

**Australian University Students' Short-term In-country
Study in China: An Ecological Perspective**

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted, either in its entirety, or substantially, for any degree or qualification at any other University or institute of higher learning. I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the intellectual content of this thesis contains neither material previously published nor written by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Abstract

The constant academic debate about the value of short-term in-country study (ICS) indicates the need for more research into ways to maximise the experience. There has been a disproportionate academic emphasis on the experiences of American students studying abroad, and hardly any research on Chinese learners from Australian universities can be found. To fill the gap, this study conducts a case study investigating this issue. It aims to examine the extent to which the ICS in China is beneficial for students' learning, as well as to explore ways to maximise the short-term ICS experience.

This study employs an ecological perspective which has redefined the goals of language education. Compared to the more traditional cognitively or socially orientated research, the ecological perspective offers broader interpretations of the four key constructs, namely, interaction, language learning, culture learning, and identity. Therefore, it can shed new light on the learning experience during ICS. Four questions to be answered regarding the key constructs of ICS are: (1) To what extent did the ICS facilitate interaction in different settings? (2) To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to language learning? (3) To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to culture learning? (4) What was the role of identity in the participants' learning process in the ICS?

The study used a mixed-method research design (the "quan-QUAL" design) for the triangulation of data sources. Pre-departure and end-of-program surveys were used to collect data on students' learning experiences in the home country and host country respectively. In-country observations were conducted to capture more information on students' sojourn experiences. Post-program interviews with participants collected nuanced details about their personal perceptions and re-entry experiences. Quantitative data were analysed by Excel and SPSS. The analysis of qualitative data included thematic content analysis, conversation analysis of observation data, and narrative analysis of student interviews.

The main argument of this thesis is that while the ICS promoted in-class and out-of-class interactions which further facilitated language and culture learning to a great extent, Australian students' identities and self-concepts also played a core mediating role throughout individual learning trajectories. The results have highlighted multi-level affordances for interaction, "seamless" opportunities for authentic language use, the diversity of cultural experiences that bolster intercultural learning, and the critical role of identity in different timescales in the ICS context. To maximise the ICS, participants should be facilitated with

explicit program intervention to be fully aware of various affordances available and the power of their own subjectivity and agency.

Since the ecological perspective has seldom been used to examine the ICS context, the findings of this research have made a substantial contribution to the practical field of study abroad and the theoretical domain from an ecological perspective. At the practical level, the findings will redound to the benefits of stakeholders in Australia and China. At the theoretical level, it has furthered our understanding of the theoretical framework of an ecological perspective on language education. The redefined success of language education from an ecological perspective allows us to evaluate the ICS with more subjective and relative criteria, which should be recognised in future research and by universities aiming to prepare their students for an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Unparalleled economic growth, an increasingly open business culture, and new opportunities have made China more attractive to international students as a study destination than ever. According to a recent news report in The Canberra Times, China was not even in the top 10 destinations for Australian students a few years ago, but times have changed: student numbers surged 37 percent in 2016 with up to 5000 Australians studying at Chinese universities (Bagshaw, 2016). Based on data from the Ministry of Education of China, although Oceania has been a smaller source region for international students in mainland China compared to other continents, a comparatively high increasing rate has been witnessed recently (see Table 1.1, retrieved from Ministry of Education of China, 2016).

Table 1.1: Number of international students¹ in mainland China from different continents in year 2016

Continent	Total number of students	Percentage of total international students in China	Year-on-year increment (Number)	Year-on-year increment (Percentage)
Asia	264,976	59.84%	24,822	10.34%
Europe	71,319	16.11%	4,573	6.85%
Africa	61,594	13.91%	11,802	23.70%
America	38,077	8.60%	3,143	9.00%
Oceania	6,807	1.54%	798	13.28%

Australian and Chinese government policies to increase cross-border educational engagements are having an impact (Sidhu & Dall'Alba, 2017). Australia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Student, Researcher and Academic Mobility with China

¹ International student in this table refers to both students studying in Chinese universities in pursuit of a degree and non-degree students. According to Ministry of Education of China (2016), non-degree students comprised of 52.58% of all international students in China in 2016.

in November 2014 to support the New Colombo Plan (NCP)² implementation and facilitate greater two-way mobility of students, researchers and academics. The number of agreements covering study abroad and academic or research collaboration between Chinese and Australian universities increased from 885 to 1,184 between 2012 and 2015 (Department of Education and Training of Australia, 2015). China became the most popular location for NCP students in the first year of full implementation of this policy. The rise of international students from Australia in China indicates a need for more research and public attention.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, however, hardly any academic publications to this day can be found investigating Australian learners of Chinese participating in in-country studies in China, illustrating the ground-breaking nature of the current thesis. In their critique of the study abroad literature on language learning, Kinginger and Palgrave (2009) observe a disproportionate emphasis on the experiences of American students. A thorough search of the existing research on study abroad in China reveals that that current body of literature has also been putting its focus on a North American setting. Most research participants are from American universities (see Beecher, 2012; Chen, 2007; Du, 2015; Tian & Lowe, 2014 for the literature written in English, and Feng, Bu, & Li, 2013; Ru, Feng, & Li, 2011; Su & Spagna, 2017 for the literature written in Chinese). Complementing this dominance are studies on participants from Asian countries and Africa. The foci of the study abroad research adopted by researchers from various regions, as Kinginger and Palgrave (2009) suggest, "are shaped in part by socio-political history and education policy influencing the societal roles ascribed to language and language learning" (p. 12). This indicates the results of research in other regions might not be fully applicable to the Australian context. Consequently, there is an imperative need for more research to provide a fuller picture of China as a destination for international students from Australia.

To fill the gap, this study conducts a case study in a leading university in Sydney, Australia, using the data collected from Chinese learners studying in a short-term in-country study program in Beijing, China. The Department of Chinese Studies at the home university has established cooperative partnerships with some of the most prestigious universities in China for in-country study programs. The program under investigation (hereinafter the Sydney-Beijing ICS program) allows undergraduate students to undertake a four-week intensive language learning experience. It was first integrated into the university's Chinese

² The introduction of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) in 2014 tried to diversify Australian student mobility from traditional destinations to Asia Pacific countries in order to facilitate regional trade and economic engagement (Scharoun, 2016).

curriculum in 2012 and enrolment has been consistently increasing. Contrasting with the fast development of the program, little is known about the learning experience particularly from the perspectives of the participants. It still remains in question to what extent the program has helped the students with their language learning and cultural immersion. Researching Chinese learners in these two leading universities in Australia and China will offer practical advice for decision-makers in both countries.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will first define the term “in-country study” which will be used throughout the thesis. This will be followed by identifying the key issues in the field: academic debates and research focuses. These key issues will lead to the objectives, research questions, and the significance of the current study. The chapter will end with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Intention and extension of in-country study (ICS)

In-country study, also referred to as “study abroad” in many publications, is defined as “a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes” (Kinginger & Palgrave, 2009, p. 11) in this study. According to the authors, this definition situates the phenomenon of study abroad on a continuum with migration on one end, and tourism on the other (see Figure 1.1). That is to say, the intended degree of resettling and integration into the host country is not as strong as more explicitly migration-related mobility, but at the same time, the purpose of the stay goes beyond leisure and entertainment associated with tourism to incorporate more efforts on focused learning.



Figure 1.1 Situating in-country study on a continuum

Choosing the nomenclature of “in-country study” has been a challenging task, and the term is chosen in this thesis for a couple of reasons. The first reason is rooted in the geographical context of the current research. This study takes place in an Australian higher education context. In many Australian universities, programs for studying in another country on a short-term basis are named “in-country study” programs. The particular program examined in this study is named “Chinese in-country study” in the home institution. Another reason is that the

term can best describe the features and organisation of the program under investigation. As noted by Coleman (2006, cited in Kinginger & Palgrave, 2009), a plethora of terms is discovered circulating in the literature. In addition to “in-country study” and “study abroad”, other terms include “student mobility”, “residence abroad”, “overseas language immersion”, etc. Among these terms, “student mobility” and “residence abroad” weaken the element of focused learning, while “overseas language immersion” only expresses the linguistic benefits of the program. The term “in-country study”, in comparison, not only embodies the academic pursuit of the sojourn, but also implies that the host country (e.g., its language and culture) is seen as a learning target, in a way that “study abroad” does not. Therefore, “in-country study” is considered the most appropriate term to describe the phenomenon researched in this thesis.

Regarding the extension of the concept, in-country study further divides into several categories. Three common types of student mobility are identified by Kinginger and Palgrave (2009): “(1) full study abroad for a foreign degree or qualification; (2) study as part of an academic partnership within a home degree or a joint degree involving institutions at home and abroad; and (3) exchange programs” (p. 9). Articles discussing the features of different categories of student mobility in Australia usually follow a similar typology, but with a few variations. For instance, Nerlich (2013) broadly outlines two main cohorts of outwardly mobile students in Australia: students who are enrolled to complete a qualification in a foreign university, and students who are enrolled to complete a qualification in a home country university and incorporate a study experience offshore while enrolled. Olsen (2008) on the contrary, segments the big groups into smaller sub-categories. The author summarises six types of international study experiences for Australian students: (1) Semester or year exchanges for credit (with fees mutually waived); (2) Other semester or year programs for credit (on a fee-paying basis); (3) Short-term programs of less than one semester; (4) Placements or practical training; (5) Research; (6) Others such as international conference and moots.

Particularly for this thesis, the target program falls into the category of short-term programs of less than one semester, often held during summer or winter vacations. The participants are students enrolled in a home country university who study abroad to earn credit points as part of the structure of a home degree. More specifically, the thesis mainly concerns “international language tours from the Australian university by groups of students in-country to enhance language skills” (Olsen, 2008, p. 367). This type of program is mostly funded directly by Australian universities, partially supported by Australian Government

programs or other sources, and these funding sources more often supplement, rather than fully cover, students' study and living costs (Nerlich, 2013).

Understanding the intention and extension of the concept "in-country study" is vital for the interpretation of its values and limitations. While this research is largely based upon the body of knowledge about in-country or study abroad in general, it is important to keep in mind to what extent this knowledge is applicable to particular structure of the program in different local contexts. Another thing to note is that, in the remainder of the thesis, the terms "study abroad" and "student mobility" are occasionally used and are interchangeable with the keyword "in-country study" of this research, because of their popularity in the current body of literature. The next section will identify the key constructs of ICS that need attention from research.

1.3 Key constructs of ICS

Recent research on language education has seen a shift of focus from a linguistic code to a meaning one (Kramsch, 2008), a shift which engages broader ways of understanding the fundamental concepts involved in language education. These concepts include learning, language, culture, the learner, and the relationships among them (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Some of these concepts are also key constructs of study abroad which are central to understanding the sojourn abroad as both a social and a language learning experience from an interdisciplinary perspective (Mitchell, Tracy-Ventura, & McManus, 2017). For example, Mitchell et al. 's project on Anglophone students abroad conceptualises four key constructs of language learning during residence abroad: language, identity, culture, and community and social networks. The fourth construct focuses on sojourners' interaction with communities of practice in different settings.

In the same line, this thesis will also be based on four key constructs of in-country study: (1) interaction; (2) language learning; (3) culture learning; and (4) identity. To specify, the thesis will first explore the idea of interaction and its relationship with learning. It then moves on to the topic of language learning, with a focus on language use and acquisition. This is followed by a discussion on the integration of culture learning into the language learning process. Finally, the role of identity and related self-concepts of students in the learning process will be explored. The following will justify why these four constructs are chosen for the current thesis. It will first explain why both language and culture learning

should be taken into consideration, and then elucidate why there is increasing research interest in social interaction and identity in the research field of study abroad.

Many researchers have pointed out that linguistic gains and cultural understanding are among the most important questions about study abroad (e.g. C. Wang, 2010; Wilkinson, 2000). Scholars in linguistics and applied linguistics have discussed the relationship between language and culture and have encouraged second language educators to combine the two (Lange & Paige, 2003). Language and culture can be viewed as a language-culture continuum in which language is one extreme (i.e., linguistic form, including linguistic and paralinguistic structures), through to culture as the other extreme (i.e., world knowledge, providing a macro context for communication) (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Because of this integration, it is common sense that culture learning goes hand in hand with language learning. Culture learning plays a vital role in language learning during study abroad – one of the strongest predictors of second language gains during study abroad is students' cultural sensitivity (Baker-Smemoe, Dewey, Bown, & Martinsen, 2014). Therefore, study abroad research should not be limited to the linguistic outcomes. Sociocultural and intercultural competence are essential elements which study abroad is expected to enhance (Coleman, 1998). Nevertheless, although there is extensive literature on language gains and culture *separately*, not many studies explore how learners feel about their growth in *both* aspects at the same time (Kong, 2014). This thesis fills the gap and takes a broad scope by including both language and culture aspects of the ICS experience.

Another research trend in the field of study abroad is an increasing interest in sojourners' social interaction (e.g., engagement in the target social environment), and identity (e.g., individual differences). These themes are seen as integral parts of the in-country learning processes and as vital factors influencing overall learning outcomes. Wang's (2010) article reviewing the contradictory results of study abroad research notes that the amount and the quality of interactions with local peoples in the host country, as well as learners' identity seem to play a major role in leading to distinctive learning outcomes. A review-based article by Kinginger summarises that when students do not gain sufficient language improvement or intercultural awareness, it may be due to a lack of meaningful engagement in the host communities (Kinger, 2011). In a later review-based article, Kinginger reveals that identity and related conflicts can have significant consequences for the overall quality of language experiences abroad (Kinger, 2013). Following the general trend in the field, interaction and identity are the other two key constructs of ICS identified in this thesis.

Each of the four key constructs - interaction, language learning, culture learning, and identity - will be reviewed in the literature in more detail in Chapter 2. As will be shown, the ecological perspective towards language and language education (e.g., van Lier, 2000; Kramsch, 2002) will be used to interpret data relating to these key concepts. These concepts and the relationships among them constitute the points of reference throughout the thesis.

The next section will identify some major academic debates regarding a particular type of ICS, that is, the short-term ICS, which will be the focus of this study.

1.4 Academic debates around the effects of short-term ICS

The focus of this thesis is a particular type of program: the short-term ICS program, which is less than a semester in length, ranging from 1 to 8 weeks (Donnelly- Smith, 2009, cited in Mapp, 2012). Short-term programs are often faculty-led and cohort-based trips, during which participants are grouped together with other students from the home institution and accompanied by one or more faculty members throughout the sojourn. Recent years have witnessed a rapid development and growing popularity of short-term in-country programs worldwide, especially in the United States (Mapp, 2012; Scharoun, 2016; Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017), but also in Australia (Byrne, 2016; Scharoun, 2016).³ Short-term programs are becoming more appealing to many students than longer programs. These students might have limited flexibility due to financial or academic demands (Mapp, 2012), anxiety about or lack confidence in committing to an extended long-term experience (Eckert, Luqmani, Newell, Quraeshi, & Wagner, 2013), or fear disruption to employment in the home country (Wildermuth, 2005, cited in Batey & Lupi, 2012). A short-term program can provide a viable alternative for these students who may not have any opportunity to study abroad otherwise.

The effectiveness of the short-term format is often questioned by study abroad researchers. It is frequently argued that longer programs are likely to bring about greater benefits for students (Mapp, 2012). The short duration lacks academic rigour (Altbach, 2004, Neppel, 2005, cited in Lumkes, Hallett, & Vallade, 2012), reinforces a vacation mind-set (Foronda & Belknap, 2012, cited in Walters et al., 2017), limits participants' integration into the host culture and increases their interactions with fellow peers, which potentially

³ Data from the 2015 Australian Outbound Student Mobility Snapshot indicate that Australian students are more likely to undertake short-term study tours to destinations in Asia than semester-long exchanges. More than half of the international study experiences from Australia are for less than a semester while only 6.5% are for a year. (Scharoun, 2016)

constrains language and culture development (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). On the contrary, other studies show that a longer stay does not always necessitate a more effective learning experience. Lumkes et al.'s (2012) study finds that length of stay is not a strong predictor of students' cultural adaptation. A study from Du (2013) shows that length of stay might be a negative predictor of speed of development in language gains, based on the fact that the first month of the study abroad shows the most rapid change of students' oral proficiency and the growth slows down as the time passes by. The author explains that the first month of study in a foreign country is a time when students have the greatest problems adjusting to life in the target country, which creates demanding communication needs, thus forcing students to negotiate for meaning (Du, 2013). It suggests that a longer stay does not always equate to more effective learning.

A number of studies provide positive evidence for the value of a brief but still worthwhile in-country experience. Evidence shows that even a short-term stay in a foreign country can contribute to students' growth as much as long-term programs do. For example, Chieffo and Griffiths (2003, 2004) found significant changes in intercultural awareness, functional knowledge, global interdependence, and personal growth and development for students that participated in short term study abroad programs. The authors conclude that, "short term programs, even as short as one month, are worthwhile educational [endeavours] that have significant self-perceived impacts on students intellectual and personal lives" (2004, p. 174) In some cases, students in a short program abroad even experienced more growth than those studying abroad for a semester. Dwyer (2004) explains that compared to the traditional long-term program, in a short-term trip, faculty typically has more control over student activities and learning processes, which allows for more purposeful and focused learning to occur. Some other studies demonstrate the long-term effects on global citizenship of short-term stays (Caldwell & Purtzer, 2015; Galipeau-Konate, 2014). These researchers have argued that despite the short duration, short-term in-country experiences are nevertheless valuable and rewarding.

In the Chinese context, a thorough review of the current literature on short-term SA-in-China programs has revealed inclusiveness in research scopes, indicating the complexity of the issue. Different studies have been based on diverse theoretical foundations using distinct approaches, looking at various aspects of the effects of ICS, and therefore generated inconclusive results in the literature. If we have a closer look at this literature on short-term SA in China, some main categories of the effects of ICS being investigated emerged.

The most commonly seen type of effect is on participants' language proficiency, which has been variously defined and evaluated. While some studies rely on the change of scores in standardised Chinese test and observe generally positive learning outcomes (e.g., Taguchi, Xiao, & Li, 2016a), others delve into the issue of pragmatic development in learners. For example, Diao (2016), employing the language socialisation theory, finds that American students became socialised into using certain Chinese particles as gendered linguistic practices in the dorm conversations during SA in China. Jin's (2015) research, taking a sociocultural perspective, documents two American learners' dynamic, complex and highly individualised developmental process in acquiring Chinese compliments. It uncovers that while Chinese people's special treatment of the students provided more constraints than learning opportunities, the learners' own motivation and study approaches also shaped their learning process and outcomes significantly. Taguchi, Li and Xiao (2013) examine American sojourners' production of Chinese formulaic expressions and identified different patterns of the changes in production. In a later study, the research team (Taguchi, Xiao, & Li, 2016b) assesses students' performance of speech acts with a spoken test and establishes a significant causal relationship between the amount of social contact and the production of Chinese speech acts. Finally, in both Li's (2014) and Winke and Teng's (2010) projects, the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is used to measure students' pragmatic ability, and the studies provide supportive evidence for the positive effects of short-term ICS programs on pragmatic development to various extents.

A number of studies have examined the particular arrangement of a short-term program and its influence on the learning experience. For example, Di Silvio, Donovan and Malone (2014), looking into the homestay setting, report positive correlations between students' oral proficiency gains and their being glad to have lived with a host family, and between students' language learning satisfaction and their satisfaction with the homestay. Another study by Liu (2014) investigates the benefits of the at-home preparation program for the in-country experience. It argues that the pre-program preparation arrangement can help increase students' language proficiency, as it builds students' self-esteem and confidence and subsequently allows them to benefit from interacting with native speakers during their study in China.

While the above studies are mainly linguistically oriented, some other researchers are interested in less linguistically-oriented effects of ICS programs. A number of articles are found to have examined sojourners' identity development during SA in China. This line of research is informed by the socialisation theory, or the social constructionism perspective,

and interprets identity as constructed through interaction with locals. Diao (2017), focusing on three American students with histories of using non-standard Mandarin, uncovers how these students and their Chinese hosts use or reject one stereotypical nonstandard Mandarin feature, the retroflex/dental merger, for identification purposes. Students responded to the notion of standard in divergent ways, highlighting study abroad as a potential space for bi/multilingual learners to (re)interpret and (re)negotiate accent and identity. Du's (2015) study on American college students studying abroad in China finds that the experience did not pose serious threats to their identity negotiation and self-presentation, even if their identification as Americans was strengthened. Students in Du's study used Otherness as their advantage to construct learning opportunities and took pride in their Chinese proficiency. Tian and Lowe (2014) report an intensive longitudinal multiple case study that explores eight American students' intercultural experiences and the impacts of such experiences on individual identity during their study at a Chinese university. The findings reveal the journey of participants from cultural naivety to emergent intercultural awareness and critical cultural capacity.

Cultural learning is another big research topic in the literature. Research evidence shows that students can benefit from the experience linguistically and in terms of identity; however, it portrays cultural learning during a short-term sojourn as more challenging, not only because the time is limited, but also due to the lack of well-designed cultural activities during the programs. Feng et al. (2013), analysing American short-term sojourners' out-of-class target language contact, argue that short-term students are fully aware of utilising the target language environment and take proactive steps to communicate with Chinese friends and service staff due to their perception of its freshness and temporary status. However, in regards to cultural aspects, since the short-term programs in China mostly organise out-of-class cultural excursions, which only expose students to short specific cultural customs or products, students' cultural understanding is usually limited. On the other hand, with strategic learning approaches, students might gain much in cultural understanding despite the short duration. For instance, Craig, Zou and Poimbeauf (2015) explore the impacts of journal writing during SA in China on learners' reflective responses to cultural phenomena that are vastly different from their own firmly held and enacted beliefs. The study has validated the effect of SA on intercultural transformation through a proper program intervention: reflective journal writing. It can be seen that the short-term program in China has both advantages and limitations in different aspects of learning, and the specific design of the program is an important factor.

This body of literature suffers from two common limitations. First, all the studies reviewed above are undertaken in a North American context. Although this chapter might not provide an exhaustive list of all studies on short-term SA programs in China, it is safe to say that empirical data derived from other parts of the world is scarce. Another limitation is that, with rare exceptions (e.g., Diao, 2016, 2017; Jin, 2015; Taguchi, Li & Xiao, 2016a, 2016b; Tian & Lowe, 2014), most studies lack a substantial theoretical foundation or adequately articulated conceptual framework.

The inconclusive and inconsistent results found in the existing body of literature, as well as the gaps identified above, have jointly motivated the current study, which aims to conduct a more fine-grained and theoretically convincing study in order to clarify the question. As Barkley and Barkley (2013) state: “Short-term study abroad programs can provide a truly positive experience when planned and executed in a deliberate and thoughtful fashion” (p.146). Consequently, the focus of this research on a short-term ICS program in China becomes two-fold: (1) the effectiveness of this type of program; (2) solutions that make it more effective and worth the investment. How this research focus informs the objectives and research questions of the current study will be explained in the next section.

