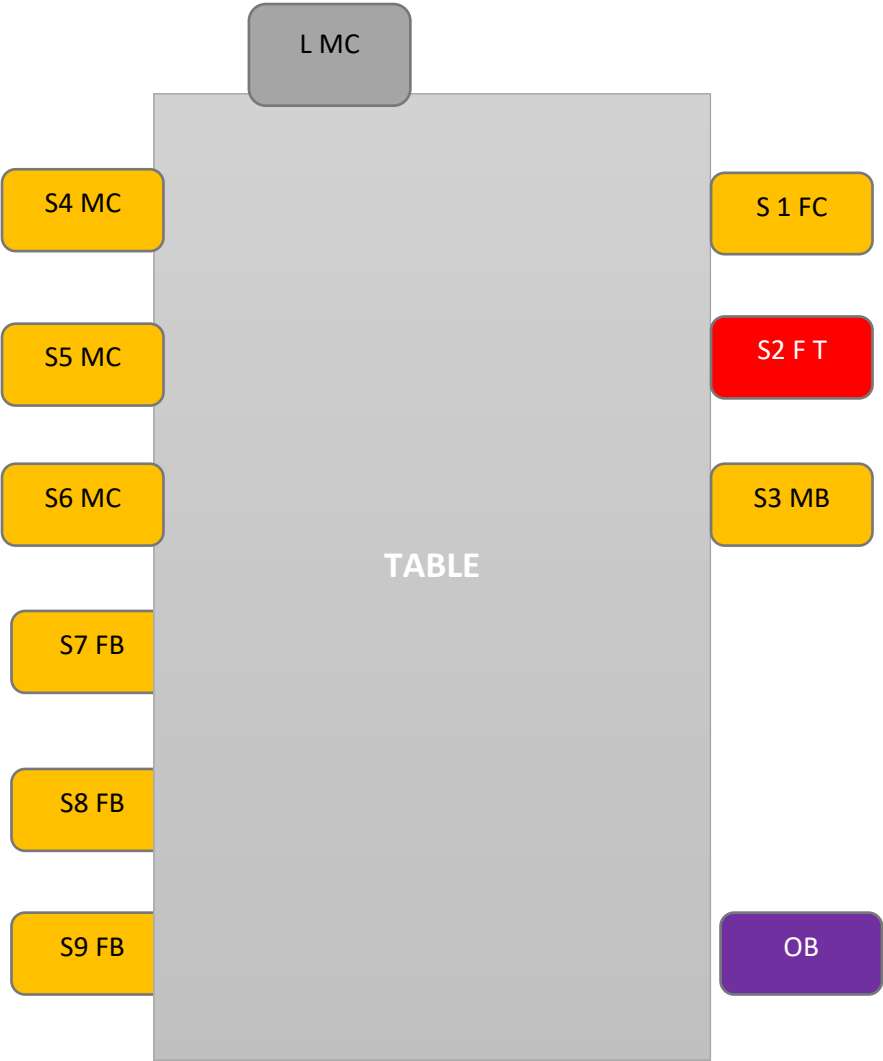
KEY	
S	Student
M	Male
F	Female
C	Caucasian
B	Black
T	Thai
L	Lecturer
OB	Observer
Sn	Student ID number

Please note: I am using these categories very broadly. I was aware of their limitations and was of course critical of them.

APPENDIX 9: Consent Form to observe Thai students in lectures

Angela Cleary
PhD Student (*Student ID number*)

School of Education

Birmingham University, UK

Contact:

(email address)

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Blackledge

(email address)

Research Title (Draft): What are the learning experiences of post-graduate Thai students in UK?

I am conducting research into the learning experiences of Thai post-graduate students at UK universities. Many of our students have received a traditional Thai education which is very teacher focussed and didactic in style and this does not prepare them for the very different teaching and learning styles they will meet at UK universities. The level of academic English, methods of teaching, methods of learning and study and literacy skills are possibly stressful challenges for Thai students to overcome in order to achieve a good result at the end of their studies.