1.5 Objectives and research questions

As a response to the proposed research focus regarding the short-term ICS program as mentioned above, this study has two broad objectives. First, it examines the extent to which the ICS in China is beneficial for Australian university students’ language and culture learning; second, it aims to explore ways to maximise the short-term ICS experience.

To meet these objectives, the thesis will examine the four key constructs of ICS identified in Section 1.3: interaction, language learning, culture learning, and identity. Accordingly, four research questions will be answered using data collected in this study:

- (1) To what extent did the ICS facilitate *interaction* in different settings?
- (2) To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to *language learning*?
- (3) To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to *culture learning*?
- (4) What was the role of *identity* in participants’ learning process in the ICS?

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will redound to the benefits of stakeholders on both sides in the two countries, as well as enrich our understanding of the topic in the academic field.

At the practice level, the importance of the Chinese language in Australia and the growing attractiveness of China as a destination for Australian student mobility justifies the need for more efficient ICS program designs. Consequently, program sponsors will be informed by the findings and made aware of the value of the ICS experience which may impact on their decision-making. It is hoped program administrators and language teachers will benefit from information about what should be emphasised in their practices to facilitate students' learning experience during the sojourn in China. Students themselves may also find the recommended approaches useful to maximise their ICS experience in China.

At the theoretical level, as will be explicated in the next chapter, this study is inspired by an ecological perspective which will help researchers to identify critical areas in the Chinese ICS process that have not been thoroughly explored before. It will enrich our understanding of the core concepts of interaction, language, culture and student identity in the study abroad research field. The results achieved through ICS programs may on the surface look similar in various research settings, but interpreted from an ecological perspective, each program goes through a highly distinctive process involving the complexity of the target environmental systems and the learners' own bio-ecology. The redefined success of language education from an ecological perspective allows us to evaluate the ICS with more subjective and relative criteria, which should be recognised in future research and by universities aiming to prepare their students for an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world. Since the ecological perspective has seldom been used to examine the ICS context, the findings of this research will make a substantial contribution to the existing literature.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

To achieve the objectives of this study as articulated above, this thesis is divided into eight chapters. This chapter (Chapter 1) has introduced the study, defined the key terminology of "in-country study (ICS)", identified the four key constructs of ICS, reviewed academic debates round the effects of short-term ICS, articulated the objectives and research questions of the study, and stated the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 will review the literature on different understandings of the four key constructs – interaction, language learning, culture learning, identity, and introduce the ecological perspective taken towards them. It will discuss the relationship between the ecological perspective and other significant theories in the field, particularly the cognitive and social orientation to language learning. Informed by previous and current literature, the chapter will develop an analytical framework to link the four key concepts together, as well as to guide the way to collecting and interpreting the empirical data.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology of this study. To begin with, the chapter explains the reason why a mixed-method research design was chosen for data triangulation. Then it offers a detailed description of the research site and data sources. Data collection and analysis processes are also explained. The chapter ends with a reflection on the subjectivity of the researcher and ethical considerations.

Chapters 4 to 7 are the data analysis and discussion chapters of this thesis. They are structured thematically to discuss the core issues identified in this study.

Chapter 4 answers the question of to what extent the ICS promoted interaction opportunities in different settings for the students. It will argue that the ICS program facilitated students to construct interaction opportunities in multi-level settings, with a common limitation of insufficient organised out-of-class activities. The multi-level settings - classroom, campus, social space and virtual space – provided students with different types of interaction opportunities and challenges. It will suggest possible program intervention to maximise the opportunities for students' interaction.

Chapter 5 scrutinises the extent to which the ICS contributed to students' language learning, with a focus on authentic language use and acquisition. This chapter will concentrate on students' authentic use of Chinese for meaning negotiation and self-expression; attention will also be given to their analytic thinking about these authentic experiences. The chapter will argue that the ICS program promoted students' authentic Chinese language use and acquisition in the "seamless" experience of the ICS, blurring the boundary between formal and informal learning. It will make recommendation to take advantage of the seamless nature of the ICS, allowing the in-class pedagogy and out-of-class L2 use to complement each other.

Chapter 6 looks into the question of to what extent the ICS contributed to students' culture learning. It will reveal that the ICS facilitated students' culture learning with both cultural and intercultural orientations: the ICS gave students access to cultural learning resources and facilitated their cultural interpretation and intercultural identity. A limitation

regarding the lack of in-depth intercultural learning will be uncovered. It suggests that explicit program interventions are needed to design activities for focused, conscious and guided cultural interpretation of the symbolic dimensions of students' life experiences in China.

Chapter 7 examines the influence of multi-faceted identity and self-concepts on students' ICS experience and individual learning trajectories. It will be found that identities not only serve as antecedent conditions for the in-country study, but also as factors constructed in moment-to-moment interactions during the study, as well as prolonged consequences post the journey. Demographic identity categories can explain sub-group features to some degree, but none of these variables can determine the learning experience alone. Students' linguistic self-concept has the power to explain individual trajectories and contradictory cases. Re-entry learner identity can be seen as a prolonged effect of the short-term sojourn. Understanding multi-faceted identity in different timescales will inform program designers to give explicit support in developing students' ability to analyse their own identities as invoked or constructed in different timescales, and to maximise the power of their subjectivity, autonomy and agency.

The last chapter of this thesis (Chapter 8) will conclude the findings and evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the study are achieved. It will recapitulate all the findings from Chapter 4 to Chapter 7. Then, it will discuss these findings at the practical level and theoretical level and offer implications for practitioners and researchers. At the practical level, the chapter will discuss how the findings of the thesis respond to the debates around the effects of short-term ICS. At the theoretical level, it will discuss how the findings contribute to the ecological perspective on language education. The chapter will end with the limitations of the thesis and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the previous and current literature and establish the theoretical foundation of the study. It will elucidate how an ecological perspective is useful for our understanding of the key constructs of in-country study (ICS) and therefore useful for answering the four research questions as proposed in the previous chapter:

- (1) Q1: To what extent did the ICS facilitate *interaction* in different settings?
- (2) Q2: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to *language learning*?
- (3) Q3: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to *culture learning*?
- (4) Q4: What was the role of *identity* in participants' learning process in the ICS?

The chapter will be structured as follows. Section 2.2 will critically examine diverse schools of theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which lead to a call for an ecological perspective towards language development. The main strength of an ecological perspective i.e. its redefinition of the success of language education will be highlighted. Section 2.3 interprets the four key concepts above from an ecological perspective, in comparison with understandings from other perspectives. It will be argued that the ecological perspective provides broadened ways of understanding these constructs. Section 2.4 will outline the gaps found in the current literature on study abroad justifying the use of an ecological perspective. Section 2.5 will model the analytical framework of this research showing the way in which these key constructs are interrelated in the ecology of the ICS. Based on the theoretical framework of the ecological perspective, Section 2.6 will list the detailed sub-research questions to be answered in the findings chapters. Finally, Section 2.6 will summarise the main points covered in this chapter.

2.2 The ecological perspective to language education

This section establishes why the ecological perspective is used to interpret data collected in this study. It will be argued that the ecological perspective on SLA stands out from other

theories because of its redefinition of how language education achieves social and individual equilibrium, which broadens our understanding of the key constructs of ICS.

The advent of taking an ecological perspective to language education was a response to the heated debate between two major schools of thoughts taking conflicting ontologies in SLA, namely, cognitive SLA (the acquisition metaphor) and social SLA (the socialisation metaphor). As summarised by Ellis (2010), cognitive SLA, drawn from Jean Piaget's cognitive theory, is more interested in the individual's construction of knowledge, with an emphasis on the mental process. Social SLA follows Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theories and maintains knowledge is co-constructed through the interaction among learners and shaped by social and historical context. There has been heated debate between these two schools of theories. On the one hand, scholars supporting social SLA criticise the overwhelmingly cognitive orientation of SLA which views learner and learning as functioning independently of context and language use (e.g., Firth & Wagner, 1997; Hall, 1997; Liddicoat, 1997; Watson-Gegeo, 2004). On the other hand, proponents of cognitive SLA maintain that the process of acquisition is basically cognitive, and so cognitive science is the logical choice for future SLA to survive as a viable field of inquiry (e.g., Kasper, 1997; Long, 1997; Long & Doughty, 2003). However, recent development in the field calls for a cognitive-sociocultural integration (e.g., Felix, 2005; Ellis, 2000).

As a response to these theoretical debates, the proposal of taking an ecological perspective to language learning is an attempt to reconcile the tension between the cognitive and social orientations to language learning, “[capturing] the interconnectedness of psychological, social, and environmental process in SLA” (Lam & Kramersch, 2003, p. 144). The ecological perspective considers that the dividing line between cognitive SLA (the acquisition metaphor) and social SLA (the socialisation metaphor) is not clear-cut. It is difficult to separate acquisition and socialisation if the goal of language acquisition is expressed through functional/communicative competence and social/cultural performance, and if socialisation is dependent on grammatical and lexical ability (Leather & van Dam, 2003). Kramersch (2002) states that language acquisition and language socialisation research might be the prisoners of their own metaphors, and the awareness of this is precisely the prompt for the “ecology” metaphor to be born out.

The ecological perspectives on language acquisition have redefined the educational success for language learning. Neither the goal defined by the “acquisition” metaphor (full mastery of the linguistic and communicative aspects of the language) nor that of the “socialisation” metaphor (full acculturation and assimilation into the language-speaking

community) is adequate. Considering the increasingly multilingual and multicultural nature of global communication, language users have to navigate much less predictable exchanges, and the essence of an ecological perspective is to acknowledge and to live with paradoxes, preventing premature closure in defining success (Kramersch, 2002, 2008). That is to say, the ultimate criterion of success for language education needs to be defined “not only by external measures of individual achievement” and scores in language tests “but also according to subjective and relational criteria” (ibid., 2002, p. 24) – whether the learner could “see him/herself through his/her own embodied history and subjectivity and through the history and subjectivity of others” (ibid., 2008, p.668). This ability is conceptualised by Kramersch (2006) as “symbolic competence” (p. 251). Synthesising Kramersch’s proposal of educational success/goal defined for language education from an ecological perspective, four critical areas of ability and competence are identified, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

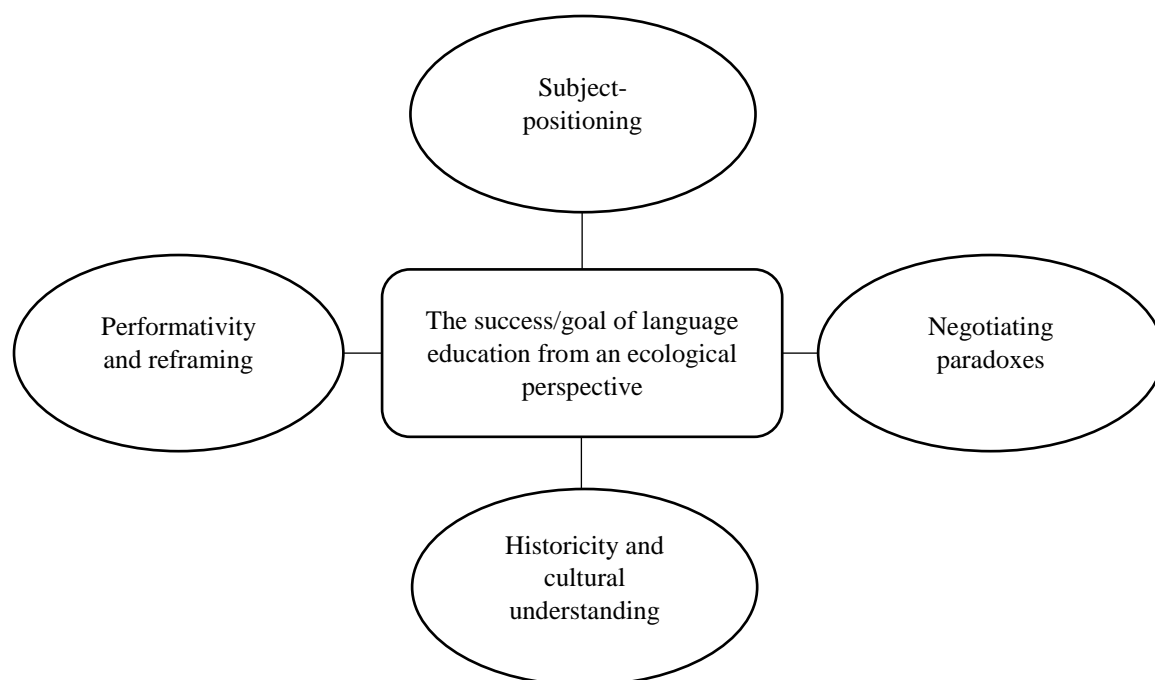


Figure 2.1: The success/goal of language education from an ecological perspective (Based on Kramersch, 2002, 2006, 2008)

In the figure, *Subject-positioning* entails the ability to align oneself in the social space through language choices and to use one’s full semiotic potential for identification purposes. *Negotiating paradoxes* entails the ability to form a sense of community and the degree of

engagement in discovering unplanned affordances along the way. *Historicity and cultural understanding* is an understanding of the cultural memories evoked by symbolic systems. *Performativity and reframing* encompasses the capacity to make an influence on reality - create alternative realities and reframe human thoughts and action. This renewed view on the ultimate goal for language education is reminiscent of the spirit of ecolinguistics' principle frame of "ecosophy" - "the commitment to ecological equilibrium" (S. Chen, 2016: p. 109). The language learning goal from an ecological perspective ultimately points to the equilibrium of nature and society, as well as the self which constantly lives in real-life paradoxes.

It is this newly emerged ecological perspective towards language learning mentioned here that sets the very theoretical foundation of the current study. The logical map illustrated in Figure 2.2 explains the usefulness of the ecological perspective to investigate the research topic of this study.

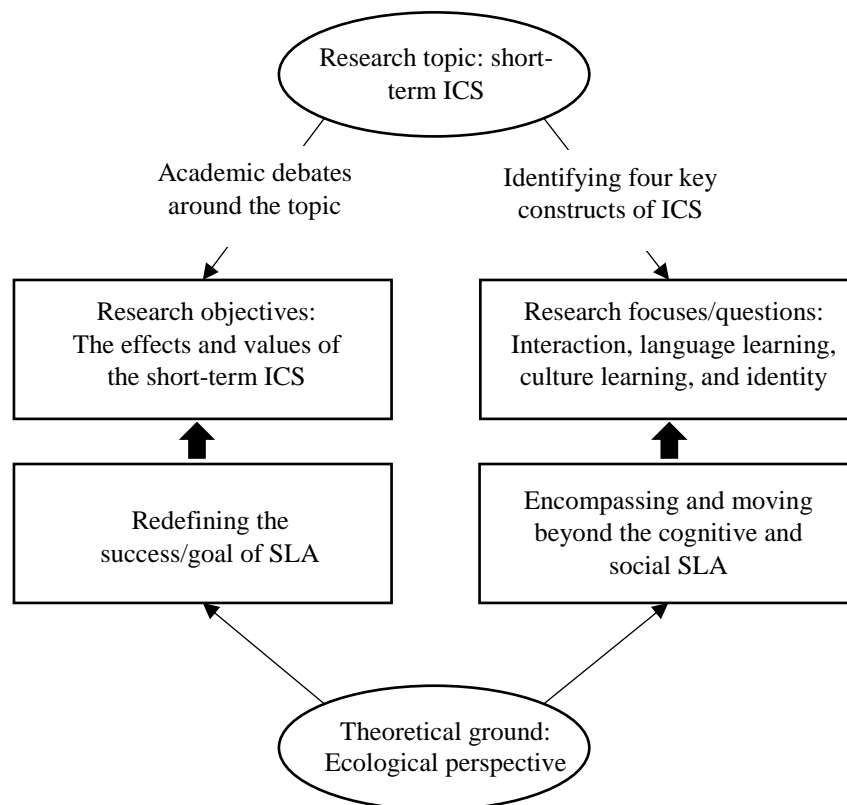


Figure 2.2: Logic map of applying the ecological perspective to the research topic

As can be seen from the figure, the ecological perspective is ideal for the research of the short-term ICS in this study for two main reasons. The first reason is that the theory is useful to meet the research objectives of the study. Its redefinition of the success/goal of SLA can help to explore the effects and values of the short-term ICS, which is a response to the academic debates around the topic. The notions of the success/goals of language education proposed by Kramsch (2002, 2006, 2008) inform the ICS research to re-evaluate what constitutes a successful sojourn. The second reason is that the reconciliation of the cognitive and social SLA via the ecological perspective offers an overarching framework to encompass both the linguistic and sociocultural aspects of language learning, with an eye on both external/social processes and internal mental/psychological processes. Therefore, it captures the interconnectedness of the four key constructs of ICS identified in this study. Understanding the four key constructs of ICS from an ecological perspective offers new insights into the research questions of the study.

The next section will outline in detail how the four key constructs of ICS are interpreted within the ecological framework

2.3 Interpreting key constructs of ICS from an ecological perspective

The following sub-sections will examine these four constructs in turn through an ecological lens. In each of the sub-sections (Section 2.3.1 – 2.3.4), I will review the literature regarding each key construct, summarise the limitations of other theoretical perspectives, and then elucidate how the ecological perspective makes up for their deficiencies.

2.3.1 Interaction for learning

In the field of SLA, interaction became a core concept of language learning with the advent of the communicative approach to language learning, contrasting with the behavioural approach that focuses on the stimulation-response model in early years. Scholars believe that interaction with others is the fundamental process and purpose of learning, although with different emphases. Table 2.1 summarises the interpretation of interaction from different perspectives - cognitive, social and ecological.

Table 2.1: Interpreting interaction from different perspectives

	Cognitive orientation	Social orientation	Ecological orientation
Interpreting Interaction for learning	Interaction offers sources of input and output	(1) The meaning-making process in interaction constitutes the learning itself (2) Learning occurs in interaction with more competent members	(1) Interaction offers <i>affordances</i> for learning (2) Interaction occurs at different levels: interpersonal, intrapersonal, and between human and physical environments

In cognitive SLA, interaction and context are understood as sources of input and output to facilitate cognition, but not as constitutive of learning itself in learning how to interpret, create and exchange meanings (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Research on study abroad with this orientation usually uses quantitative instruments to measure interaction and socialisation during SA, such as measuring the amount of target language exposure and language use (Matsumura, 2000, 2001), and language contact and interaction (Dewey, Ring, Gardner, & Belnap, 2013). In these studies, interaction is seen as an external factor to language proficiency and is not considered as part of the learning process itself. Although they inform us about the importance of interaction during study abroad, these studies cannot capture the detailed process of students' interaction.

In social SLA, interaction is deemed to be a socially negotiated aspect by which learners are socialised into the L2 society. Social context is not only a source of input and output for the learner, but it provides interaction for active meaning-making with other participants who are more or less competent in the language (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Research studies with this orientation are usually qualitative in nature as the qualitative methodology is “very much in keeping with a sociocultural perspective of second language acquisition which conceives learners first and foremost as individuals” (Lantolf, 2000, p.155). This line of research on study abroad explores more how students interact with different communities. For example, Castañeda and Zirger (2011) investigated how students interacted with members in the host family, community, and service school. Although socially oriented research focuses more on the process and questions of “how” and “why”, interaction is often limited to the interpersonal level, lacking attention to intrapersonal interaction and interaction between human and physical environments.

The ecological perspective embraces the importance of both the social process and cognitive process of learning but is broader than these. The following will explicate the two distinctive features of the ecological view on interaction: (1) emphasis on the affordances of

the environment for interaction, and (2) the multi-levelled nature of the environment for interaction.

An understanding of interaction from the ecological perspective is not narrowed to examining interactions with other learners or human beings, but takes a broader concept of interaction incorporating the holistic environment. As Kramsch (2002) stated: “The metaphor of ecology captures the dynamic interaction between language users and the environment as between parts of a living organism” (p. 3). The ecological perspective therefore has “extensive explanatory power for learning deriving from the interaction between individuals and their environments” (Hoven & Palalas, 2011, p. 701). The ecological view on interaction privileges the notion of *affordance*, or “a particular property of the environment that is relevant ... to an active, perceiving organism in that environment.” (van Lier, 2000, p.252). The usefulness of an affordance is only manifest when a learner perceives it as salient (Hoven & Palalas, 2011), echoing Kramsch’s understanding of learning based on subjective and relational criteria. One of the educational successes of language education is the degree of engagement in discovering unplanned affordances along the way in the complex and unpredictable multilingual environment (Kramsch, 2002). Therefore, a research focus regarding interaction in this study is whether students perceived the affordances in the target environment were valuable for their construction of interaction opportunities.

To understand the holistic environment for interaction more thoroughly, it should be noted that interaction occurs at different levels, entailing not only interpersonal social interaction but also intrapersonal interaction and the interaction between human and physical environments. Such an interpretation of the ecological perspective stems from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) chaos theory on educational development, which sees the environment as complex nested systems at multiple levels from proximal to distal which can be labelled micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. Most relevant to understanding students’ experiences in a short-term ICS are *microsystems* because they fit the student and study abroad setting (Jessup-Anger & Aragones, 2013). The microsystem is originally defined by Bronfenbrenner (1993) as “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations” that are experienced in one’s immediate environment that “invite, permit, or inhibit engagement” in that environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 15). With the development of technology, the notion of an *ecological techno-subsystem* (Johnson & Pupilampu, 2008) was added as a dimension of microsystems to include human interaction with non-living elements of communication, information and recreation digital technologies in environments. That is to say, ecological views on learning consider the “interactions among various aspects of an

intervention, including the students, teachers, environment, and technological tools, in order to determine how they work together to influence the teaching and learning process” (Ducate & Lomicka, 2013). Learning processes deemed by some scholars as non-interactive (e.g., watching TV, see Wiklund, 2002) are also deemed interactive in nature from an ecological perspective.

Informed by an ecological orientation, interaction in this study will be examined in different settings with diverse people and resources both in class and outside of class. The focus is not only on the diversity and intensity of social contacts but also on the nature of the interaction processes in the affordance of ICS. Since the usefulness of an affordance is only manifest when a learner perceives it as salient (Hoven & Palalas, 2011), the focus of analysis is on whether students perceived the affordances in the target environment were valuable for their construction of interaction and learning opportunities.

2.3.2 Language and language learning

The interpretations of language and language learning also differ in the three schools of thoughts on SLA: the cognitive, the social, and the ecological. Table 2.2 summarises the main points of interpretation from different perspectives.

Table 2.2: Interpreting language learning from different perspectives

		Cognitive orientation	Social orientation	Ecological orientation
Interpreting language learning	Language learning process	Individual mental process based on human memory	Collaborative social process through the use of the language	Adds to the social orientation and stresses that language use and learning are <i>emergent</i> in real-life contexts
	Language learning outcomes	Focusing on the mastery of linguistic structures	Focusing on becoming a competent member of the community through the use of the language	Focusing on the awareness of language variability and talking analytically about language

As Ellis (2010) points out, SLA with a cognitive orientation considers language as either a set of formalist rules or a network of form-function mapping. Language learning occurs inside the mind of the learner as an outcome of input that activates universal processes of cognition. In the field of study abroad in China, studies with a cognitive orientation can be found investigating program participants’ language gains, using pre- and post-program tests or standardised exams (e.g., SAT Chinese scores, HSK test, Oral Proficiency Interview) to

assess students' language skills (Liu, 2010; Taguchi, Xiao, & Li, 2016b; Kim et al., 2015; Du, 2013; Hayden, 1998). These studies generally report positive findings and provide evidence that students make gains through the ICS in different domains of language skills (e.g., speaking, reading, fluency, vocabulary, etc.). However, they are limited by their narrowed scope on language. Whether gaining higher scores in standardised language tests can reflect better competence in using the language in real-life remains a question.

SLA with a social orientation acknowledges that language use in real-world situations is fundamental, not ancillary, to learning (Jane Zuengler & Miller, 2006). With social orientation, the focus of language learning is not on the cognitive process based on memory, but on the use of the target language to become a competent member of the socioculturally constructed communities (e.g., Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Following a social orientation, some studies in the field of study abroad in China examine the amount of students' target language use in the study abroad context. For example, Taguchi, Xiao, and Li (2016a) developed a Language Contact Questionnaire (LCQ) to measure participants' amount of Chinese use in different social activities and found that students had more opportunities to use the target language in interpersonal interaction (compared to "non-interactional" contact such as reading books) during the sojourn. Other studies attempt to explore whether students use the language appropriately. Quantitative-based studies adopted the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to capture pragmatic aspects of students' language production (e.g., speech acts, appropriateness, etc.), and results are generally positive (S. Li, 2014; Taguchi, Li, & Xiao, 2013). Qualitative-based studies have uncovered highly individualised trajectories in the development of pragmatic aspects in real-life contexts during study abroad (Diao, 2016; Jin, 2015). Although socially oriented research is insightful in understanding language as social practices, the language learning goal in this line of research is still limited to what is approximate or appropriate for oneself in another language, which is deemed insufficient from the ecological perspective.

The ecological perspective challenges such concepts as "target language", "native speaker" and "standard norm" which are some of the common ideas in traditional cognitive and social SLA. The ecological perspective offers a lens through which the systems of language are viewed holistically (Halliday, 1993; Wells, 1994) and explores "how languages reciprocally reflect and constitute the life-worlds of people in the increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural contexts of our contemporary world" (Scarino, 2010, p.327). In this view, language is not just a string of syntactic units but also a resource to accomplish and perform things in real-life social settings (Jenks, 2017). Language learning is an emergent, complex,

non-linear and dynamic process in which the learner uses and creates the language, “both purposefully and incidentally, on the basis of their perceptions of, interactions with and action upon affordances found in their learning and language environment” (Hoven & Palalas, 2011, p.702). Language learning from this perspective, is shaped by and emergent from real-life events (e.g., health and weather, see Casanave, 2012), involving the creation of incentives and learning resources to use the language. In this sense, the ecological perspective pays more attention to the authenticity of language use and learning and the engagement with the experience of language variability in order to experience the world (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

The expected language learning outcomes through the use of language in life-worlds involve two critical aspects (see Table 2.2 above). The first aspect is an awareness of language variability. Shohamy (2007) contends that variability within language makes it creative and a living expression of self, which should not be reduced through education. The second aspect involves learning to “talk about talk” (Kramersch, 1993a: p. 264, cited in Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Language learning should promote ongoing investigation of learners by talking analytically about language. Then learners are involved in active learning that facilitates exploration and discovery rather than being passive recipients of knowledge transmitted to them (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). These two critical aspects will also be examined in this study.

Informed by these discussions, language learning in this research will be examined at three levels: first, the amount of language use during the program; second, using language authentically; and third, students’ mental process of critical thinking on language variability and talking analytically about language.

2.3.3 Culture and culture learning

The ecological view acknowledges that the social and historical dimensions of language need to be put in relation to each other, highlighting the vital role of culture learning in SLA. Although it is common sense that culture learning should be integrated into language learning, there has been ongoing debate around how culture should be defined and learned in the language curriculum. Different theoretical orientations espouse very distinct opinions. Table 2.3 outlines the key opinions on culture learning within the cognitive, social, and ecological orientation of SLA.

Table 2.3: Interpreting culture learning from different perspectives

	Cognitive orientation	Social orientation	Ecological orientation
Interpreting culture learning	Accumulating cultural knowledge about another culture (usually represented by national attributes)	Knowing about the societal norms and symbolic systems of the target culture	Challenging the notion of bounded speech communities and “one language - one culture” assumption and transforming into “new” intercultural speakers

The cognitive stance usually involves understanding cultures as static and unproblematic and bounded by geographic borders, such as national traits. Although it sometimes recognises cultural subgroups within the territory of the national group, such as ethnic minorities or social classes, it inevitably considers culture as a finished product, “removing the possibilities for contestation and creation as a feature of social life.” (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p.18) Cultural competence is deemed as the accumulation of a body of knowledge about a country and its cultural products, which is no more than a matter of observation with the learner being external to it. Many ICS programs in China promote this kind of culture learning, placing typical Chinese cultural elements at the core of the cultural curriculum, such as geographical and historical overviews, Chinese Philosophy, Chinese Customs, Chinese Film Appreciation, Chinese Classical Music Appreciation, etc. (e.g., Zhao, 2016). Scholars often criticise such an essentialised approach to culture learning (e.g., stereotypical cultural notes in language textbooks) for its minimal expectations in actual intercultural communication (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013).

Socioculturally oriented research studies widely adopt the understandings of culture as societal norms and symbolic systems. This line of research believes that speech events have their own cultural-specific structures and routines, and many speech acts have cultural-specific variations (Schulz, 2007). Cultural competence is defined as knowing what people from a cultural group are likely to do and the values or beliefs underlying these behaviours. The focus of culture learning in SLA, in this sense, is to “pay particular attention to social, cultural, and interactional contexts” in which the language is used (Duff, 2008b, p. xiii, quoted in Wang, 2010). Cultures are shared meanings that make collective sense of experiences, and therefore, the use of symbols is an element of meaning-making. Language is also a component of culture, which is seen as the symbolic medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated and negotiated (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002). Language

and culture are inextricably interrelated, acquired in the same process, as well as providing support for the development of the other (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Watson-Gegeo, 2004). Research studies on developing Chinese pragmatics during ICS in China often fall into this category of culture learning (e.g., Diao, 2016; Jin, 2015). Although this paradigm became very strong in the 1980s, it is nevertheless criticised because it still places the learner within his/her own cultural frame and presents culture as relatively homogeneous, logical, coherent and uniform (Bayart, 2005).

The ecological perspective provides an alternative view on culture that sees culture as “practices” (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) in plural form. It problematises the notion of bounded speech communities and the “one language - one culture assumption” (Blommaert, 2005, p.216) and emphasises what Kramsch (2008) termed “unfinalisability”. Culture learning in this sense concerns the understanding of the deterritorialised nature of language and culture. Understanding culture as “practices” highlights multiple possibilities, which are also called “toolkits” by Swidler (1986) as “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problem.” (p.273) In other words, an individual has multiple cultures which give him/her access to more possible practices than is required as the pre-defined norm of a particular group. Therefore, the central focus of culture learning involves more than just developing knowledge of another place and its people. One of the goals of culture learning is to transform into “new” intercultural speakers “who feel comfortable among people who have cultural baggage different to their own, who are capable of accepting the difference and do not feel threatened by it, able to objectify their own beliefs, to negotiate, to make themselves understood and to make the effort to understand others” (Antonio & Ángela M^a Larrea, 2015, p.7).

It is recognised that there will be some place for cultural facts in a language curriculum; the traditional models of teaching and learning cultural knowledge are not total fallacies. Rather, the problem lies in their narrowed scope. A distinction is made by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) between “cultural orientation” and “intercultural orientation” to the learning of culture in SLA, with the former being learning the target culture in its own right and the latter being involved in the confrontations of multiple possible interpretations – a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 2004, cited in Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p.44) and the problematisation of one’s own understanding, which, in turn, leads to further learning. “Cultural orientation” entails both the cognitive and social view of culture, using both descriptive and communicative approaches to culture learning. “Cultural orientation” is widely adopted in Chinese ICS programs. An example can be found in Hu (2014) in which

the author designed the culture curriculum for international students in China as two sections: a knowledge-based and a communication-based culture class. Such a curriculum is very useful for students' cultural awareness and understanding. However, "intercultural orientation" should be given more weight to form a more solid approach to culture in language education.

This overarching view of culture learning echoes Moran (2001)'s experiential culture learning model, which captures both "cultural learning" and "intercultural learning". Moran points out that if we define culture from the perspective of learning, cultural experience consists of four interconnected learning interactions – cultural participation (participating in cultural experiences), cultural description (describing what the culture is like), cultural interpretation (developing intercultural perspectives) and cultural response (developing intercultural identities). The latter two areas in the model correspond to the "intercultural orientation" to culture learning. Although these two areas have occasionally been investigated in the literature on ICS in China (Cui, 2013; Lumkes et al., 2012; Tian & Lowe, 2014) in terms of cultural awareness and transforming into intercultural persons, they only report the outcome of the ICS without scrutinising in detail the culture learning processes that lead to the results or enquiring if there is anything missing. Using Moran's process-oriented model will shed more light on how cultural interpretation and response form an integral part of the holistic culture learning process.

Inspired by the broadened interpretation of culture from an ecological perspective and Moran's experiential culture learning model, culture learning in this thesis will be explored regarding both "cultural" and "intercultural" orientations, with a focus on the latter.

2.3.4 Identity and learner agency

This section considers identity not only as a learning product but also as a powerfully influential factor in the learning process. Identity has many facets, and as observed by Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, and Brown (2012), at least five facets are salient in the SLA literature: people's inner sense of who they are; the identities they project to others; the identities that are recognised or ascribed to them by others; imagined identities, and socially-validated identity categories. This section does not aim to give a detailed account of each of these facets of identity, but to review how the nature of identity is defined from different perspectives and how it will be interpreted in this study. The different interpretations of identity from cognitive, social and ecological perspectives are summarised in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Interpreting identity from different perspectives

	Cognitive orientation	Social orientation	Ecological orientation
Interpreting identity	Learner identity is often viewed as static	Learner identity is dynamic and multiple	Identity is multidimensional and multiscale, based on different spatial and temporal scales; Learner has the agency to select from a repertoire of different subject positions

Within cognitive SLA, learner identity is often viewed as static (e.g., the “native” and “non-native speaker” dichotomy) (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). In the study abroad literature, many studies follow this perspective that identity is fixed and represented by institutionalised categories. Kinginger (2013)’s review of the literature on language learning in the study abroad context summarises several demographic identity categories frequently investigated by researchers, such as national affiliation, language inheritance, age, gender, and ethnic background. However, inconsistent results regarding the power of these identity categories on language learning question the reliability of looking at each category as a generalised whole. For example, in the study abroad in China literature, continental background (Lawani, Gai, & Titilayo, 2012) is found to be insignificantly related to either language learning or cultural adaptation based on quantitative correlation, whereas other researchers believe that Western students perform better in language acquisition than Asian students (Baohua Yu & Watkins, 2008). Seeing learner identity as static falls short in explaining individual differences and contradictory results.

Sociocultural oriented research often adopts a post-modern view on identity, acknowledging that learner identity is dynamic, and the learner can have multiple identities that provide different opportunities for language learning (Norton, 2000). Instead of seeing identity as demographic variables that may predict the learning experience, these studies explore individual trajectories, noting that identity arises in the embodied process of learning through social interaction (Jing–Schmidt, Chen, & Zhang, 2016). The dynamic feature of identity can be reflected in the learner’s language use. For example, Zhu (2010) focusing on the use of address terms, argues that in the course of intercultural language socialisation, participants make aspects of their multiple and shifting identities relevant and undergo a process of developing new social and cultural identities. Diao (2017) focusing on three American students with histories of using non-standard Mandarin, uncovers how these students and their Chinese hosts use or reject one stereotypical nonstandard Mandarin feature, the retroflex/dental merger, for identification purposes. Students responded to the notion of

standard in divergent ways, highlighting study abroad as a potential space for bi/multilingual learners to (re)interpret and (re)negotiate accent and identity. This line of research uncovers the reciprocal relationship between social interaction, language use and identity.

The ecological perspective on identity overlaps with the sociocultural view to a great extent, but gives more emphasis to the multidimensional and multiscale nature of identity as subject positioning which is based on different spatial and temporal scales. Learners are understood as “whole persons with heads, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities” (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251). Identity performance is not just articulating one identity, but mobilising a whole repertoire of identity features in the course of communication (Blommaert, 2005, p.232). Learners’ demographic identity categories are not totally irrelevant as some identity features might be framed by the sense-making frameworks or discourse that individuals buy into or use without questioning (Ehrlich, 2008): the forces of global, national, social and individual realities not only unite people through global interactions, but also bring about “an increase in ethnic, racial, religious, and national consciousness” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 158) which divide people at the same time. However, learners are not merely passive receivers of ideas or concepts or confined by certain boundaries but assert agency through complex identity work.

Individuals do not passively receive affordance in the environment for learning; they invite or inhibit responses from the environment, choose their ways in interaction with surroundings, seek out increasingly complex activities, and have personal views on agency related to their environment themselves. This agency is conceptualised as “developmentally instigative characteristics” proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1993) which is relevant to the “bioecology” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) in a learner’s microsystem. This is also relevant to the ICS context, as Jessup-Anger and Aragonés (2013) argue that during a cohort-based, short-term study abroad, many students’ microsystems are identical, including their learning environment, living arrangements, and travel experiences. However, it is found that students bring their backgrounds, expectations, and “developmentally instigative characteristics” to the microsystem, shaping individualised experiences. Because of this agency to select from a repertoire of different positions, intercultural speakers’ thoughts, ideas and attempts at meaning-making become a central resource for mediation (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013).

Considering the key focus of the ecological perspective on the multidimensional and multiscale nature of identity as subject positioning, the definition of identity by Block (2007) is adopted in the current study:

Identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of past, present, and future. Individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their sociohistories as life goes on. The entire process is conflictive as opposed to harmonious, and individuals often feel ambivalent. (p. 27)

The understanding of identity as subject positions at the crossroads of past, present and future echoes the temporal dimension of an environment for human learning (i.e., *chronosystem* in Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Informed by this temporal dimension, this study will examine the influence of identity on students' learning process in different timescales: as invoked from their pre-sojourn sociohistories, as emerged in interaction during the sojourn, and as lasting effects post the sojourn.

2.4 Gaps in the literature

The above sections reviewed the literature regarding the four key constructs of ICS, namely, interaction, language learning, culture learning, and identity. As reviewed, the current literature suffers from two limitations.

First, most literature on study abroad and study abroad in China takes either a cognitive or social SLA orientation, however, these orientations have the pitfall of narrowed scopes on the understanding of the success/goal and the key constructs of ICS. The cognitive perspective puts a heavy emphasis on the mental process without sufficient attention to the sociocultural context for learning. The social perspective sheds more light on the sociocultural context, but it concentrates on the learning of another language/culture in its own right. Insufficient attention has been given to the variability of language and culture. The ecological perspective is useful to address the complexity of the ICS environment and enrich our interpretation of the learning processes during ICS in China.

Second, although the ecological perspective has been adopted in many empirical studies in bilingual/multilingual settings such as immigration contexts (Kramsch, 2008), second language classrooms (Bannink, 2002; Lantolf & Genung, 2002; van Dam, 2002), multicultural workplaces (Sarangi & Roberts, 2002), Chinese e-learning contexts (An, 2014, Tong & Tsung, 2018) and minority education in China (Tsung & Cruickshank, 2009), it has not yet been applied to examine short-term ICSs. Considering that the affordances in the

short-term ICS context are very different from those in other settings, ecologically oriented research carried out in other contexts might not be fully applicable.

The application of the ecological perspective in this thesis will bridge the link between the practical field of study abroad and the theoretical field of ecological perspective.

The next section will model the analytical framework of the current study that helps to structure this thesis.

2.5 Modelling the analytical framework of the current study

The understanding of interaction, language, culture, and identity from an ecological perspective as explicated above has informed the modelling of the analytical framework of the current study (Figure 2.3). In the ecology of an in-country study program, the key constructs of interaction, language learning, culture learning and identity works are not in isolation – they are extricably interrelated as demonstrated in Figure 2.3. The following explains the relationships between these constructs.

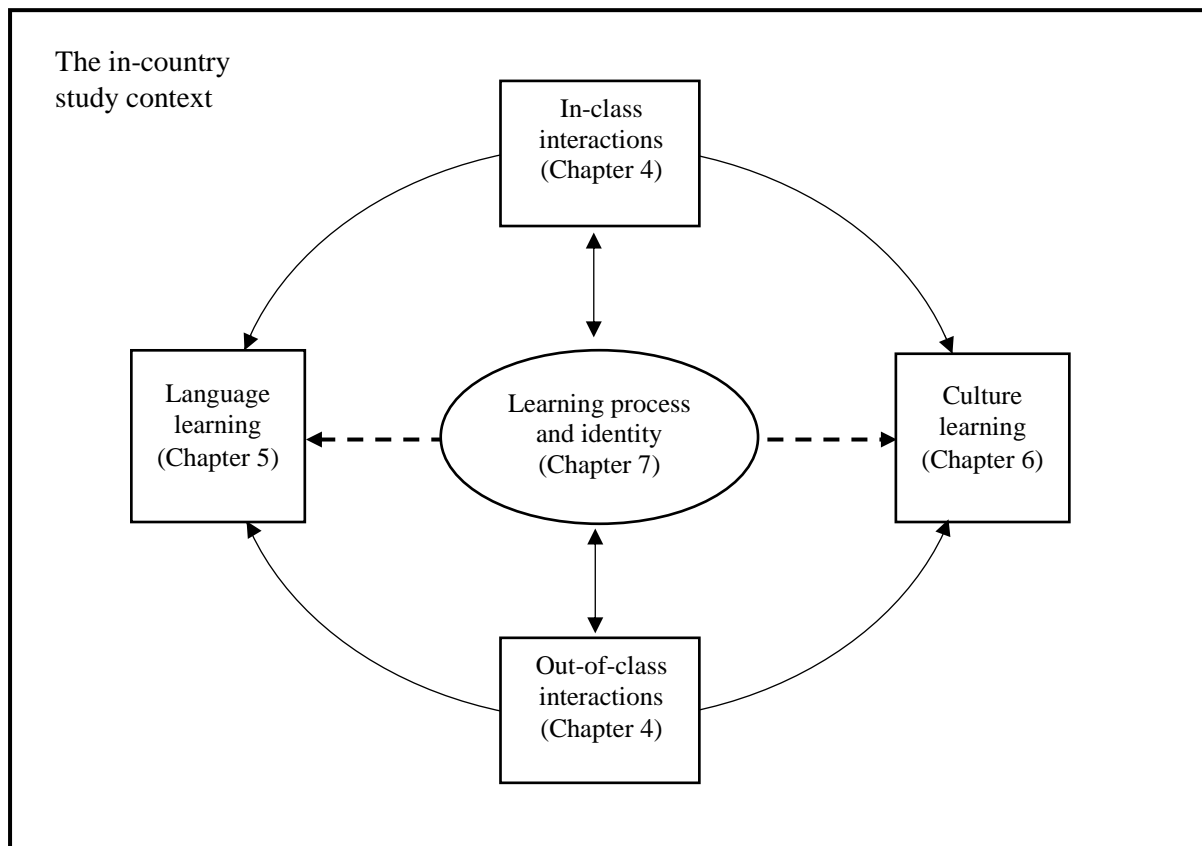


Figure 2.3 Modelling the analytical framework of the current study

Interactions are the point of departure of my analysis and discussion of students' in-country study experience (Chapter 5). At the practical level, the ICS program was structured as consisting of an in-class component and out-of-class component, so these two components will be considered respectively. This is followed by looking at how these interactions provide affordances for language learning (Chapter 6) and culture learning (Chapter 7). The arrows directing from interactions to language/culture learning represent the process by which learning takes place firstly on a social, interpersonal plane and then students make the learning their own through internalisation on an individual, intrapersonal plane (Vygotsky, 1978). Identity plays a core mediating role in the holistic learning process, therefore is situated at the heart of the analytical framework (Chapter 8). The bi-directional arrows between identity and in-class/out-of-class interactions demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between social interaction and identity.

Notably, the dashed bi-directional arrow connecting language learning, identity and culture learning illustrates that the border lines among these three processes are not clear-cut. They all actually happen during that same process when a learner is interacting with the in-country environment. The dashed line also blurs the boundary between the in-class and out-of-class settings. The in-country study context is roughly divided into the more formal setting of the classroom and the less formal setting outside of class. This has been done to make the data collection procedure more feasible. Nevertheless, it does not indicate ignoring the possible connection between in-class and out-of-class settings, as well as the multi-dimensional feature of the out-of-class setting itself.

2.6 Detailed sub-questions of each research question

Based on the interpretation of the four key concepts of ICS as mentioned above, each chapter will tackle some detailed sub-questions. The following (Table 2.5) outlines all the sub-questions of each research question to be answered in the findings chapters.

Table 2.5: Detailed sub-questions of each research question

Research question	Sub-questions
Chapter 4: Q1: To what extent did the ICS facilitate interaction in different settings?	Q1-1. Did the ICS promote in-class interaction with teachers and peers? Q1-2. Did the ICS promote out-of-class interaction in different communities (including online communities)? Q1-3. What are the limitations of the ICS in facilitating interaction during the program? Q1-4. How can the ICS be maximised for interaction opportunities?
Chapter 5: Q2: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to <i>language learning</i> ?	Q2-1. Did the ICS facilitate students' amount of and time on the use of the Chinese language? Q2-2. Did the ICS facilitate students' use of the Chinese language in authentic contexts? Q2-3. How did students interpret their experience of language use in authentic contexts? Q2-4. How can the ICS be maximised for using the language in authentic contexts?
Chapter 6: Q3: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to <i>culture learning</i> ?	Q3-1. Did the ICS facilitate students' cultural learning – learning about Chinese culture through participation and description? Q3-2. Did ICS facilitate students' intercultural learning – cultural interpretation and cultural response? Q3-3. What are the limitations of the ICS in facilitating culture learning during the program? Q3-4. How can the ICS be maximised for culture learning?
Chapter 7: Q4: What was the role of <i>identity</i> in participants' learning process in the ICS?	Q4-1. What were the influences of demographic identity categories on students' ICS experience? Q4-2. What were the influences of students' subject-positioning on their ICS experience? Q4-3. What were the influences of re-entry learner identity on post-program learning experience? Q4-4. How can identities be dealt with in multiple timescales?