My research questions

This study is in collaboration with UK universities and Thai post-graduate students in order to help achieve a true and clearly defined outcome which I hope will help future Thai students cope with these pressures and adaptations. In addition I hope the results of the study will aid the UK universities in their support for Thai students and to provide valuable information for the Thai government in how to prepare Thai scholarship students who are coming to UK for high level academic studies.

 There are certain questions I would like to answer, that could best be articulated as the following:

- How do the students adapt to Western pedagogy and use of academic English (L2)?

- What are the challenges and stressful experiences encountered by Thai students in a UK academic environment

- How does the UK university provide L2 and study skills support and demonstrate pedagogical awareness of the traditional Thai education background and language needs of its Thai students?

How you can help?

I am inviting your kind help by permitting me to observe our Thai scholarship students in some of your lectures (approximately one every six weeks) and note how our Thai students interact with their peers within the teaching group, how they respond to western teaching and learning styles, whether they adapt over time e.g. responding in class and whether the standard of their academic English and their study skills adequately equip them for post-graduate study in UK.

The Thai students being observed have consented to being observed and they know they can withdraw their consent at any time.

Equally, you may withdraw your consent to me observing the Thai students in your lectures at any time.

Consent to observe Thai students in lectures

Angela Cleary has explained the objectives of the research, 'learning experiences of post-graduate Thai students in UK'. I give my consent that she may observe the Thai students in my lectures:

Signed

Print Name   **Date**

APPENDIX 10: Code book showing categories and codes

Code	Denoting	Identifier
Filing codes		
I	Interview	
S	Student	
L	Lecturer	
01	Participant ID number	
a	First interview	
T	Transcript	

Student codes		
S01	Student 01: Abe	
S02	Student 02: Plum	
S03	Student 03: Sid	
S04	Student 04: Wendy	

'A priori' codes		
Challenges (A)	Difficulties living in UK	
English (B)	Problems re. English language proficiency	
Academic (C)	Western v Thai teaching and learning	

Initial coding	**Challenges (A)**	
Exams	Structure & time management /*subj content/ study skills*	A1
Kissing	Culture shock	A2
Food	Thai v Western	A3
Weather	UK v Thailand	A4
Friendships	Thai v multicultural /*intercultural relationships*	A5
Pub culture	Culture shock	A6
Free time	*Hobbies /sport/travel*	A7
Other students	Peer pressure	A8
Health	Illness	A9
Family	Aspirations & family background	A10
Region of Thailand	Ref to home	A11
Future plans	After UK Master's course	A12
Practicalities	Practical issues [pressures] accommodation, bank a/c etc.	A13
Confidence	Self-confidence in studies, relationships etc.	A14
Humour	Examples of joking, play on words etc.	A15

Initial coding	English Language (B)	
Reading & writing	Prose /equations	B1
Listening	Problems with accents (peers & teachers)/understanding	B2
Speaking	Intercultural communication	B3
L1	Use of Thai	B4

Initial coding	Academic (C)	
Background	Thai schooling (academic background)	C1
Teaching	UK v Thailand (class sizes, pedagogy)	C2
Learning	UK v Thailand (student attitudes behaviour) study skills	C3
Progression	Future plans after UK Master's course	C4
Preparation	Academic preparation before UK Master's course	C5
	Thai culture of Krengjai (respect e.g. for teachers)	C6
Facilities	e.g. Uni. library etc	C7

Initial coding	My Observations /reflections (O)	
Stereotype	Reflections on stereotypic imagery	O1
Teaching	Reflections on teaching styles	O2
Language	Reflections on use of language	O3
Character	Reflections on Thai character	O4