2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature and introduced the theoretical framework of this study - an ecological perspective to analyse students' interactions, language learning, culture learning, and identity in the short-term in-country study program. Adopting the ecological perspective on SLA locates the current research at the centre of academic debates in the field

and represents some of the most innovative initiatives in language education. The ecological perspective redefines the ultimate success of language education as achieving social and individual equilibrium. Interpreting the key constructs of language learning during study abroad from an ecological perspective means that we need to adopt broader views on interaction, language, culture, and identity.

The next chapter moves on to introduce the methodology of the thesis and illustrate in detail how data were collected and analysed to answer the research questions and sub-questions as listed above.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has modelled the analytical framework of this study. This framework is created to guide the collection, sorting, and interpretation of the data and information about the topic that has to be analysed - language and culture learning processes and identity during a Chinese in-country study program. Based on the framework, this chapter will present the research design and detailed research methods of this study.

This chapter will begin with an explanation of the paradigm underlying the macro methodological design of this study (Section 3.2). As will be shown, this study follows an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm and adopts a mixed-method research design. Section 3.3 explicates two critical issues regarding the mixed-method research: timing and weighting. Section 3.4 offers a detailed description of the research site, data sources, data collection and analysis methods. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 will introduce the data collection and analysis methods of this study. Section 3.7 will give a summary of all the data sources and analysis methods in a table. Finally, Sections 3.8 and 3.9 will reflect on the researcher's role and ethical considerations. Section 3.10 will summarise the key points of this chapter.

3.2 Research paradigm and the mixed-method research design

At the macro level, this research follows the interpretivist/constructivist⁴ paradigm. It is deemed as competing with the positivist paradigm. While positivist researchers generally believe that a “reality” exists and operates independently and the findings are seen as facts or truth to be discovered, research with an interpretivist/constructivist orientation regards the person as actively engaged in the construction of their own world (Burr, 2003). A research paradigm reflects the researcher's ontology, epistemology, and axiology stances and determines the research approach that “span[s] the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation” (Creswell, 2014, p.3). There is no absolutely “right” or “wrong” paradigm; nor is there a “good” or “bad” paradigm. There is,

⁴ Although interpretivist and constructivist are sometimes treated as two different paradigms in the literature (see Zhu, 2016 for example studies following these two paradigms), they can be combined into a single paradigm based on their shared position on human subjectivity and agency (e.g. Mertens, 1998; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

however, the most suitable paradigm for the research problem to be tackled. As a main target of the current research is to examine the lived experience of the participants and the hermeneutic understanding of these experiences, the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm is regarded appropriate to guide the current study.

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, along with its advocated research approaches, is in alignment with the ecological perspective of this study. The proponents of the ecological perspective in SLA generally take a phenomenological stance when understanding the world (Kramsch, 2002). Following Schutz's notion of "relevance", researchers within an ecological framework support that "there is no knowledge without a knower, and what makes a difference is the relevance of the phenomena for the potential knower" (Kramsch, 2002, p.13). That is to say, the same object (e.g., a language pedagogy) might be relevant to a person (e.g., a language learner) in different or even conflictual ways, depending on the degree to which it resonates with his/her thoughts, beliefs, or motivations (e.g., reasons and strategies for learning the language). Therefore, the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm and research approaches are compatible with the ecological framework of the study.

In the tradition of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, research approaches are usually described as qualitative, hermeneutical and dialectical (Mertens, 2010). However, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods is also possible – "[q]uantitative data may be utilised in a way, which supports or expands upon qualitative data and effectively deepens the description." (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006: p.196) It may in fact be possible for all paradigms to employ mixed methods rather than being restricted to any one method, to avoid potential diminishing and unnecessary limitation of the depth and richness of a research project (ibid.). The integration of both the qualitative and quantitative methods echoes what Morse (1991) describes as *methodological triangulation*, which refers to the use of at least two methods to investigate the same research question, and it is used to ensure the most comprehensive approach when a single method is inadequate. Consequently, this study primarily draws on qualitative research methods, while combining quantitative data for the sake of triangulation.

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2010) argue that a good mixed-method researcher articulates the reasons for choosing to use mixed methods, provides the rationale for combining methods, and explains how doing so enhances the research. Now I turn to justify my choice of using mixed methods from three aspects: it is a response to the methodological debates in the research field of study abroad (SA); it helps to address the research questions with richer

evidence; and it increases the credibility of a study such as this which only investigates one institution.

The first reason why I adopted the mixed-method design is that the mixed-method research design is a response to current methodological debates in the research field of SA. Research relying on quantitative methods has received criticism. Some researchers have pointed out that the process of language learning and socialisation is cooperative, reciprocal, and very complex; even in the same settings, different individuals will have different experiences (J. Zuengler & Cole, 2005). Particularly in SA, “a qualitative method is most appropriate for a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of SA experiences” (Wang, 2010, p.60). However, relying on qualitative data solely also has constraints, for example, the selection of a small number of participants. Matsumura (2000) suggests it would be ideal to conduct research using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to “produce findings that could be cross-validated and corroborated” (p.110). It can be seen that a combination of qualitative and quantitative research is called for in the research field of SA.

The second reason why I adopted the mixed-method design is because it helped to address the research questions with richer evidence. The mixed-method design is useful when the research purpose is to both explore and explain, for it draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to more fully address the complexity of the research questions (Creswell, 2009; Morgan, 1998). Considering the research objectives in this study, this research was motivated by both its interests in understanding the complex phenomenon of SLA in SA as well as its practical goal of program advancement. That is to say, while it was crucial to conduct a qualitative inquiry to scrutinise students’ learning processes through narratives or close observations, it was at the same time necessary to generate an overall picture of the effectiveness of the program through quantitative statistics.

The third reason is pertinent to the research site of this research. Only one in-country study program was investigated and the participant sample was comparatively small. The generalisability of the findings can be a challenge. Silverman (2014) notes that in qualitative research, generalisation is based upon identifying recurring social processes rather than sampling individuals. Although Silverman’s statement has convincingly legitimised the validity of studies with small sampling, one may still be concerned about the researcher’s “cherry-picking” of some of the data while neglecting others. Using quantitative or numeral data can help to address this issue. Incorporating numbers in qualitative research contributes to what Maxwell (2010) called *internal generalisability* of qualitative research findings:

[Internal generalisability] refers not to the generalisability of conclusions to other settings (what qualitative researchers typically call transferability) but to generalisability within the setting or collection of individuals studied, establishing that the themes or findings identified are in fact characteristic of this setting or set of individuals as a whole. Internal generalisability is clearly a key issue for qualitative case studies and interview studies. (Maxwell, 2010: p.478)

This study will use survey to collect numeric data from the full sample of participants to validate the internal generalisability of data derived from the smaller number of participants in the qualitative interviews and data obtained through observation. Using multiple data will increase the reliability and trustworthiness of a qualitative study based on small samples.

This section has introduced the research paradigm underpinning this study and justified the adoption of a mixed-method research design. The next section will consider two major issues regarding the implementation of multiple methods, namely, timing and weighting.

3.3 Implementing mixed methods: timing and weighting

Mixed-method studies can be structured in various ways. Some distinctions can be made in regards to the timing of data collection and the weighting/superiority given to certain methods. Drawing on these typologies, the current study falls into the category of **sequential design** with **qualitative dominance**. The following will discuss each of these two features in turn.

The sequential design of this study means that the timing of using different data collection methods is not completely concurrent. The distinction between *sequential design* and *concurrent design* is clarified in Maxwell (2010): while some mixed-method designs start as qualitative and add quantitative or vice versa in a sequential manner, others are described as balanced, concurrent, or simultaneous. This classification runs parallel with Field and Morse (1985)'s two types of triangulation. *Simultaneous triangulation* is the use of quantitative and qualitative methods at the same time and there is no intersection between the two datasets during data collection. *Sequential triangulation*, on the other hand, is used when the outcomes of one method can impact on the planning of the next method. In the current study, quantitative and qualitative data were basically collected and analysed in a sequential

manner, although the process was not absolutely linear. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the timing and sequence of the research procedures.

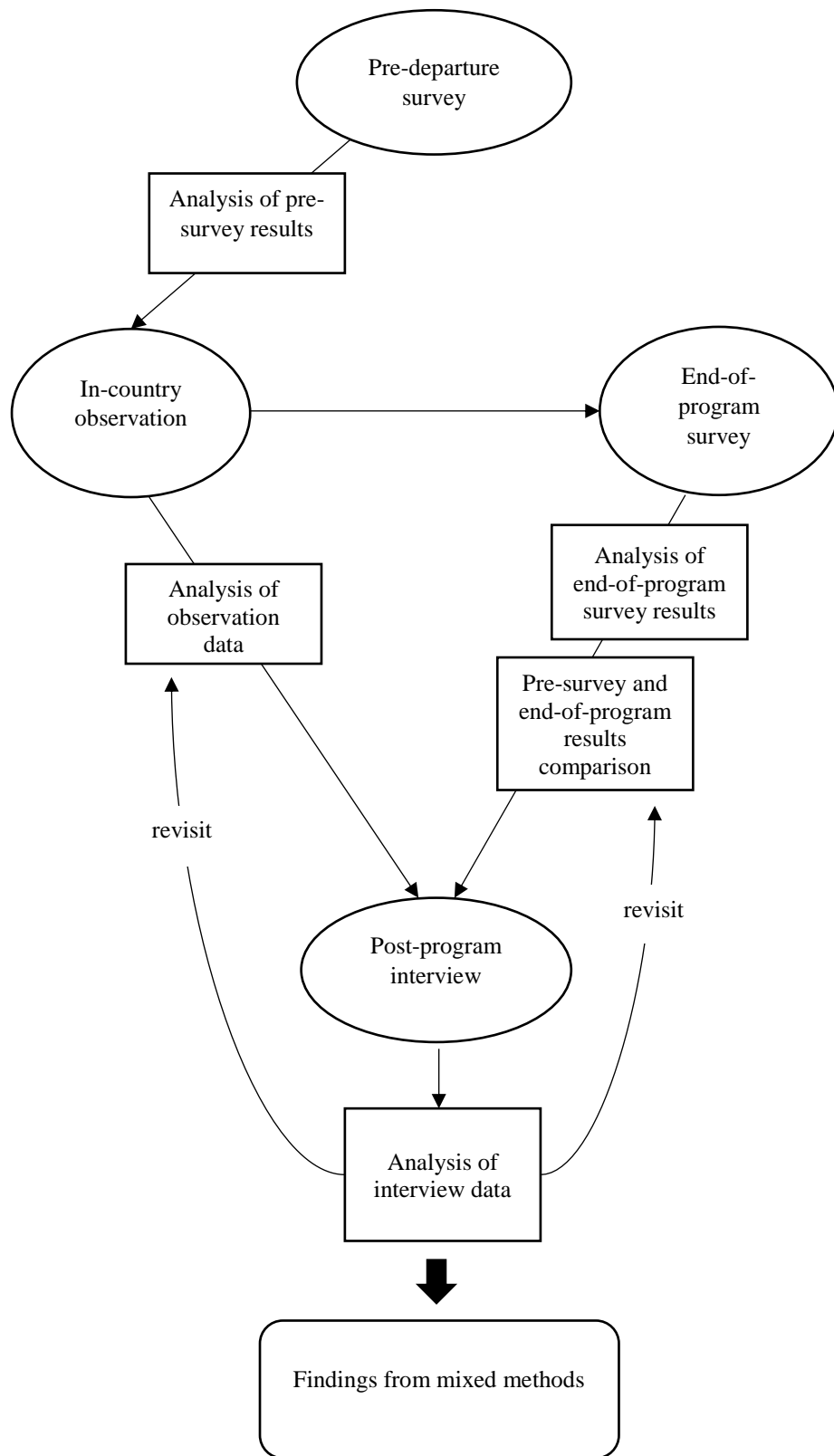


Figure 3.1: Timing and sequence of research procedures

In Figure 3.1, ovals represent data collection procedures and squares represent data analysis procedures. At the outset of this research, a pre-departure survey was designed to collect quantitative data and qualitative answers to open-ended questions. The analysis of these initial data helped the researcher to identify what to focus on during in-country observations. At the end of the program, a second survey was conducted to collect data which can be used to make comparison with those collected in the pre-departure survey. Quantitative data in the two surveys and qualitative data from surveys and observations inspired the refinement of the post-program interview questions. The last procedure – post-program interview – uncovered more qualitative evidence that either supported or competed with the themes identified in previous procedures. I went back and forth between data collected at different stages to look for similarities and discrepancies. The overall findings of the research project were drawn from the data collected through these multiple methods. In general, the quantitative data were useful to depict a big picture of the whole cohort, while the qualitative data attempted to illustrate recurring patterns and account for individual differences and learning trajectories.

Another important issue regarding the mixed-method design is the weight of each method. In a mixed-method study, one method is often more dominant or is weighted more heavily than the other. Padgett (2008, p.223) suggests some visual aid to illustrate these dynamics and research options with those in capital letters being more dominant. For example, the design of the current study can be put as a “quan-QUAL” type of research, as it started from quantitative research (a survey) and moved later on to qualitative research (observation and interview). The qualitative components were prioritised and weighted more heavily in data analysis, so that this study could still align itself to the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm.

Now that it has been made clear why this study used a mixed-method research design and how I implemented different methods, the following sections will take a closer look at the research case of this study – the site, program, and participants, as well as the detailed designs of methods for data collection and analysis.

3.4 Data collection: Research site and program participants

This section introduces the in-country study (ICS) program under investigation and the participants of this program. The ICS program investigated was held at the end of the year

2015 in Beijing, China. The participants were from Sydney, Australia. Hereinafter, the target program will be named the Sydney-Beijing Program for short.

The program aimed to provide students with opportunities to improve language skills in the Chinese-speaking environment, as well as to enrich their knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and society at first hand. One of the major purposes of the program was to help students get prepared for a more advanced course level of Chinese in the home institution upon returning. To give a thick description of the program, Table 3.1 documents the program profile by applying an adapted version of Engle and Engle (2003)'s "defining elements" which classify levels of study abroad programs.

Table 3.1: The Sydney-Beijing Program profile

The Sydney-Beijing Program profile	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and duration 	4 weeks (December, 2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants 	Altogether 40 students were enrolled in the program. Post-beginner's class had 14 students, intermediate class had 13 students, advanced class had 13 students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility 	Students (except for Chinese native speakers) who had taken Chinese Units of Study at USYD for at least one year were eligible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry target language competence 	There were different levels of language competence. In the destination university, the students were divided into three classes: post-beginner's class (equivalent to low-intermediate level), intermediate class, and advanced class based on their Units of Study in the home institution. The participants had taken at least one-year Chinese course at the home university. As instructed learners, they had typically undertaken a systematic study of Chinese grammar and regularly practised speech and writing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-departure preparation 	An information session was arranged to inform students about the major structure of the program. There were two other meetings after that to help participants complete necessary paperwork and organise their trips in China. Students could find program coordinators from both home and destination institutions for assistance and consultation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language used in coursework 	The target language – Chinese. In the post-beginner's class, English was occasionally used to explain things to students when it was too difficult to use Chinese.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic work context 	

<p>The students were taught by destination institution staff, along with other peers from the home institution. The textbooks used in class were published by the destination institution targeting at intensive Chinese language programs. Formal language instructions ran daily Monday through Friday. The students were divided into three classes of different levels: post-beginner's, intermediate, advanced. Each class had three teachers focusing on different topics: one for practice, one for oral, and one for grammar.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing
<p>Participants were housed in single or shared rooms in the international student sector in a university apartment, equipped with a canteen, convenience store, gym, and café, open to both international and domestic students. The apartment was located two stops away from the main campus. School buses ran in the morning, and students needed to take public transport to return to the apartment after class.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for out-of-class language learning
<p>Each student was paired with a language partner who was a student from the destination institution. The language partners were volunteers selected by the program organisers. After the initial meeting at the opening ceremony of the program, participants and partners arranged their meetings and activities at their leisure later on during the program.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for cultural interaction
<p>Three cultural excursions were organised on weekends. The destinations were the Great Wall, National Museum, and 798 Contemporary Arts District. Various cultural experiences were available on campus, ranging from movie nights to a speech competition. Although most activities were provided for local students or longer-term international students, program participants received a booklet introducing these opportunities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided reflection
<p>No formal guided reflection was organised at the end of or after the program. However, the students were reminded that the survey and interview would be beneficial for their reflection on the learning experience when recruiting participants for this study.</p>

3.5 Data collection methods and participants recruited in this study

This section presents methods used for data collection. For quantitative methods, this study adopted a pre-departure survey (Survey 1, see Appendix A) and an end-of-program survey (Survey 2, see Appendix B) to collect data. Qualitative methods include on-site observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Different collection methods adopted to address the questions in each findings chapter are summarised in Figure 3.2. In the following I will introduce the design of these methods in detail.

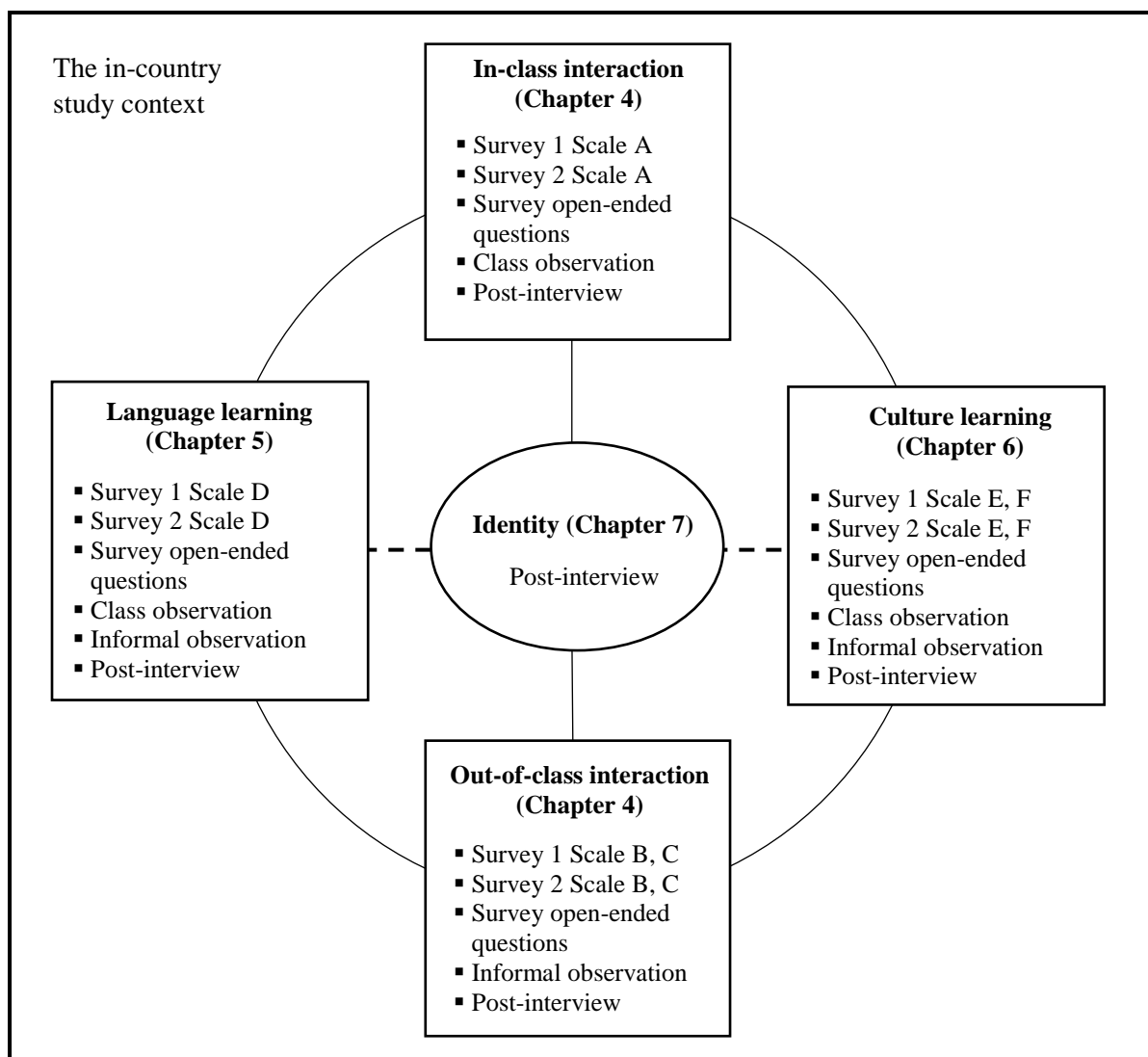


Figure 3.2: Data collection methods for each chapter

The figure illustrates that different research methods are useful for answering different research questions in this study. In the survey, several sections were designed to investigate issues in each chapter respectively. The on-site observation was carried out in two forms – classroom observation and informal out-of-class observation. The former was used to observe classroom interaction whereas the latter was used to observe out-of-class interaction. Both forms of observation are useful to investigate language learning and culture learning through interaction. Post-interview was used to tackle all the problems in all the chapters. Particularly, the issues related to identity were only examined post-interview because, as reviewed in the previous chapter, identity is understood as a dynamic construct regarding subjective positioning. Therefore, narratives collected by interviews are more appropriate to collect data to explore individual differences and contradictory results.

3.5.1 Pre-departure and end-of-program surveys

The program participants were asked to do a survey before they went to China (Survey 1, see Appendix A), and another survey on the last day of the program (Survey 2, see Appendix B). The surveys were anonymous; however, the students were asked to generate a code name themselves and write it on the top of the pre-departure survey. They were required to write the same code name in the end-of-program survey. This was to ensure that the results gained from both surveys can be matched and compared. The overall purpose of the surveys was to examine the frequencies of interaction and learning activities that students perceived to have experienced during the sojourn, and students' self-perceived gains in language and culture aspects. Comparing results in Survey 1 and Survey 2 will answer the question of whether learning opportunities increased during the program and whether students perceived their abilities improved.

The structures and contents of the two surveys were similar with just a few variations: Survey 1 and Survey 2 included the same set of Likert scales, while the open-ended questions were slightly different, targeting at home and host country respectively. Both surveys consist of five parts. *Part One* provides a profile of the participants: their demographic features such as age, sex and degree; academic backgrounds; language backgrounds; motivation of learning Chinese and previous experiences in China, etc. *Part Two* is about students' interaction and language learning processes - how frequently students participated in certain language interactions and language use activities. *Part Three* looks into students' culture learning. In Part Two and Part Three, 7 Likert scales (Scale A - F) were designed to investigate student learning processes and perceived outcomes. *Part Four* consists of open-ended questions collecting more details about students' learning processes. *Part Five* looks into students' opinions and perceptions related to the program design and implementation.

The designs of Likert scales and the descriptions of the scale items were based on the literature related to SLA processes. Table 3.2 documents the aims and designs of the 7 Likert scales in the surveys.

Table 3.2: The aims and designs of the Likert scales in the surveys

Scale	Research questions to be answered	Aim of investigation	Design of the scale
Scale A	Q1	Frequencies of classroom interaction and language use	Three areas of interaction: teacher-student; student-student; attentive listening (intrapersonal interaction) (Ohta, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2001; Ohta & Nakaone, 2004). Ohta's concepts were chosen because they explicitly adopt the ecological view that embraces both cognitive and social processes of language learning.
Scale B	Q1	Frequencies of out-of-class interpersonal interaction and language use	Based on the research on social networks (Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Wiklund, 2002) during study abroad. Two areas of interaction: with native speakers (Badstübner & Ecke, 2009; Castañeda & Zirger, 2011) and with peers (Magnan & Back, 2007).
Scale C	Q1	Frequencies of technology-mediated interaction	Two types of technology: Traditional media such as television, and new technology empowered by the Internet.
Scale D	Q2	Levels of self-perceived Chinese language abilities	Based on the four skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing. Categorized into abilities in formal class tasks and authentic tasks out-of-class.
Scale E	Q3	Frequencies of culture learning	Based on the experiential culture learning model (Moran, 2002) that include: cultural participation, cultural description, cultural interpretation, and cultural response. Moran's concepts were chosen because they entail both “cultural learning” and “intercultural learning”.
Scale F	Q3	Levels of self-perceived culture learning outcomes	Based on the expected learning outcomes of the experiential culture learning model (Moran, 2002) that include: knowing what (the culture is like), knowing how (to behave in the culture), knowing why (culture works like that), and knowing oneself (as a cultural being). This model also overlaps with Byram's (1997) intercultural competence model entailing the dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

From the column “aim of investigation” in the table, it can be seen that, following the ecological framework, the learning processes are investigated in various forms of interactions, which are multi-dimensional and multi-layered. The learning outcomes are based on students' self-perceived abilities in diverse areas, since these are more relevant to

“subjective and relational criteria” (Kramsch, 2002, p. 24, see also Section 2.2) than standardised tests. It should be acknowledged that self-report data are often questioned in the literature about their validity and reliability (e.g., X. Shi, 2006; Shiri, 2015). However, since whether the students could gain higher marks in the language tests is not the major focus of the study, self-report data can still provide useful insights from students’ own perspectives.

The scales in the surveys were tested on validity and reliability before being handed out. Tests on the scales’ validity, face validity and content validity (Litwin, 1995) were used. Construct validity was not adopted because it requires years of evaluation and experiment (ibid.) which was not practical for the current study. The researcher consulted supervisors and other experts in the field of SLA and SA who helped measure the appropriateness of the items in the instruments. Five students not participating in the program were asked to do the survey as a pilot study.⁵ Students highlighted sentences or statements with grammar mistakes, ambiguous meanings, or terminologies they did not understand. This procedure ensured that the questionnaires were actually measuring what this study aimed to investigate.

To test the reliability of the scores gathered from the sample in the pilot study, test-retest reliability was used. The five students in the pilot study were asked to do the survey a second time a week after their first attempt. Results showed that the scores collected by the scales were reliable ($r > 0.7$). Internal consistency reliability was not conducted because the scales were not aiming to investigate different aspects of a same concept or psychological construct; rather, they aimed to see how students behaved in diverse settings. As will be explained later, items in the scales will be analysed one by one. The score of each item will be treated individually, without being summed up with the scores of other items in the same dimension. Such an approach is applicable when the items in a scale are investigating facts and status, or when the summing up of scores in a dimension cannot represent the overall score of that dimension (Wu, 2010).

A sample of 31 participants was recruited in the survey (see Appendix C for the demographic features of recruited participants). All 40 students in the program were invited to complete the surveys, but because their participation was voluntary-based, it was out of the researcher’s control how many students volunteered. Survey 1 questionnaires were collected a week before departure. Survey 2 questionnaires were collected on the last day of the program. Thirty-five questionnaires for Survey 1 were collected, accounting for 88% of the

⁵ Although these students did not participate in the Sydney-Beijing Program, they were enrolled in Chinese courses at the home university and were intended participants in another ICS program in China. Therefore, their learning experiences were comparable to the program participants in this study.

population. Thirty-three questionnaires for Survey 2 were collected, constituting 83% of the population. Among all collected questionnaires, 31 pairs of Survey 1 and Survey 2 could be matched according to the code names students put on them, which made up for 78% of the population. Since the main purpose of the survey was to compare the learning experience in the home and the host country, only these 31 pairs of questionnaires were used for the final data analysis (78% of the population, Confidence Level = 95%, Confidence Interval = 8.46).

It would be ideal to encourage more students to participate in the survey so as to reduce the Confidence Interval, however, due to realistic reasons (i.e., the anonymity and voluntary basis of the survey), the researcher was unable to identify who participated or not. Also, the descriptions in the scale items might not capture nuanced details. Considering these methodological limitations of a survey method, the interpretation of the quantitative data should be made with caution without over generalisation. Evidence from the qualitative data will be used to complement quantitative results. Moreover, it should be emphasised that this study ultimately draws more heavily on its qualitative component following the “quan-QUAL” research design as mentioned (see Section 3.3). The following section introduces the qualitative components of the study.

3.5.2 In-country observation

Another research method for data collection in this study was the in-country observation, including in-class non-participant observation and out-of-class participant observation. Participant observation refers to the researcher’s presence in and interaction with a site during the time that an activity or event is occurring (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012). The classroom observation in this study was non-participant observation because I did not participate in any class activity but just observed interactions happening in the classroom. The out-of-class observation was participant observation because I joined the students and participated in different types of activities organised by the program and by students themselves. During the month, I lived in the same international apartment as program participants, had meals with some of the students in the school cafeteria or local restaurants, audited Chinese classes across three levels regularly, and participated in all program-organised cultural excursions and was part of student-organised gatherings.

As Silverman (2014) notes, it is important for the observer to narrow down the research problems to be observed so as to prevent sloppy and unfocused research. Table 3.3 summarises the focus of my observation targeting each research question.

Table 3.3: Focus of observation for each research question

Research question	Focus of observation
Chapter 4: Q1: To what extent did the ICS facilitate interaction in different settings?	Cases in which the students took proactive moves to interact; Cases in which the affordances in the environment invited students' interaction with different people and resources.
Chapter 5: Q2: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to <i>language learning</i> ?	Cases in which students actively used the Chinese language; Cases in which language use in authentic context was prominent.
Chapter 6: Q3: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to <i>culture learning</i> ?	Cases in which students participated in culture learning activities; Cases in which students' interaction and language use reflected embedded cultural meaning.

For the classroom observation, classroom interactions were audio-recorded with the consent of program participants and the staff at the target institution. An audio recorder was put beside the seat where I was sitting in the room. A limitation of the recording was that casual chats among students or between students and the teacher in lower volume could not be recorded clearly. However, I tried to take down notes of anything prominent in the room as I heard or observed it. Future studies may recruit focused students and ask each of them to bring a recorder and record their conversations in all settings throughout the class. Since the three classes (post-beginner's class, intermediate class and advanced class) had lessons during the same hours and each class had three different teachers focusing on different topics, I made a detailed timetable to ensure a balance of observation hours among all levels throughout the entire sojourn period. Table 3.4 presents my observation timetable.

Table 3.4: Classroom observation timetable

	Post-beginner's class	Intermediate class	Advanced class
Monday	1 hour (revision/practice)	2 hour (grammar)	n/a
Tuesday	n/a	n/a	2 hour (grammar)
Wednesday	2 hour (oral)	n/a	1 hour (revision/practice)
Thursday	n/a	1 hour (revision/practice)	2 hour (oral)
Friday	2 hour (grammar)	2 hours (oral)	n/a

The planning of this observation timetable was affected by the actual schedule of the classes (Appendix D). Revision/practice classes were usually held in the morning for one hour. Grammar classes and oral classes were two hours in length. I decided to stay in the room for the whole two hours during grammar and oral classes so that all the activities could be

observed completely. A total of 48 hours of classes was observed and recorded.⁶ A drawback of such a plan was that not all levels of classes could be observed every day. The influence of time on learning processes could not be fully investigated (e.g., the learning atmosphere of the first class in a week might be different from the last class in a week). Ideally in future observations, three investigators can share the task and each of them could take the responsibility of observing one class throughout the program.

In the out-of-class setting, participant observation was conducted. Due to ethical considerations, out-of-class observations were not audio-recorded. The collection of data relied on my field notes and daily reflection journals. A total of 27 entries of field notes was collected during the program. Future studies may consider better ways of obtaining consent from students to audio-record their naturally occurring conversational data with other interlocutors.

When I conducted my observations in the field, I was highly aware that even if a study starts with certain design and theoretical prepositions, “the fieldwork will be most beneficial if the initial prepositions are ignored temporarily” (Yin, 2011). I tried not to categorise events and occurrences prematurely. Instead, only taking an inductive stance can “let the field reveal its reality first, in its own way”, which can then be compared with earlier prepositions on a later stage (ibid.: pp.131-132).

The observational data were triangulated by student self-report and reflection data. As Yin (2011) put it, the meaning the researcher derives from observations will be inferences of a sort which need to be triangulated by other sources of data, so that they can be corroborated or challenged. In this study, I also collected interview data from students as will be presented below.

3.5.3 Post-program interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted after the program with a sub-sample of participants. Participation in the interview was also voluntary. Participants were interviewed three months after the program when the new semester started. The researcher chose to do the interviews at that time for two reasons. First, the interview protocol could include some questions about the significant issues raised but not answered by survey and observation data. Second, it was a

⁶ Due to the heavy smog on two days during the month, the classes were cancelled on one Tuesday and one Wednesday. Also, on the last two days of the program, there were assessments during classes so that observations were not conducted.

chance to investigate the prolonged influence of this ICS program on students' Chinese learning in the new semester.

Two modes of interview were involved in this study. The students were invited to make their choices on whether to do the interview on a face-to-face basis or via asynchronous email. Eight students chose to do the face-to-face interview and nine students opted for the email interview. That is to say, altogether 17 students were recruited for the post-program interview. All the participants were asked to suggest a pseudonym for themselves that the researcher could use in writing up. Table 3.5 summarises interview participant profiles.

Table 3.5: Summary of interview participants

NO.	Student pseudonym	Gender	Age	Heritage learner ⁷	First Language	Level of class	Interview mode	Length of interview
1	Myo	Female	19	No	Korean	Intermediate	F2F	1:28:21
2	Cheng	Female	20	Yes	Cantonese	Advanced	F2F	38:40
3	Dom	Male	19	No	English	Post-beginner's	F2F	40:40
4	Ying	Female	70	Yes	Indonesian	Advanced	F2F	1:05:49
5	Rebecca	Female	18	Yes	English	Post-beginner's	F2F	58:20
6	Mary	Female	19	No	English	Post-beginner's	F2F	39:34
7	Jenny	Female	20	Yes	English	Post-beginner's	F2F	1:11:00
8	Coco	Female	18	Yes	Cantonese	Intermediate	F2F	1:00:05
9	Selena	Female	18	Yes	Cantonese	Intermediate	email	2530 words
10	Joyce	Female	22	Yes	English	Advanced	email	4207 words
11	Alice	Female	20	Yes	English	Advanced	email	3120 words
12	Hiroko	Female	62	No	Japanese	Post-beginner's	email	3015 words
13	Emily	Female	18	No	English	Post-beginner's	email	3095 words
14	Jessie	Female	18	Yes	English	Post-beginner's	email	2449 words
15	Irene	Female	18	Yes	English	Intermediate	email	3465 words
16	Linjia	Female	19	Yes	Cantonese	Advanced	email	1781 words
17	Jack	Male	19	Yes	Hakka	Intermediate	email	1864 words

Note: F2F stands for face-to-face

Face-to-face interviews were semi-structured. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent. I also took quick notes of participants' responses while doing the

⁷ The term "heritage learner" (Xu & Moloney, 2017), or "background student" (P. Chen, 2016) used in the literature, refers to those who were born or raised in Chinese speaking families in Australia or other countries. English (or another language other than Chinese) is their first language, but most also have some exposure to some form of the heritage language, be it Mandarin Chinese or other Chinese language varieties. They may have a certain ability to speak and understand Chinese, and their reading and writing skills may vary.

interview. The interviews were conducted in English. Instructional questions were designed whereas students were encouraged to form their own narratives. The design of the interview questions followed Patton (2015)'s advices in his book on qualitative methodology. Six types of questions were integrated in the interview protocol: experience/behaviour questions, opinion/value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and demographic/background questions (see Appendix E for the face-to-face interview protocol).

As a complementary option, the participants could also choose to do an asynchronous email interview. They were asked to fill in an interview questionnaire via email. The questions in the email were the same as those in the face-to-face interview protocol, but more structured and concise (see Appendix F for the email interview questionnaire). The participants were not informed of each other's answers since the questionnaires were only sent to individuals, not as a group. I sent out follow-up emails if further explanations and clarifications were needed. The legitimacy of using the email interview as a complementary method has been recognised in the literature. As Ratislavová and Ratislav (2014) state, the approach of email interview can never replace the traditional face-to-face interview, however, "it could gain a solid position as a qualitative research method thanks to its unique benefits" (p.452). Some advantages include time and money saving (e.g. there is no need for the researcher to transcribe radio recordings), longer time for thinking (consequently better data quality), as well as tension releasing (e.g. some participants may get nervous when doing face-to-face interview and generate inaccurate data).

Both face-to-face interview and email interview were useful and elicited interesting responses, however, the different nature of the data generated by these two modes should be acknowledged. Yin (2014) distinguishes between structured interviews and qualitative interviews. Structured interviews carefully script the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee since the researcher uses a formal questionnaire that lists every question to be asked. Email interview in this research can be seen as a form of structured interview, since all questions, although open-ended in type, were pre-scripted and fixed. In contrast, face-to-face interviews were more flexible, semi-structured and followed a conversational mode. The researcher doing this kind of interview may have an implicit agenda of questions and a protocol, but the questions actually posed to individual participants may differ according to the contexts.

Even though email interviews differ from the face-to-face mode in many ways, adopting the email format is not equivalent to taking a positivist stance. I would argue that when I was doing my email interviews, I also took a constructionist stance. First, in this

study, email interview questions were open-ended and were expected to elicit any possible answers from students. Second, as will be mentioned again in Section 3.6, the analysis of email interview data involved the interpretation of participants' narratives – their “written narratives” (e.g., Fagundes & Blayer, 2007) in this case. That is to say, the focus of email interviews was on how interviewees constructed narratives of their experiences through writing.

Understandably the email interview has limitations. For example, the researcher was not able to enquire into some questions of interest in depth right on the spot and some students did not reply to the emails with follow-up questions. However, since the participants in this research were all self-selected, the employment of email interview attracted and engaged more students which contributed to the richer data of the current study.

The section above introduced the data collection methods of this study. The next section will explain how the data collected were analysed.

3.6 Data analysis methods

Mixed-method research necessitates multiple approaches to analysing data. For the quantitative data, I incorporated both descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. For qualitative data, I adopted thematic content analysis, conversation analysis, and narrative analysis. These analysis methods will be explained in more detail in the following sections.

3.6.1 Descriptive and Inferential analysis of quantitative data

The quantitative data collected by Survey 1 and Survey 2 were analysed with Excel and SPSS. Both descriptive analysis and inferential analysis were used. In order to describe the general picture of students' learning experience during the program, the mean scores and percentages of items in Likert Scales were calculated using Excel. Results are presented in bar charts or tables. In addition, the Paired Sample Test was conducted in SPSS to determine whether there were significant differences between results of Survey 1 and Survey 2.

3.6.2 Thematic content analysis of qualitative data

Five sets of qualitative data were collected: (1) answers to the open-ended questions in Survey 1 and Survey 2; (2) classroom recording transcripts; (3) field notes/researcher's journal entries; (4) oral interview recording transcripts; (5) responses to email interview

questions. All these different types of qualitative data were imported into NVivo 11 Pro and coded thematically.

The thematic content analysis followed the five recursive phases of data analysis depicted in Yin (2011): compiling database, disassembling data, reassembling data, interpreting data, and concluding (p.186). It was a cyclical and iterative process integrating both *deductive* and *inductive* coding approaches. An *inductive* approach is a bottom-up coding exercise, which begins with the researchers immersing themselves in the data to identify the themes or dimensions that seem meaningful to the producing of each message (Abrahamson, 1983). In contrast, adopting a *deductive* approach means the coding works in a top-down way. Such approaches to coding are more explicit about the categories or themes to be concerned with at the beginning of the coding process (Lewins & Silver, 2007). Lewins and Silver advocate a combination of both approaches that “takes account of both existing theoretical ideas and those which develop directly from the data under consideration” (p.88).

Such an “integrated approach” to coding informed the current study. The *deductive* element of the coding process involved general pre-defined categories based on the key constructs of ICS: interaction, language learning, culture learning and identity. They were also the research areas and research questions to be tackled in the study. Four highest-level *Nodes* (Level 4 code) for these general theoretical concepts were created in NVivo.⁸ In each Level 4 code, I also created more specific tentative categories (Level 3 code) based on the literature (see Appendix G for examples of tentative Level 3 coding categories). These Level 3 coding categories were constantly being revised and renamed in the later process of inductive coding and interpretation. The analysis then moved on to the *inductive* phase. In each Level 3 code, I first used the form of an “open coding” process whereby initial concepts most close to the originally compiled data were generated (Level 1 code). Then I moved on to the next higher level of abstraction and combined Level 1 codes into different groups that formed Level 2 codes. In doing so, I was able to identify the themes, features, and patterns emerging from the data that could describe and explain the higher-level concepts.

I followed the three important methodological procedures proposed by Yin (2011) during the data reassembling process: making constant comparisons, watching for negative cases and engaging in rival thinking. More specifically, I constantly compared the similarities

⁸ In the coding process, I noticed that the four categories of data usually overlapped. Therefore, the strategy I took was identifying the aspects more prominent in the local context. For example, whether the interviewee was emphasising opportunities for interaction with more people/resources, or the potential of these interactions for internalised language acquisition and culture learning, or the mediating role of identity factors in the process.

and dissimilarities among coded items, used negative instances to refine my interpretation to make it fit the full range of instances, and searched for any plausible rival explanations in the data before any possible conclusions were made. Particularisation was a core issue in the interpretation process, which may be more valuable than generalisation, because it involved using case studies to “provide comparative information to a wide variety of other cases, so long as one is careful to take contextual differences into account” (Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012).

This section introduced the overall coding methodology I adopted for qualitative data. The following two sections will explain the detailed techniques I used to analyse two types of data – transcripts for classroom interactions and narratives from student interviews.

3.6.3 Conversation analysis of classroom interactions

This section clarifies the transcription of classroom recordings, why I adopted conversation analysis (CA) to analyse transcripts, how CA has been applied to analyse SLA classroom interactions, and how I conducted CA in this study.

Classroom interaction data collected by class recordings were transcribed before they were analysed. Conversations recorded were literally written down line by line with markers and symbols being added. To take both verbal and non-verbal cues into consideration, the teacher-student and peer interactions were transcribed with a simplified version of Jefferson (2004)’s transcription conventions. It has been employed in studies on Chinese language learning in different versions (e.g., Cheng, 2013; He, 2000; Tang, 2010) (see Appendix H for the transcription conventions).

After the class recordings were transcribed, I adopted CA to analyse the data. CA is a methodology for the analysis of spoken interaction which is more process than product-oriented (Walsh, 2006). This focus on process regards functions of language as a means for social interaction (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), and considers social contexts as being dynamic and constantly shaped by participants making use of turn-taking sequences. CA contrasts to other types of approaches (e.g., interviews and experiments) in its interests in naturally occurring data (i.e., talk-in-interaction and language-in-use), which are considered to be less artificial (Have, 2007). To do CA more effectively, the researcher should always try to identify sequences of related talk, examine how speakers take on certain roles through their talk, and look for particular outcomes in the talk so as to trace the trajectories through which these outcomes are produced (Silverman, 2014).

Many research studies in SLA from an ecological perspective favoured the CA approach to examine multilingual interactions. For example, they use CA to scrutinise how participants find their ways of “reterritorialising and rehistoricising them in the moment-by-moment utterances” (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008), or whether the discourses at different levels are in alignment (Sarangi & Roberts, 2002). Particularly in this study, since only classroom conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed, CA was used to analyse a specific type of “institutional talk” (ibid.: p.341) – the classroom talk. There are some basic features regarding institutional talk including classroom conversations: it is usually goal-oriented and people design their conduct to meet institutional tasks or functions, and it is often shaped by certain constraints (Drew & Heritage, 1992). In the CA literature analysing SLA classroom events, some areas of research interest include how classroom interactions promote learner involvement (Cancino, 2015) and whether they are in alignment with pedagogical purposes (Seedhouse, 2004; Walsh, 2006).

Therefore, CA in this study will not only involve analysing the language use in interaction sequences but also the classroom discourse and interpersonal relationships constructed in those sequences.

3.6.4 Narrative analysis of interview data

With regard to the analysis of data from student interviews, narrative analysis (NA) was adopted. The interview recordings were transcribed literally, and the email interview questionnaires were collected with follow-up correspondences being added.

NA offers a way to describe the structure of stories and uses a constructionist approach to demonstrate how people actively construct versions of who they are (Silverman, 2014). Different from thematic content analysis which focuses more on generalising categories, NA is more interested in the organisation of stories and individual cases (ibid.). One advantage of NA is that it is able to capture the nature and meaning of experiences that are difficult to observe directly and are best understood from the perspectives of those who experience them. Greater stress has been put on the subjectivity and complexity of learning experiences and the importance of investment by language learners (De Fina, 2016). It is an important approach in this study to provide rich and valuable data about how students “[made] meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes” (Brenner, 2006, p.357, cited in Yin, 2011).

In the present study, although I used NA to explore both oral interviews and email interviews, the two sets of data were treated differently, due to the distinctive nature of the two datasets. In the face-to-face interview, the presence of the interviewer as an interlocuter

in the conversation should not be erased in the analysis. De Fina and Perrino (2011) make the point that interview-elicited narratives are subject to the constraints imposed by the local research contexts. Therefore, more emphasis should be put on the strategies used by narrators to engage and influence their audiences as well as the processes in which the participants and audience co-construct narrative identities. Informed by these discussions, the analysis of the email interview data in this study concentrated on the production of texts by students in the local context, whereas the analysis of the oral interviews positioned students' utterances in the broader stream of conversation with the interviewer.