APPENDIX 11: Example of coded transcript

R OW	TIME	TRANSCRIPT	FINAL CODE	COMMENT
6.	00:09:19	**Respondent:** I think it's really good. Because when you um I **think the nature of Thai student w**hich has been in you know kind of **Thai traditional academic style** we don't really expose ourselves in class.**C6**	**C3** Learning **T1** Theory link	**C3** The nature of the Thai student: The traditional academic style: v interesting phraseology 'we **T1**don't really expose ourselves in class. Inhabiting the stereotype
7.	00:09:35	Interviewer: What do you mean by **don't expose yourself**?*		**I ask for explanation of this term***
8.	00:09:38	Respondent: We just sit there and listen. **C3** *[heavy rain in the background]* That's just what we do **C3**because we've been in kind of we we've never encouraged to to say something in class **C2**, I would say. I mean in my generation it was like that but now they they tend to improve **C2** to to be towards like you know kind of international kind of westernised **C3**and encourage students to contribute to classes more and more and more so I would say that.	**C3 & C2** Teaching & Learning **C6** Thai culture **T1** Theory link	**We T1** just sit there and listen... That's just what we do **C3 & C2** Like Abe, there is a certain resignation / acceptance of a '**Traditional Thai way**' as opposed to a Western way of teaching and learning. The use of the word 'we' shows that Plum associates **T1** herself with this national characteristic or stereotype perhaps to provide support within a foreign environment and with a *farang* interviewer. Recognition that there is a slowly changing pedagogy to a more student-centred approach.
9.	00:10:15	**Interviewer:** So it's literally within the last couple of years do you think it is changing?		
10.	00:10:20	**Respondent:** Yeh it is changing from what I have heard because I've got um brother you know who just graduated from university as well and he's he's been telling me and you know I would just I see the differences **C3** but it it takes time for for Thai students to actually you know **C3** *[door banging in the background]* contribute themselves in class, raising hand and asking questions is just it is rare.**C3**	**C3** Learning	**C3** Younger sibling just graduating and he has experienced this change in pedagogy and encouraging students to respond Plum is aware that this transition /evolution will take time. Contributing themselves ...an interesting phrase indicating that Plum considers that the students are responsible for their own learning.**C3**

10	**00:12:40**	Respondent: **Ummm** *[door clanging/banging]* **the main I'm still thinking that if if I'm reading it by myself I would** *[bangs]* **much um better than listening like alone in class.**^{A5} **But then again if you come to class you would get something more extra that in the books they don't provide so I would say it its always the best thing for students to do to you know to attend class go back and revise it again just reading what it was in the book.**	C3 Learning B1 Reading & Writing B2 Listening A5 Friendship	C3 **Plum debates which is better…attending lectures and 'listening alone' or reading from the text book by herself. Interestingly Plum is the only Asian in the class so has no-one to work with. She emphasises that whether she is in class or in her accommodation, she works alone.** A5 **NB 2009 UKBA/Home Office regs. require international students to attend all lectures and seminars or risk having their visa withdrawn**
11	00:13:18	**Interviewer:** What about: If you know something is coming up would you feel that you should read it before the lecture or do you think its better to go to the lecture first and then read afterwards?		Q about preparation before class
12	00:13:28	**Respondent:** Er before *(laughter)* . Definitely. Because you you you get struggling shocking *(pronounced shockering)*^{A1} when you see a word that you don't familiar with ^{B1} and its always better for you you to know what's the meaning of that word in your language before attending the class ^{C5} and he just speak something ^{B2} that – **what**? ^{A14} *(laughter)* **What is he say**? ^{B2 A15}	*A1* Academic challenge B1 Reading & Writing B2 Listening C5 Preparation A14 Confidence A15 Humour	*A1* Plum finds it worrying not to understand words in lessons. If shakes her confidence ^{B1 & C5} Plum stresses the importance of preparation before the lesson especially with academic vocabulary.^{B2} One of the challenges in attending class is listening to the teacher and trying to understand what he is saying (especially if he uses academic terminology with which she is unfamiliar). ^{C5} Uses shocking for shock or problem ^{A14} Shakes her confidence in class if she does not understand the teacher ^{A15} Uses humour to emphasise the point she is making

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