The presentation of narrative data is challenging because it can appear to be dull, wordy, vague, or even seem to be selective and biased (Yin, 2011). Yin introduces four different ways to display narrative data: first, interspersing quoted passages within selected paragraphs; second, using lengthier presentations covering multiple paragraphs; third, making chapter-long presentations about a study's participants; and fourth, presenting information about different participants but not focusing on the life story of any of them. I will primarily adopt the fourth approach to report narrative data. It means that the main text will move from topic to topic and refer to the experiences of different participants, depending on the relevance and suitability of the experiences to the topic. Such a way of displaying can better organise participants' information according to my research questions and themes. Moreover, in this mixed-method research, room should be left to report data from other sources such as surveys and observations.

This section has clarified how I used NA to analyse the interview data. Now I move on to give a summary of all data sources and analysis methods mentioned in the preceding sections.

3.7 Summary of data sources and analysis methods

Table 3.6 provides a summary of all data sources in this study and how they were collected and analysed. It also illustrates the approaches I will take to present the data in the forthcoming chapters.

Table 3.6 Summary of data sources and analysis methods

Types of data		Collection methods	Collection time	No. of participants	Analysis methods	Presentation of data
Quantitative and numeral data	Likert Scale scores (Survey 1)	Survey 1	Before departure	31	Descriptive analysis; Inferential analysis	Tables and Figures
	Likert Scale scores (Survey 2)	Survey 2	At the end of the program	31	Descriptive analysis; Inferential analysis	Tables and Figures
Qualitative data	Answers to open-ended survey questions (Survey 2)	Survey 1	Before departure	31	Thematic content analysis	Quotations
	Answers to open-ended survey questions (Survey 2)	Survey 2	At the end of the program	31	Thematic content analysis	Quotations
	Interview recording transcripts	Face-to-face interview	After the program	8	Thematic content analysis; Narrative analysis	Quotations; vignettes
	Email interview responses	Email interview questionnaire	After the program	9	Thematic content analysis; Narrative analysis	Quotations; vignettes
	Out-of-class field notes	Participant observation	During the program	The whole cohort	Thematic content analysis	Vignettes
	Class recording transcripts	Non-participant observation	During the program	The whole cohort	Thematic content analysis; Conversation analysis;	Transcribed conversations; vignette ⁹

A challenge of multi-method research integrating different sources of data is how to make consistent conclusions drawn in reference to the evidence with different perspectives. I adopted the solution offered by Anderson-Levitt (2006) - the analysis may make sense from each perspective but also test the evidence for consistency across various sources, with deliberate efforts to look for contradictory evidence to strengthen the findings even more.

⁹ Some episodes were rendered anecdotally when the full transcripts were too lengthy or when it was not necessary to present the actual transcripts. Such an approach was also used in (van Dam, 2002).

3.8 Reflection on the researcher's role

The evidential objective is pursued throughout this thesis, however, with the axiology underlying the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, I will explicate my role as a researcher and the subjectivity attached to it in this section.

Axiology concerns the role of researcher values in the scientific process; the axiology underlying the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm accepts that researcher's values and lived experience cannot be divorced from the research process (Ponterotto, 2005): "The researcher should acknowledge, describe, and "bracket" his or her values, but not eliminate them" (p. 131). I will briefly reflect on my role from three aspects: as a second language learner and an international student studying abroad in Australia; as a teacher of Chinese as a second language; and as a researcher.

My personal experience shares much in common with my research participants. We all are second language learners and have life experience in the country/countries where the language is spoken. China-born, I started to learn English in primary school. In the second year of high school, I joined a school-led summer program in which I travelled to Britain and Europe for four weeks with a cohort of Chinese students. The features of that program were very similar to the program investigated in this study, because we also had daily language classes and organised excursions, and we lived together with other participants in the cohort. That was the first time I left my home country and entered into a new environment, learning and using English. After I graduated with a BA degree from one of the universities in China, I was admitted into a Master degree program at a university in Australia as an international student (majoring in cross-cultural communication) and have been living here in Australia for four and a half years. These experiences abroad informed me of what it meant to be a temporary sojourner and learning a language in the SA context.

During my stay in Australia, I took the role of a casual Chinese teacher at the same university. I have been making close observations of, and having rich experience with, Australian university students learning Chinese. This teaching experience has made me more aware of the features of our students - their learning trajectories, attitudes, environments, as well as their struggles and obstacles. Being a staff member in the Chinese Department where the ICS program in this study was held, I had frequent personal and working communications with other teachers, including program organisers. Therefore, I have a better understanding of the fuller context in which the program was implemented as well as the nitty-gritty of the

actual implementation process. This also affected my motivation of conducting this research: to facilitate future advancement of the program. Although the teachers' and program organiser's perspectives are beyond the scope of this study focusing on students' learning processes, I believe the background knowledge helped my interpretation of the data collected.

My role as a researcher should be taken into consideration as well as my roles as a L2 learner and teacher when interpreting the conclusions made in this study. I was highly aware to separate my epic perspectives from the students' emic views when I analysed the data and I made every effort to avoid premature assumptions. All interpretations in this study are based on evidence. However, I also acknowledge that a researcher's subjectivity may impact on the perception of the "relevance" of evidence, which points to an "ever greater need to make explicit the subject position of the researcher" (Kramsch, 2002, p.24). I believe this acknowledgement can strengthen the credibility of the current study.

3.9 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted under the ethical protocol approved by the Ethics Committee of the University (Project No.: 2014/895, see Appendix J for the ethics approval letter). Before I carried out my data collection, I applied for Ethics Approval from the Committee on my research plan and methodological design. All documents for data collection such as survey questionnaires and interview questions received approval. Throughout this study, I followed the guidelines offered by the Committee to address ethical issues regarding informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. These are important issues to be considered in any research with human subjects. In this section, I will describe how they were addressed in this study.

Use of the data in this study was based on participants' consent. The initial contact with program participants and the partner institution was made by email to reduce possible coercion. The emails were sent by the program coordinator who was not associated with this study. A Participant Information Statement (PIS) attached to the email outlined the nature, purpose and implications of this research, and stressed that participation in the research was completely voluntary. It was explained to the students that the purpose of the study was not to assess their learning outcomes but to understand their learning experiences in an attempt to contribute to research literature and future program development. They were assured that non-participation would not in any way affect their academic results. For those who expressed their willingness to participate in the study, a Participant Consent Form (PCF) was

handed out to obtain their consent to participate in the survey, be contacted for the interview, and be audio-recorded for class observation. For the students who expressed their interest in the interview, their consent to have their interview audio-recorded was also obtained through the PCF. The administrators and staff in the partner university gave their consent to the researcher to do field study and class observation. Only the participants who signed the PCFs were recruited and had their data used in this study.

Several measures were also taken to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. The surveys were administered anonymously. Completed surveys were returned by students in an anonymous return box in the researcher's absence so their identities would be concealed. Code Names given by students themselves were used to match the pre-departure and end-of-program surveys (see details in Section 3.5.1). Responses from interview participants were also kept confidential. The interviewees were re-assured that their answers in the interview would not be exposed to anybody else and would not be used to judge against their individual performance. I personally transcribed all the interview recordings and conducted the data analysis by myself. No one else had access to the data collected. Pseudonyms were used in this thesis to present individual interviewee's data. Any information that could lead to the identification of the interviewees was suppressed in the thesis.

During the process of this research, no ethical problem arose. The participants were very cooperative and supportive and they showed great enthusiasm in contributing to the research. The valuable personal experiences and insights from them all added credit to the findings of this study.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has elaborated the research paradigm, research design, research site and participants, data collection and analysis methods, as well as the researcher's role and ethical issues of this study.

In short, the study follows an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm and mixed-method research design. The timing and weighting of multiple methods were elaborately designed, which followed a sequential pattern with qualitative dominance. A rich description of the research site was provided. Research methods in this study included pre-departure and end-of-program surveys, in-country observation, and post-program interviews. Quantitative results were analysed through descriptive and inferential analysis. Qualitative data were

analysed through thematic content analysis. Particularly, classroom interactions were analysed with conversation analysis; interview data were analysed through narrative inquiries. These research methods were justified and supported by the methodological literature.

The following chapters from Chapter 4 to Chapter 7 will report the findings of the study and my discussions of these findings.

Chapter 4 Interaction opportunities in the program

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will report findings about the first key construct of in-country study (ICS) – interaction – by answering the following research question and sub-questions:

Q1: To what extent did the ICS facilitate interaction in different settings?

Q1-1. Did the ICS promote in-class interaction with teachers and peers?

Q1-2. Did the ICS promote out-of-class interaction in different communities (including online communities)?

Q1-3. What are the limitations of the ICS in facilitating interaction during the program?

Q1-4. How can the ICS be maximised for interaction opportunities?

This chapter reports findings from surveys, observations and interviews to answer these questions. The theoretical foundation underpinning the analysis in this chapter is the interpretation of interaction from an ecological perspective: “The metaphor of ecology captures the dynamic interaction between language users and the environment as between parts of a living organism” (Kramsch, 2002: p.3). The ecological view on interaction privileges the notion of linguistic *affordance*, or “a particular property of the environment that is relevant [...] to an active, perceiving organism in that environment” (van Lier, 2000, p.252). The usefulness of an affordance is only manifest when a learner perceives it as salient (Hoven & Palalas, 2011). Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on whether students perceived the affordances in the target environment as valuable for their construction of interaction opportunities.

This chapter will reveal that the Sydney-Beijing ICS Program did facilitate students to construct interaction opportunities in multi-level settings to a great extent, but there was a common challenge of insufficient organised out-of-class activities. In the following, **Section 4.2** will report the quantitative and qualitative results of surveys and show that students perceived their interaction increased in most situations during the ICS compared to the non-ICS setting (Q1-1, Q1-2). **Section 4.3** will present qualitative evidence explaining the facilitated classroom interaction from three aspects: interaction with teachers, interaction with peers, and interactive class activities (Q1-1). **Section 4.4** will move on to students’ interaction

in out-of-class communities in four ways: with language partners, in the living environment, through city exploration, and on the mobile social networking platform “WeChat” (Q1-2). A common challenge regarding insufficient organised out-of-class activities will be identified (Q1-3). **Section 4.5** will discuss these findings and argue that multi-level settings – the classroom, campus, social space and virtual space – afford different types of interaction opportunities and challenges. It will also suggest possible program intervention to maximise the opportunities for students’ interaction (Q1-4). **Section 4.6** will highlight key findings and offer a conclusion of the chapter.

4.2 Survey results: Increased interaction frequencies in most situations

In this section, the results of three five-point Likert scales in the pre-departure survey (Survey 1, see Appendix A) and the end-of-program survey (Survey 2, see Appendix B) will be reported: Scale A - Classroom interaction scale; Scale B – Out-of-class interaction scale; and Scale C – Technology-mediated interaction scale. The aim is to investigate the frequencies of classroom interaction and language use, out-of-class interpersonal interaction and language use, and technology-mediated interaction. The mean score of each item was calculated to show how frequently, in general, participants experienced the interaction described by that item. Results revealed that most scores in Survey 2 were higher than those in Survey 1, indicating more frequent interactions in a range of settings.

The following sub-sections (4.2.1 – 4.2.3) will present the results of each of the three scales. Bar charts generated by Excel will be used to illustrate the comparisons between Survey 1 and Survey 2. Results from Paired Sample Tests conducted with SPSS will be presented to show whether the differences were statistically significant. Answers to some open-ended questions will also be provided if relevant.

4.2.1 Classroom interaction frequencies (results of Scale A)

Scale A consisted of three dimensions. *Dimension One* is teacher-student interaction, *Dimension Two* is student-student/peer interaction, and *Dimension Three* is attentive listening in interactions. The design of the scale was based on Ohta (1994, 1995, 1999, 2001)’s categorisation of classroom interaction which included both interpersonal interaction and intrapersonal interaction. This is in alignment with the ecological perspective to encompass

both cognitive and social processes of learning. Each dimension contains three different items which are listed below:

- a1. Dimension One: in-class student-teacher interaction
 - a1-1. Asking your Chinese teacher questions in class
 - a1-2. Being corrected by your Chinese teacher when you made mistakes
 - a1-3. Answering questions asked by your teachers in class
- a2. Dimension Two: in-class peer interaction
 - a2-1. Seeking help from your classmates during class activities
 - a2-2. Being corrected by your classmates when you made mistakes in class
 - a2-3. Speaking Chinese with your classmates in class
- a3. Dimension Three: in-class attentive listening
 - a3-1. Doing mind rehearsals when the teacher asked your classmates questions
 - a3-2. Overhearing your teacher correcting your classmates' mistakes
 - a3-3. Actively paying attention to your Chinese teacher's interactional style

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 4.1. A Paired Sample Test was conducted to examine whether the differences of scores in Survey 1 and Survey 2 were statistically significant and the results are shown in Table 4.1.

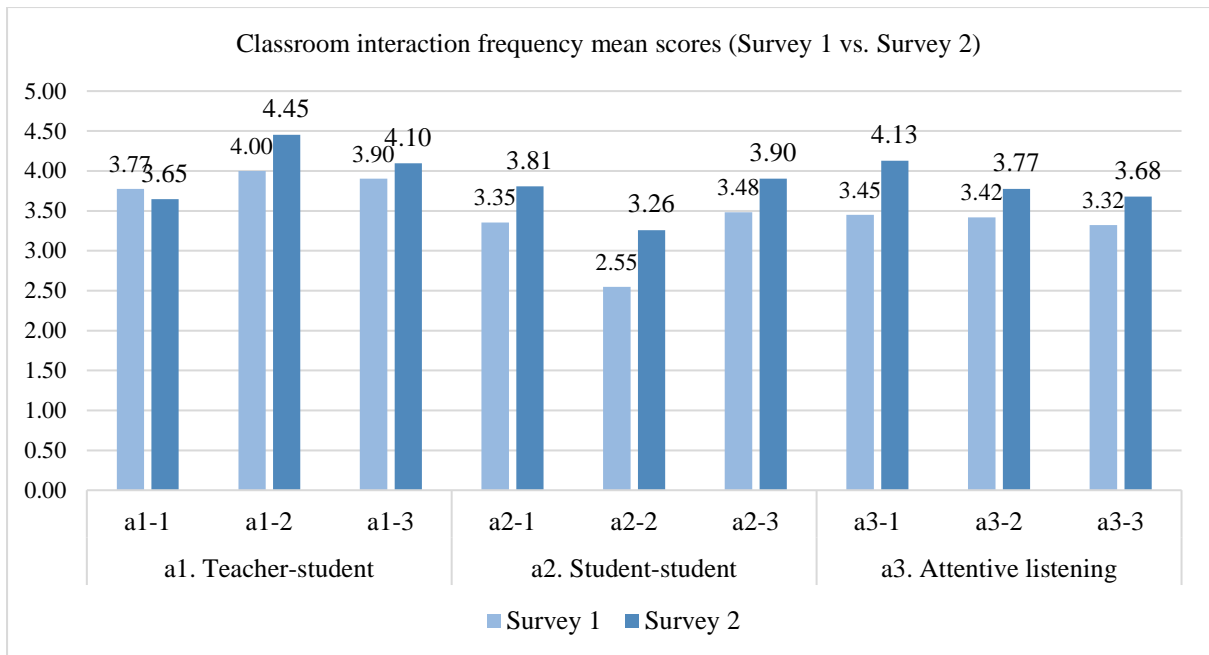


Figure 4.1: Scale A classroom interaction frequency mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 4.1: Scale A classroom interaction frequencies (Paired Sample Test)

Pair	Variable	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_a1.1 - S2_a1.1	.129	.885	.159	-.195	.454	.812	30	.423
Pair 2	S1_a1.2 - S2_a1.2	-.452	.888	.160	-.777	-.126	-2.830**	30	.008
Pair 3	S1_a1.3 - S2_a1.3	-.194	1.167	.210	-.622	.234	-.924	30	.363
Pair 4	S1_a2.1 - S2_a2.1	-.452	1.434	.258	-.978	.074	-1.754	30	.090
Pair 5	S1_a2.2 - S2_a2.2	-.710	1.553	.279	-1.279	-.140	-2.544*	30	.016
Pair 6	S1_a2.3 - S2_a3.3	-.194	1.701	.306	-.818	.431	-.633	30	.531
Pair 7	S1_a3.1 - S2_a3.1	-.677	1.194	.214	-1.115	-.239	-3.159**	30	.004
Pair 8	S1_a3.2 - S2_a3.2	-.355	1.142	.205	-.774	.064	-1.731	30	.094
Pair 9	S1_a3.3 - S2_a3.3	-.355	1.050	.189	-.740	.030	-1.881	30	.070

*p < .05 **p < .01

Note: S1 stands for Survey 1; S2 stands for Survey 2.

Results in Figure 4.1 show that in general, although teacher-student interactions received higher marks than student-student interaction in both Survey 1 and Survey 2, student-student

interactions had a greater increase of marks in Survey 2. That is to say, the ICS promoted peer interaction to a greater extent than teacher-student interaction. Moreover, all but one of the scores were higher in Survey 2, illustrating the overwhelmingly increased opportunities for interaction in class. Only the score of “a1-1. Asking your Chinese teacher questions in class” inclined slightly. However, as shown in Table 4.1, the decrease was not statistically significant ($t = .812, p > .05$). The lesser interaction in this aspect was not a prominent phenomenon of the cohort based on the data in this study.

Based on results shown in Table 4.1, the three items with significant increase in scores are: “a1-2. Being corrected by your Chinese teacher when you made mistakes”, “a2-2. Being corrected by your classmates when you made mistakes in class”, “a3-1. Doing mind rehearsals when the teacher asked your classmates questions”. These items uncovered two main areas that might be salient for our students. First, more perceived corrective feedback from teachers and peers alike. Second, maintained attention during classroom interactions.

To understand students’ perceptions of their classroom learning experience in greater detail, open-ended questions in Survey 1 (Questions 4.1-4.2) and Survey 2 (Questions 4.1-4.2) inquired into students’ perceived strengths and limitations of Chinese classes at home and host institutions. The answers were coded thematically and ranked (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Features of classroom learning experience (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

	Survey 1 – at home institution	Survey 2 – at host institution
Top 3 strengths of classes	1. Teaching content ¹⁰ (N=11) 2. Qualified teachers (N=8) 3. Class interaction (N=7)	1. Qualified teachers (N=16) 2. Supportive classmates (N=7) 3. Class interaction (N=7)
Top 3 limitations of classes	1. Teaching content (N=14) 2. Class interaction (N=8) 3. Class structure ¹¹ (N=7)	1. Teaching content (N=12) 2. Class structure (N=7) 3. Learning materials ¹² (N=3)

In Survey 1, it can be seen that while many students appreciated the classroom interaction at the home institution, others felt that improvements were needed. In Survey 2, the top 3 strengths were qualified teachers, supportive classmates and class interaction. Compared to Survey 1, supports received from classmates seemed to be a salient issue for students.

¹⁰ Teaching content here means the teaching of different language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammars, Chinese characters, etc.

¹¹ E.g., class hours, timetables, division of levels, etc.

¹² E.g., some students mentioned that the textbook was the only learning material and there could have been more supplementary learning resources.

Another difference was that no student considered class interaction a limitation in Survey 2. In comparison, the classroom interaction during the program, especially with peers, seems to be a salient advantage for our students.

In a word, the most significant areas in which ICS promoted interaction are receiving feedback from teachers and peers and maintaining attention during classroom interactions. Students perceived the interactive feature of classroom instructions to be a big advantage of the ICS program.

4.2.2 Out-of-class interaction frequencies (results of Scale B)

Scale B consists of two dimensions. *Dimension One* is learner-native speaker interaction. *Dimension Two* is peer interaction. The categorisation is based on prior research on social networks during study abroad (Wiklund, 2002; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Castañeda & Zirger; Badstubner & Ecke, 2009; Magnan & Back, 2007). The items range from the most informal form of making informal conversations, to a more formal form of practising Chinese more intentionally, to the most formal form of collaboratively doing a Chinese assignment. Specifically, each dimension contains three items as listed below:

b1. Dimension one: out-of-class learner – native speaker interaction

- b1-1. Making informal conversation with Chinese native speakers in Chinese.
- b1-2. Asking Chinese native speakers to practise Chinese with you.
- b1-3. Asking Chinese native speakers for help when doing Chinese assignments.

b2. Dimension two: out-of-class peer interaction

- b2-1. Making informal conversation with your classmates in Chinese after class.
- b2-2. Asking your classmates to practise Chinese with you after class.
- b2-3. Asking your classmates for help when doing Chinese assignments.

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 4.2. A Paired Sample Test was conducted to examine whether the differences of scores in Survey 1 and Survey 2 were statistically significant and the results are shown in Table 4.3.

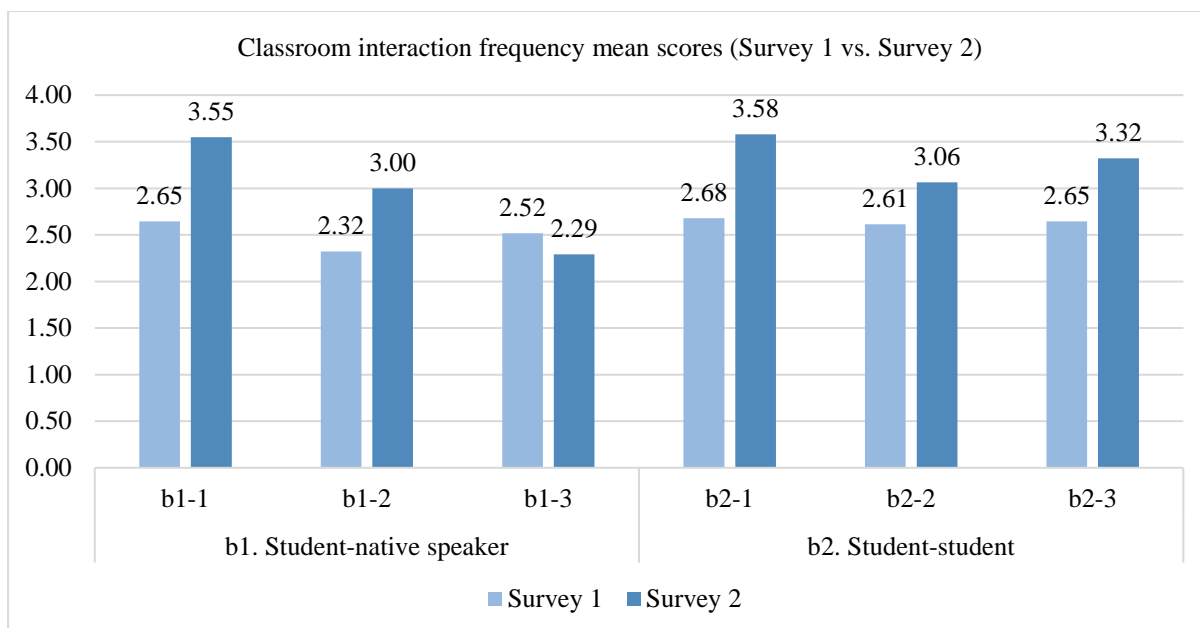


Figure 4.2: Scale B out-of-class interaction frequency mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 4.3: Scale B out-of-class interaction frequencies (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_b1.1 - S2_b1.1	-.903	1.814	.326	-1.569	-.238	-2.772**	30	.009
Pair 2	S1_b1.2 - S2_b1.2	-.677	1.351	.243	-1.173	-.182	-2.791**	30	.009
Pair 3	S1_b1.3 - S2_b1.3	.226	1.499	.269	-.324	.776	.839	30	.408
Pair 4	S1_b2.1 - S2_b2.1	-.903	1.248	.224	-1.361	-.446	-4.030***	30	.000
Pair 5	S1_b2.2 - S2_b2.2	-.452	1.338	.240	-.942	.039	-1.880	30	.070
Pair 6	S1_b2.3 - S2_b2.3	-.677	1.833	.329	-1.350	-.005	-2.058	30	.048

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Results in Figure 4.2 show that all but one scores of the items were higher in Survey 2, indicating that students perceived more opportunities for most types of interactions during the program. The only item that declined was “b1-3. Asking Chinese native speakers for help when doing Chinese assignments.” It is possible that in China students spent more time interacting with native speakers to practise or speak Chinese, whereas they spent relatively more time seeking help for homework from native-speaker friends at the home university in

Australia. Nevertheless, Table 4.3 indicates that the decrease of the score was not statistically significant ($t = .839, p > .05$). The lesser interaction in this aspect was not a prominent phenomenon of the full cohort based on the data in this study.

Table 4.3 shows that the scores of three items increased significantly: “b1-1. Making informal conversation with Chinese native speakers in Chinese”, “b1-2. Asking Chinese native speakers to practise Chinese with you”, “b2-1. Making informal conversation with your classmates in Chinese after class”. These items point to a common salient issue for students, that is, that ICS promoted the use of the Chinese language out of class, especially in more natural and informal settings as opposed to interaction during formal Chinese assignments.

In order to understand students’ interaction with Chinese native speakers in more detail, some open-ended questions were added in Survey 1 (Questions 4.3 - 4.4) and Survey 2 (Questions 4.4 to 4.6). These questions were targeting students’ Chinese friends instead of random Chinese people, because these were more consistent social networks. Table 4.4 summarises the findings with a comparison between Survey 1 and Survey 2.

Table 4.4: Interaction with Chinese friends (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

	Survey 1 – in Australia	Survey 2 – in China
Number of Chinese friends	0 (N=1) 1-2 (N=8) 3-5 (N=14) 6-10 (N=6) > 10 (N=2)	1-2 (N=16) 3-5 (N=11) > 6 (N=4)
Ways of meeting Chinese friends	Top three ways: Home university courses (N=18) Chinese Table ¹³ at the home university (N=14) Student unions at the home university (N=12) Other ways: Working experience; family; former school experience; church; immigrant communities; homestay international students; other friends	Top three ways: Language partner ¹⁴ (N=23) When exploring Beijing (N=7) Through other friends (N=5) Other ways: Met on campus at the host university; family; church
Things usually did or talked about with Chinese friends	Top three activities: Discussing university study (N=15) Random chatting (N=11) Having meals together (N=9)	Top three activities: Having meals together (N=16) Random chatting (N=10) Hanging out and sightseeing (N=9)

¹³ The Department of Chinese Studies at the home university organises a Chinese language group weekly which is called Chinese Table. In the events, Chinese learners and international students from China sit together, practise Chinese, and discuss a range of topics related to Chinese learning.

¹⁴ During the ICS each participant was paired a language partner who was a volunteered student from the host university.

	Other activities: Talking about Chinese learning and Chinese culture; talking about Australia	Other activities: Going shopping; watching movies; visiting church
How was making Chinese friends facilitated?	Mainly through university life	Mainly through the language partner program

According to Table 4.4, prior to the program, many students had already made several Chinese friends in Australia. Almost half the students (N=14) had three to five Chinese friends. Two students had more than 10 friends. One of them mentioned that she had probably 20 to 30 Chinese friends through her husband’s friends and workplace. Another had more than 60 Chinese friends through church, family, university, and an evangelical union.¹⁵ Many students (N = 18) met their Chinese friends through university courses. Others through the language group – Chinese Table, or student unions at university. Almost half the students (N=15) mentioned that they usually met Chinese friends to discuss university study; fewer mentioned they talked about Chinese study, Chinese culture and Australia. It seems that in the home country, university life played a major role in facilitating friendship and interaction oriented toward study.

Responses in Survey 2 indicate that in China although students had fewer Chinese friends who were met mainly through the language partner program, they participated in a wider range of activities than in the home country. Compared to Survey 1, more students listed activities involving “doing things” such as having meals, sightseeing, going shopping, watching movies, etc., rather than just for study or chat. It implies that the interactional pattern between students and their Chinese friends shifted from “hearing” culture to “experiencing” culture (Lumkes et al., 2012) through immersion. Chapter 6 will report more about students’ cultural immersion. The language partner program, for sure, played a pivotal role in it. More than half the students (N=16) named the language partner as the most beneficial way for social networking.

All in all, the most significant areas of promoted interaction were making Chinese conversation in more natural and informal settings as opposed to interaction during formal Chinese assignments. Students could not only “talk” or “chat” with native speakers but had more chances to “experience” Chinese lifestyle with them. The language partner program played a critical role in facilitating the friendship with native speakers during the ICS.

¹⁵ At the home university there is a faculty called ACES, which stands for Australian Chinese Evangelical Union.

4.2.3 Technology-mediated interaction frequencies (results of Scale C)

Scale C includes two types of interaction through digital technologies – traditional mass media and new media/technologies empowered by the Internet. The following outlines the two items in the scale:

- c-1. Watching Chinese media products such as TV news, dramas, movies, etc.
- c-2. Learning Chinese with online tools such as websites, online videos, blogs, etc.

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 4.3. A Paired Sample Test was conducted to examine whether the differences of scores in Survey 1 and Survey 2 were statistically significant and the results are shown in Table 4.5.

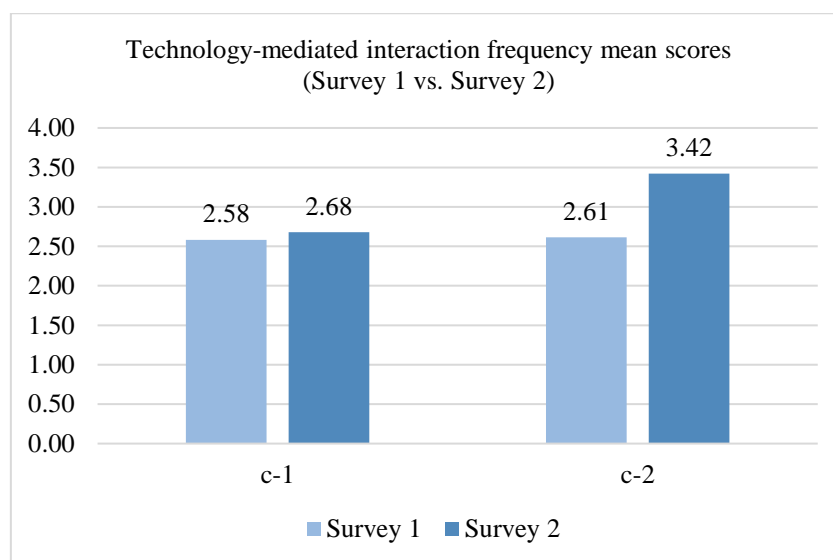


Figure 4.3: Scale C technology-mediated interaction frequency mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 4.5: Scale C technology-mediated interaction frequencies (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_c.1 - S2_c.1	-.097	1.446	.260	-.627	.434	-.373	30	.712
Pair 2	S1_c.2 - S2_c.2	-.806	1.250	.224	-1.265	-.348	-3.593**	30	.001

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Results in Figure 4.3 indicate that students perceived more opportunities for both types of interaction during the program. Results in Table 4.5 illustrate that the change of score of “c-2. Learning Chinese with online tools such as websites, online videos, blogs, etc.” was statistically significant, suggesting that students’ interaction through new media/technologies increased tremendously during the program.

In order to understand students’ interaction through online tools in more detail, an open-ended question in Survey 1 (Question 4.6) and Survey 2 (Question 4.11) further asked what tools were used for Chinese learning. Results reveal the fact that the online communicating tool WeChat¹⁶ stood out. Figure 4.4 summarises the main tools used before the program in Australia and tools used during the program in China.

¹⁶ WeChat is a Chinese multi-purpose mobile application and is one of the largest standalone messaging apps with over nine-hundred million active users (The Economist, 2016). It has diverse functions: private and group messaging, voice messages, voice calls or video calls; Subscriptions/official accounts; Moments posts; payment services; city services and mini-programs, etc.

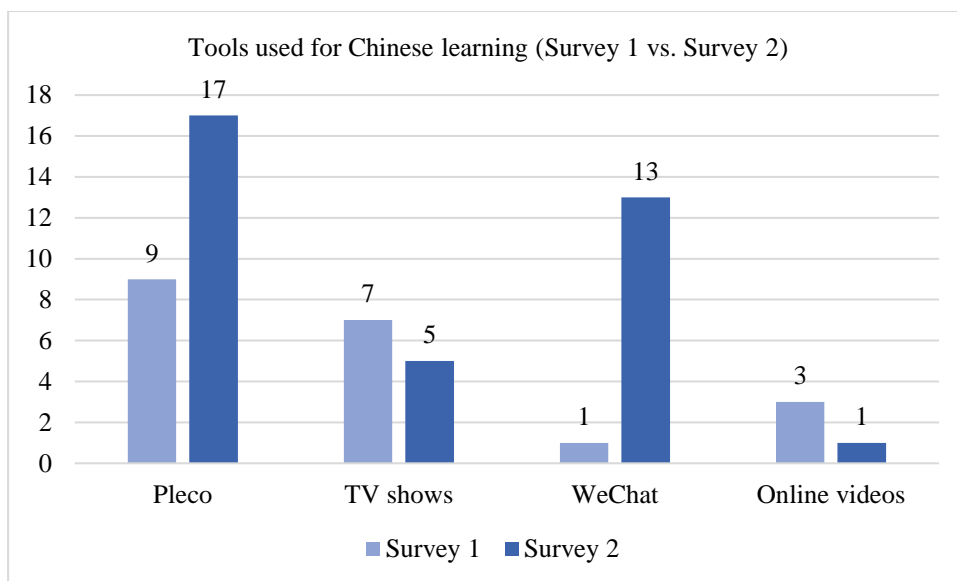


Figure 4.4: Tools used for Chinese learning (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

The top three tools mentioned in Survey 1 were Pleco,¹⁷ TV shows and online videos. Only one student mentioned WeChat. In Survey 2, the most used tool was still Pleco, but the number of students using WeChat for language learning had risen to 13, ranking the second among all. The difference between Pleco and WeChat was that the former was a mobile application designed exclusively for Chinese language learning, whereas the latter was a genuine communicating tool widely used among Chinese people. The increase in using WeChat for language learning implied more learning opportunities through authentic interactions.

In short, this sub-section presenting the results of technology-mediated interaction has demonstrated that the mobile app WeChat stood out to be a prominent facilitating tool for interaction and Chinese learning.

4.2.4 Summary of survey results

The survey results in this section have illustrated that in general students perceived that their interaction increased in most situations during the program in China more than it had before the program in Australia. The increases of some types of interaction were more significant than others.

In the classroom, the most significant aspects were receiving corrective feedback from teachers and peers and maintaining attention during classroom interactions. Concrete

¹⁷ Pleco Software is a smartphone-based Chinese language learning app with the following features: Optical character recognition, dictionaries, audio, flashcards, document reader, screen reader, etc.

corrective feedback (CF) from formal language instructions during SA is an important aspect of the second language classroom experience since students may not get sufficient feedback in the informal setting (Krashen & Seliger, 1976). It is one of the affordances of social interaction that has positive effects on L2 development (Ohta, 2001: p.134), which may be provided in both teacher-fronted settings and peer learning settings (ibid., p. 140). Although much SLA literature has discussed on the benefits of corrective feedback as an affordance for learning, little is known about whether students more frequently receive corrective feedback in the ICS context. This study provides additional insights and confirms that students indeed perceived they had more CF from both teachers and students in the ICS. The reason behind this will be explained with qualitative data in Section 4.3.

Outside the classroom, the aspects that stood out were making Chinese conversations in more natural and informal settings (as opposed to interaction during formal Chinese assignments), mostly facilitated by the language partner program, and interaction through new media/technologies (as opposed to traditional media products), mostly facilitated by the mobile app WeChat. Section 4.4.1 and Section 4.4.4 will uncover in more detail how the language partner and WeChat facilitated interpersonal interaction respectively with qualitative data. These findings overlap with Taguchi et al. 's (2016a) results to some degree in which the authors designed a Language Contact Questionnaire (LCQ) to measure participants' amount of Chinese use in different social activities including "interactive" activities (communicating with Chinese friends, service staff and roommates) and "non-interactive" activities (watching television and reading books in Chinese). Participants reported a much larger amount of interactive rather than non-interactive contact. Although the ecological perspective values both interpersonal interaction and interaction between living humans and non-living resources, the results shown here indicate that in the ICS context and measured by the *quantity* of language contact, more opportunities for interpersonal interaction rather than "non-interactive" contact is a bigger advantage (it should be acknowledged that the mediation of non-living resources in the environment facilitated the *quality* of language and culture learning as will be illustrated in Chapter 5 and 6).

The following sections will draw on the qualitative data to explore the nature of the interactions in different settings which could not be fully achieved through numeric survey results. In doing so, it explains more about how and why the types of interactions mentioned above were promoted during the ICS.

4.3 Interactions in the classroom

This section reports findings from student interviews and observations which investigated students' interactions in the classrooms from three aspects: interaction with teachers with a focus on corrective feedback, interaction with peers concentrating on a sense of "comradery", and interactive class activities that helped to engage students and maintained students' attention. It will be explained that some of these features are unique to the ICS context and might be harder to duplicate in the non-ICS context. It should be clarified that the comparison between the ICS (host university) and non-ICS (home university) here is not aiming to compare the instructional qualities of the two universities. The point is that the contextual affordances of the ICS have advantages over non-ICS affordances in their ability to establish better rapport among participants.

4.3.1 Interaction with teachers: corrective feedback

The survey results have already shown (Section 4.2.1) that the most significant aspect of teacher-student interaction in class during the program was teacher corrective feedback. Qualitative data from student interviews and class observations further reinforced this finding. Interview data added that the correction of pronunciation was the most memorable type of teacher feedback. Observation found that in many cases, such correction not only happened during reading aloud but also in actual interactional sequences. The following will present the data as follows: (1) evidence from student interviews showing frequent teacher-student interaction; (2) evidence from student interviews with a focus on corrective feedback on pronunciation; (3) evidence from class observations demonstrating corrective feedback in interactional sequences.

A majority of students in the interviews reported that they experienced frequent teacher-student interaction during the program. For example, one of the students, Jack (Male, Age 19, Heritage, Intermediate, email), mentioned:

"The Chinese classes during the program were fantastic overall, the **main** advantage would definitely be the high level of interaction between teachers and students [...] The learning atmosphere was great [...] we received plenty of feedback from teachers which doesn't occur that much at [home university]." (emphasis added by researcher)

In his wording, the high-level interaction was the main advantage of the Chinese classes during the program. He consciously compared this aspect to that at the home university in the last sentence. Some other students attributed the greater amount of feedback from teachers to the smaller class size, as Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) put it: "Because in Sydney, like they did correct some of our tones but the classes were a lot bigger, so there wasn't as much attention." From these instances we can see that the nature of the ICS - smaller class size with more individualised attention¹⁸ - facilitated teacher-student interaction and feedback.

Many students were impressed by the feedback on Chinese tones provided by teachers. One example was given by Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email). She knew a bit of Mandarin beforehand which was taught by her Cantonese mother, whose own Mandarin was by no means perfect. Thus, Irene had been struggling with her pronunciation. As she said: "It's hard to change these pronunciation habits as they have been ingrained in me my whole life." For Irene, the corrective feedback from teachers during the program was very beneficial:

"I have **strong memories** of having my pronunciation corrected a LOT (original capitalised letters) [...] which I am ultimately grateful for [...] Being corrected was very frequent and a bit embarrassing, but it was useful in bringing to my attention my own instinctive slip-ups which I had never noticed at [home university]. [...] I am now much better at recogni[s]ing my mistakes which I never knew about before." (emphasis added by researcher)

Irene admitted that being corrected frequently could be "a bit embarrassing", which might concern some teachers who do not want to embarrass students in class, but Irene was ultimately grateful for it. By saying "I had never noticed" and "I never knew about before", Irene showed that she was indeed developing her skills. This finding, echoing the existing research on classroom corrective feedback, shows that there is a huge discrepancy between the belief of students and teachers: language students have much stronger favourable attitudes to corrective feedback than their teachers think (Schulz, 2001).

¹⁸ As mentioned in Table 3.1 for the Sydney-Beijing ICS Program profile, the Post-beginner's class has 14 students, intermediate class has 13 students, advanced class has 13 students. In the home country, on the contrary, there were around 25 students in each class on average.

It might seem to be more form-focused than interaction-focused when speaking of getting accurate pronunciation, however, class observation revealed that corrective feedback on pronunciation was actually integrated into interactional sequences when using the language for meaning-making. Excerpt 4.1 is one example among others (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters).

Excerpt 4.1: Teacher corrective feedback on pronunciation

Level of class: Intermediate

Context: The students were required to answer some questions with given sentence structures. At the same time, the teacher was focusing on correcting students' pronunciation errors. The example given in this excerpt happened when students were making sentences with "... *de shihou* (translation: when...; in the course of...)", and one of the students, Xiao Feng (pseudonym) made a pronunciation mistake, pronouncing "*xie*" (writing) as "*sie*".

T = Teacher, XF = Xiao Feng, DW = Da Wei, NN = Ning Ning

All names are pseudonyms.

- 01 T: *lai* (.) *Xiao Feng*
Come (and make a sentence), Xiao Feng
- 02 XF: *wo gang xue le hanyu de shihou* (.) *wo jue de siezi* ((inaccurate pronunciation)) *tebie nan*
When I first learned Chinese, I thought character *writing* ((inaccurate pronunciation)) was especially difficult.
- 03 T: *hao* (.) *xiezi* (.) *zhuyi a* (.) *zhege shi "xie"* (1.0) *lai* (.) *Xiao Feng*
okay, character writing. Pay attention. This is "xie". Come (and read it again) Xiao Feng.
- 04 XF: *xie*
write (repeating).
- 05 T: *dui*. [...] >*xiezi* *tebie nan*<
Correct. Character writing is especially difficult.
- 06 XF: >*xiezi* *tebie nan*<

- (repeating the sentence)
- 07 T: *hao (.) lai (.) Da Wei (.) xie zi nan ma*
Good. Da Wei, is character writing difficult?
- 08 DW: *xie zi bu nan*
Character writing is not difficult.
- 09 [...]

10 T: *Ning Ning (.) Xie hanzi nan ma (?)*
is Chinese character writing difficult?
- 11 NN: *a:: xie hanzi you yidianr nan*
Ah... Chinese character writing is a little difficult.
- 12 [...] ((a few more exchanges with other students with the same question))
- 13 T: *hao (.) Xiao Feng (.) “Xie”.*
Ok, XiaoFeng, “xie”.
- 14 XF: *xie*
(repeating)
- 15 T: *xie hanzi*
- 16 XF: *xie hanzi*
(repeating)
- 17 T: *dui (.) suoyi ni juede xie hanzi nan (.) Shi ma (?)*
Correct! So you think writing Chinese character is difficult, right?
- 18 XF: *shi (.) xie ((with better pronunciation)) hanzi nan*
Yes. writing Chinese character is difficult.

In this excerpt, the student Xiao Feng made a sentence using the word *xiezi* (写字, writing Chinese characters) with inaccurate pronunciation, which was corrected by the teacher. The following interactional sequences were based on the context constructed by Xiao Feng. Other students used different words to indicate the degree of difficulty of *xiezi* according to their own opinion. Practising the pronunciation of the word *xiezi* was not completely form-based. It was woven into the interactional activity of discussing a meaningful issue – whether writing Chinese characters is difficult. Going through such a process allowed each student to not only practise his or her pronunciation, but also to *use the word* in their own contexts. It also ensured that Xiao Feng learned the correct pronunciation by picking up how other

students said it – a form of learning from more competent peers through collaboration. One may question whether or not the pronunciation error affects the communication, and some teachers would prefer to correct errors with the students one by one after the class. However, correcting pronunciations one by one after class may not offer the same kind of meaning-making involving more than one student seen above.

The evidences from qualitative data confirm that teacher-student interaction in terms of receiving corrective feedback was a significant aspect for students, especially correction on pronunciation. Getting better pronunciation might be form-focused from some points of view, but with instructional methods, it could also be integrated into the interaction for meaning-making.

4.3.2 Interaction with peers: a sense of “comradery”

The survey results reveal that (Section 4.2.2) frequent peer interaction was another significant feature of the Chinese classes in China. This sub-section confirms this point with the results from student interviews. In addition, the interview data further uncovered that students’ increased willingness to collaborate in class was due to a sense of “comradery” – a word used by one of the participants, Linjia (Female, Age 19, Heritage, Advanced, email). The remainder of this sub-section will present evidence from two respects: (1) better rapport with classmates; (2) the common goal among program participants.

All students perceived that their relationships with each other were much closer than in the home country due to the cohort-based feature of the program. For example, Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) found herself to be frequently corrected on tones by her classmates, which she felt very helpful. When I asked her if she was comfortable being corrected, she answered: “Yeah [...] because we live together and we became very close friends, we were not afraid to be corrected, or ask questions. We just knew each other more I think.” From her expression we can see that the collective life in the ICS contributed to this sense of comradery. Survey results (Section 4.2.2) illustrated that peer interaction out-of-class increased to a great extent, and it is further uncovered here that out-of-class rapport may support in-class peer interaction.

Many students explicitly acknowledged that it was a feature unique to the ICS. The comparison between ICS and non-ICS made by Jack (Male, Age 19, Heritage, Intermediate, email) is an example:

“I was definitely more **encouraged to speak out** about my classmates’ mistakes during group discussions because of the **close bonding** experience we had, which generally [let] people open up more about their opinions. Whereas at [home university], I tended to **keep to myself** because I didn’t necessarily know how people would take criticism because I **didn’t know them at all.**” (emphasis added by researcher)

In Jack’s description, there was an obvious contrast between the interactional status before and during the program. The terms he used for the ICS were “encouraged to speak out” and “close bonding”, whereas the terms for the non-ICS were “keep to myself” and “didn’t know them at all”. Many other students also claimed that they did not contact classmates outside class in Australia and only met each other once or twice a week.

A second reason why students had a sense of comradery in the program is that they shared common academic and life goals, which also mitigated the level of face-threatening of peer feedback. Selena’s (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) comment on her classroom experience illustrates this point well:

“**On top of that**, because everyone was of such a similar level and because we were all there for a similar purpose and with the same mindset, I was definitely more comfortable being corrected by my peers. Knowing that we would make the same mistakes and that we just wanted to help each other was **a key point** in our classes.” (emphasis added by researcher)

In using the phrases “on top of that” and “key point”, Selena highlighted the critical role that having a common goal played in their Chinese classes. Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) also mentioned the common goal among participants and he thought this commonality could be attributable to the ICS: “Everyone was quite encouraging I think because, we all had a common goal and we all wanna [want to] have like a very *dade jinbu* (大的进步, big improvement).” His code-switching in the last sentence was noteworthy – he expressed “big improvement” with Chinese *dade jinbu*. We can see that he positioned himself as a Chinese speaker when he recalled on the common goal of program participants, implying that this sense of comradery is related to learning Chinese as a cohort, as an effect of the ICS.

The students additionally shared common life goals in the ICS – surviving the new environment and enjoying the trip – which further reinforced the sense of comradery. This

point can be made from Linjia's (Female, Age 19, Heritage, Advanced, email) reflection: "It was more comfortable pointing out mistakes as the sense of comradery was stronger and the sense of competition was not as strong since academic achievement was not the sole purpose of the trip." The reduced sense of competition can be seen as a decreased level of anxiety for language learning. In her opinion, this decreased anxiety was beneficial for more peer interaction.

In general, students perceived their interaction with peers increased during the program and they were more comfortable receiving corrective feedback (CF) from peers or sharing their own ideas with each other. The contextual factors of (1) better rapport with classmates due to the cohort-based feature and (2) the common goal among program participants played major roles in it. As Selena (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) stated: "It would be extremely difficult to create that kind of culture amongst students and their external environments [at home institution]." CF might be a face-threatening action sometimes (Kurata, 2007), but some classroom variables may increase the level of comfort in receiving CF or providing CF to peers. This argument is supported by Sato (2013) who found that a collaborative classroom environment and positive social relationships between learners are especially beneficial for CF and language development. The collaborative classroom environment was an advantage in that the ICS helped to lower the anxiety level of the students. An array of studies has uncovered that the level of anxiety among international students in China is relatively high (Bin Yu et al., 2014; Zhong & Gao, 2014). However, this study contrasts to their findings. For short-term ICS students in China, the strengthened collaboration and positive rapport among participants would reduce anxiety and facilitate active interaction among peers.

4.3.3 Interactive class activities: engaging students and maintaining attention

The third theme that emerged from the qualitative data is that interactive class activities helped engage students and maintain their attention. This also explains the survey result that students perceived their attentive listening during the program increased (Section 4.2.1). This sub-section will illustrate interactive class activities of two types: (1) activities that attempted to engage the whole class; (2) approaches making "rote memorisation" interactive. Finally, I will discuss how interactive class activities can be an advantage of the ICS over non-ICS.

Activities that attempted to engage the whole class

First, many students indicated that the Chinese classes during the program were very engaging. As Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) mentioned: "[The classes] were so engaging that we wanted to make an effort to attempt speaking on the spot." From Emily's statement, students would invest more in class interaction thanks to the engaging nature of instructions. Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) also stressed that the whole class was engaged, not just a few students:

"While we were in China, the teacher would ask the whole class questions, and we had to answer it, like everyone in the class had to answer it. Instead of, like, here [at home university], usually in class like a few people speak all the time and then the rest people don't. I guess it's just they made everyone like engaged."

In the interview, Mary said "everyone had to answer it" with a stress on the word "everyone". From the observation there were many activities that required every student in the room to give answers. We can understand her point better if we go back to Excerpt 4.1 in Section 4.3.1 – teacher corrective feedback on pronunciation. After the question was first posed to Xiao Feng, it was further repeatedly asked to a number of other random students who generated different answers. It kept the students in a scaffolding procedure in which no time was allowed for drifting off for any student. Although there were also questions asked to the whole class or several individual students, many students, like Mary, were impressed by how teachers tried to engage as many students as possible in the classroom.

The advantage of the engaging activities was that silent learners could also be engaged. Jenny's (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) story elucidated this point:

"[...] one student would be answering a question, and the teacher would be asking us, like you know, 'did you find anything wrong with this, was it correct, would there be anything you would change in that sentence for a better answer'. And, sometimes the teachers would get like one classmate to read something, and then we would have to listen and then correct them on their pronunciation."

The scenario mentioned by Jenny corresponds to a class episode from my observation as presented in Vignette 4.1. In this activity, the audience's attention was maintained while other peers were doing group presentations in front of the class.

Vignette 4.1: Class activity – A “spotting the vocabulary” game

Level of class: Post-beginner’s

The class had learned new words in a lesson. The teacher asked students to form groups of three or four and make up conversations using these new words. It was a free choice for each group of how many words and which words to be used. Before the presentation, the teacher notified the students that while one group was presenting their conversation, other students should carefully watch. After each presentation, they should try to tell which newly learned words were mentioned in their peers’ conversation.

In this class task, the number of words and the exact words to be used were not decided beforehand, so the audience had no idea what the conversation would be like. Meanwhile, while the other groups were doing their conversation, the audience had to be very focused on the conversation, listen carefully and even take notes so as to spot new vocabulary. It prevented students from absent-mindedness and also turned out to be fun, like a “spotting game” in which students could practise their listening skill and memorise the new words.

Previous literature has shown that interactive class activities not only generate and sustain a motivational learning atmosphere (Sullivan, 2000), but also encourage attentive listening of students. This is because teachers are able to apply some techniques that sustain the attention of all students, such as extensive repetition, revoicing and recasting of each member’s contribution, so as to avoid the exclusion of any student. Having the constant sense of being involved will encourage students to keep their focus on the class, even when they are not directly addressed by the teacher. Ohta (2001) defines the students who are not directly addressed by the teacher as auditors who are equally actively engaged in making use of the teacher’s assistance. Their involvement in classroom activities is indirect but nonetheless meaningful. They may observe language use by others, notice relevant cues for effecting interpersonal relationships, and modify their own language use. As will be argued later, these engaging activities might be an advantage of the ICS over non-ICS because they require lengthy class hours.

Approaches making “rote memorisation” interactive

The second approach observed in the Chinese classes was turning the “rote memorisation” into an interactive task. Memorisation is basically a mentally cognitive process (Inner Speech or Private Speech in Ohta, 2002); however, during the program it was interesting to see that memorisation was usually moved onto the Social Speech (ibid.) sphere for interpersonal interaction. Vignette 4.2 documents an activity of re-arranging the sentence order of a text “as a whole class” (the term emphasised in Jessie’s interview when she mentioned this activity), which can be described as a “story dragon” game.

Vignette 4.2: Class activity – A “story dragon” game

Level of class: Post-beginner’s class

The teacher handed out each student a slip of paper, on which a sentence from the text of this lesson was written in Chinese. The students were assigned with the slips at random. They were first asked to walk around the room to find out who had got which sentence. Then the students practised reading their own sentence. After some preparation time, the students were instructed to read out their sentences in a sequence, from the student who got the first sentence to the last one, so as to complete the story collectively. In the first round, they were allowed to look at their slips. In the second round, they had to recall the sentence from memory. When one student did not realise it was her turn, another student who was assigned the next sentence reminded her. The student suddenly got aware of her role and laughed – so did the entire class. After these two rounds, the teacher collected the slips back and handed them out again in another random order, followed by a third and fourth round. The students who failed to memorise their lines were “punished” – their classmates could ask them a funny question and they had to answer in Chinese.

In this activity, the task of each student was not only to memorise his or her own line, but also to get familiarised with other sentences around it. When a student forgot his or her line, the other students, especially those who had the previous or following sentence, would notice and remind the student, which can make the process more supportive and friendlier. The detail underlined above is an example. Since the students went through the story in this manner twice with a different sentence assigned the second time, the process was further

reinforced. The entertaining function of this “memorisation game” was well exhibited at the end. The teacher set up a “penalty mechanism” to encourage students to try their best. If the students managed to win the game, they would escape the penalty, but even if they failed, it was still a funny experience to be “interviewed” by their peers with some interesting questions. As can be seen, memorisation-oriented tasks like this are not merely based on rote learning. They also encourage interaction between teacher and students and among peers, integrating the exchange of meanings.

As the ICS under study was situated within a Chinese context, one may wonder whether the pedagogical focus would be overly put on “rote learning” as critiqued by “Western” educators (Biggs, 1996; Helmke & Tuyet, 1999; Mok et al., 2001; Renshaw & Volet, 1995). In fact, education in the Asian setting with a Confucius tradition values the link between memorisation *and* understanding (Tan, 2011). Deep and achieving approaches such as linking concepts and being critical to new concepts/knowledge learned in the process of memorising may help achieve understanding eventually (Kember, Wong, & Leung, 1999; Marton, Dall’Alba, & Kun, 1996). Using appropriate approaches including interactive memorisation activities as shown above can help engage students and maximise the advantages of the ICS classroom.

While the interactive activities engaging “every student” or “the whole class” were very beneficial, many students acknowledged that these activities were time-consuming and might be harder to implement in a non-ICS course. For example, Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) said: “I think probably the big difference [between ICS and non-ICS] is just sort of its interactive activities [during the program]. Whereas, because we don’t have as much time to do that stuff in Sydney [at home university], it’s just much more textbook and vocabulary and reading the *kewen* (课文, textbook passages).” Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) who gave the example of the “story dragon” activity also said that “This is quite different to [home university] where the classes are quite short (understandably) and so the classes to me seem less interactive and more information (sentence structures etc.)” (original bracketed information). Moreover, students only did one subject in China, whereas at home university they had a number of subjects or degree courses to do which might distract their attention from Chinese learning.¹⁹ As Alice (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, email) pointed out: “Because we had other subjects to study for at

¹⁹ Survey results show that most students had multiple majors. Only 5 students (16.1%) had 1 major. Among them, only 2 were taking Chinese as the only major, while the other 3 were taking another major as the only major. Most students (n=21, 67.7%) took 2 majors. Another 5 students took 3 majors.

[home university] too, we couldn't put our full attention towards Chinese". Therefore, the intensive ICS might aid the drawbacks of the formal instruction at home university and provide more opportunities for classroom interaction.

This section (4.3) investigated students' interactions in the classrooms from three aspects: interaction with teachers with a focus on corrective feedback (4.3.1), interaction with peers concentrating on a sense of "comradery" (4.3.2), and interactive class activities that helped to engage students and maintained students' attention (4.3.3). The next section will examine students' interaction in out-of-class communities.

4.4 Interactions in out-of-class communities

This section examines students' out-of-class interaction in four different types of communities: with language partners, in the living environment, through city exploration, and on the mobile social networking platform "WeChat". Survey results (Section 4.2.2) have shown that student interaction with native speakers of Chinese increased during the program; however, survey results did not specify different types of native speaker communities. It will be seen that each type of aforementioned community provided various affordances for interaction and learning (4.4.1-4.4.4), but also with a common challenge (4.4.5).

4.4.1 Language partner: reassurance

The survey results highlighted the critical role of the language partner program in facilitating out-of-class social networking (Section 4.2.2). Student interviews also confirmed this point and further explained that the language partner could reassure students' interaction for learning due to two factors: (1) the common grounds between students and their partners;²⁰ (2) conscious pedagogical goals.

First, many students found themselves having a lot in common with their language partners, which increased the willingness to communicate. Since the language partners were also university students, they knew more about students' needs and the participants were more willing to seek them for help. As Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) said: "Because they have been like in a similar position, they would know what to do or,

²⁰ There was also an open-ended question in Survey 2 (Question 4-10) asking about the main factors facilitating their friendship and interactions with language partners, almost half the students mentioned the common grounds between their partners and students themselves (N=15). This was followed by positive personal traits of their partners (N=13).

like where to go and stuff like that.” Many students also found themselves sharing similar experiences, values and future aspirations with their language partners. A typical example is Selena’s (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) remark:

“I was very lucky to meet someone with similar values and interests to me [...] I practised speaking comfortably and colloquially to a friend as we chatted about exchange and travel. She had a really open attitude and for that I’m very thankful. My language partner had gone on exchange to France before so we talked about how we both really valued learning new languages and how being bilingual was important to us. We also discussed how we’d like to go on exchange again. I think part of the reason she was so open and understanding to me was because she had also gone on exchange and knew what it was like to not be fluent in a language.” (underline added by researcher)

Selena described herself as “lucky” because of the common grounds between her and her language partner for which she was “very thankful”, illustrating the significance of the language partner in her sojourn life. In the underlined sentence, she mentioned that her partner “was so open and understanding” – common traits mentioned by many other participants about their partners. However, from Selena’s extensive narrative we are clearer that the positive trait was not simply a matter of personality – it might be rooted in students’ perception of common grounds. Her last sentence implied that “not being fluent in a language” was no more embarrassing because of her partner’s understanding. Given that most university students in China are language learners (e.g., of English), the common experience might help relieve the anxiety of students.

Second, language partners have the conscious goal to assist learners’ language learning. Evidence for corrective feedback and meaning negotiation offered by language partners can be found in the data. One example is a detail mentioned by Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) of her partner: “He took me to this entrance (of the host university) which is like the more well-known one [...] we walk in passing these signs and then we were trying to read them, and he would give me a chance, but then if I got stuck or if I read it wrong he would correct them.” This statement shows that the student partner created language learning opportunities for the learners, as well as offering corrective feedback when she needed it.

This sub-section has shown that casual interaction with language partners not only eased the learners’ anxiety in using the L2 but also introduced pedagogical goals. This dual

benefit is also supported by previous research. Badstübner & Ecke (2009) report that their students mostly used L2 with tandem partners, constituting the greatest amount of L2 contact with NSs in the out-of-class setting. Magnan and Back (2007) suggest that using the L2 with language partners who are native speakers of that language can get the best results from *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) – a concept developed by Vygotsky (1978) and further applied to SLA. It illustrates “international space within which a learner is enabled to perform above his/her own current level of competence with the assistance of another” (Kurata, 2007: p.11). A lack of ZPD in interaction and L2 use might be detrimental to language learning, as Magnan and Back’s evidence shows a negative correlation between L2 contact with L1 and students’ proficiency. This study corresponds to previous research and argues that two factors contributed to the best results of ZPD, namely the common grounds between learners and their language partners, as well as the conscious instruction and feedback from the partners.

Although beneficial, the language partner program had its drawback in that the language partners needed to study for their own university courses and could become too busy to accompany our program participants sometimes. Therefore, it was necessary for participants to seek other resources for social interaction out of class. Their living environment might be a “safer” zone to explore available resources, which will be the focus of the next sub-section.

4.4.2 Campus environment: a “safer” zone

Students also had opportunities to talk to acquaintances in their local living environment or on campus. These interactions can be seen as taking place in a “safer” zone because it is the environment with which students were more familiar. The following will present evidence of students’ interaction with two communities: (1) the staff in the student service sectors; (2) other university students on campus.

First, most participants mentioned their exchanges with service staff in the student apartment complex, such as the front desk receptionists, staff at the gym and the café, the shop assistants at the convenient store as well as the cleaning staff at the canteen. The students found the staff working in the apartment were very friendly, so they could chat with them too regardless of their limited linguistic ability. For example, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) said: “I spoke to the cleaning ladies of the dormitory in Chinese every time they came to my room. They were always chatty, courteous, and

friendly.” Through these exchanges with local acquaintances, the students were exposed to fluent Chinese spoken at a natural speed in real life.

Apart from these random chats, the need to survive also promoted interaction in the service settings on campus. Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) described an encounter at the student canteen. She mentioned that in the first week she just went to the “buffet-like” areas for food because no speaking Chinese was required which was “safer” in her own words. However, in the second week, she started wanting to try something new, so she went to another stall where ordering the food from a staff was needed. In the following scenario, Jenny was trying to negotiate with the staff and finally successfully received assistance from them:

“I was like pointing over to counter and, ‘I want this, I don’t want this’, and then probably because they knew my Chinese is limited they actually reconfirmed with me and like, you know, they kinda like, spoon it up and like, ‘so this you don’t want, this you don’t want’ ... and I was like, ‘yeah.’”

When Jenny was telling me the story, her revoicing of the staff’s utterances was slower than normal speed. It suggested that in her opinion the staff were trying to be very nice and patient with her. It can be seen that the staff were showing understanding and treating her nicely.

Second, since a mixture of international students and local students resided in the apartment block, it also provided rich resources for interaction with them. Rebecca (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) told a story about her experience of helping another international student translate Chinese:

“I was doing some homework in the café, and the receptionist came to me and asked me to help translate, because they had a student there who couldn’t speak Mandarin, and they couldn’t speak that much English. I had to use Pleco for a lot of words because I couldn’t figure out how to explain things... I’m so happy I can remember how to say those words now...”

According to Rebecca, helping the café staff and other international students living in the apartment reinforced her Chinese vocabulary. In addition to other interactional students, the participants also had opportunities to be acquainted with domestic students. A brief example would be Joyce’s (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) most memorable encounter

with a local student. When she got lost while searching for the correct exit to leave the host university and turn to the apartment, she “luckily” met a male student “who was very nice and kind enough to walk all the way back with me to the right place” – because they both lived in the same student apartment. As can be seen, living in the student apartment created opportunities for shared life experience among program participants and other university students, which increased the possibility of sporadic interaction.

All the examples documented above point to the friendly atmosphere of the campus environment for interpersonal interaction, which can be seen as a “safer” zone for students. The accommodation placement – the student apartment in this study – afforded plentiful opportunities for interaction since it constructs a dynamic “microcosm” of the social world outside. The students were able to socialise with native speakers in all sorts of daily life settings – ordering food in the student canteen and I, shopping in the retail store, engaging in service encounters, dealing with the public transport, etc. While many ICS studies related to accommodation focus on the homestay arrangement (e.g. Castañeda & Zirger, 2011), evidence also shows that the department or dormitory setting should not be devalued. Magnan and Back (2007) argue that the homestay experience does not necessarily surpass the dormitory arrangement based on quantitative correlation. As a matter of fact, Rivers (1998) finds that the homestay may be detrimental to interpersonal communication and meaningful output if the students disfavour interaction with the host families.

The potential benefits of interacting with random acquaintances in one’s familiar living environment is highlighted by Smith (2002). As the author argues, L2 is better acquired in a more loosely integrated net with a lower level of density and relational intensity, instead of in tight and intense communities. This is because knowing these informal host acquaintances in the immediate living environment will “make you feel better about where you are” and “make you feel safe” (Smith, 1996, cited in Smith, 2002: p. 155). In this sense, the student apartment can give students more diverse interaction compared to homestay, while in a “safer zone” compared to the world outside.

The next section will turn to the efforts that students paid to step out of this safe zone and break the “bubble” of the student cohort.

4.4.3 City exploration: breaking the “bubble”

Although it was undoubtedly challenging, a number of students in this study managed to take proactive movements in interacting with local residents on public transport, at tourist sites or through service encounters while exploring Beijing. Interacting in the wider social

environment required more courage and efforts from students, but it was also very rewarding. This section will provide two examples to illustrate this.

The first example comes from Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) and shows how lack of courage and confidence might prohibit interaction in the social environment. Hiroko expressed her regret at not having sufficient interaction with native speakers by telling a contrasting story about her peers: “**I wasn't daring enough** then to fully make use of the surroundings like some of my classmates did. This particular male student even chatted up taxi drivers in Chinese by asking *nijia you ji kou ren* (你家里有几口人, how many family members do you have).” Interestingly, Hiroko actually chatted a lot with the staff members such as the cleaning ladies at the student apartment (see the previous section), which means in the safe confinement of the campus, she could easily interact with the environments around. Such a contrast demonstrates that interaction with native speakers in the social environment was indeed more demanding than in the campus environment.

A second example coming from Selena (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) was a successful case, indicating that with more courage and efforts from students, the interaction in the social environment can be quite rewarding. Selena wrote as follows:

“**The most interesting** thing was probably on a day I went to get my nails done at a salon. The girls there were really nice and we chatted about what school was like in China and what exchange was like [...] It was a great opportunity to practise my language as they were very patient and forgiving with my mistakes and inability to completely express my meaning. **I'm glad I had the courage** to speak up and start conversation rather than just sit there in silence for an hour.” (emphases added by researcher)

Selena's expressions emphasised in the text indicate that this memory of stepping out of her comfort zone and trying to “start conversation” was rewarding because it was “interesting” and made her “glad” about it. Although she had the choice of just “sitting there in silence for an hour”, she, unlike Hiroko, was “daring enough” to “fully make use of the surroundings” (see Hiroko above). From the content of her chat with the girl at the salon, we can see that she not only practised the language but also got to know more about China in this interaction.

Both cases above suggest that stepping out of the campus and roaming around the city outside serves a real opportunity for students to delve deeper into the authentic life of local

people and encounter social realities. The “cold contacting” of striking up conversation with unknown individuals in public places has been found in the previous literature to be one of the most common strategies learners used to develop social networks for language learning and use (Dewey et al., 2013). In the Chinese context, Su and Spagna (2017) note that sojourn students in China perceived traveling around to be the most memorable and meaningful experience during their stay. The students in their study admired China’s vast territory, its spectacular views, the prosperity of large cities, the beauty of small towns, and the efficiency and punctuality of high-speed railways. Some students also visited ethnic minority areas and Chinese friends’ families to explore the rich multiculturalism of China. They argue that these experiences enriched students’ knowledge about the true life of ordinary Chinese people. This study agrees with their argument in this respect. Taking proactive moves to interact in the social environment could be challenging, but once the learners break the “bubble” and step out to explore, the rich resources for interaction and learning pay off the efforts.

The three sub-sections above focused on interpersonal interactions; as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the ecological perspective also values technology-mediated interaction, therefore, the next sub-section will turn to the mediation of technology. In Section 4.2.3 survey results have found the important role that WeChat played in facilitating online interaction. The next sub-section will provide more data from student interviews.

4.4.4 “WeChat”: bridging connections

All interviewees but one²¹ mentioned that they used WeChat²² very frequently during the program and agreed that WeChat was an essential tool for connecting sojourners with others in China. Since most social networking sites that students used in Australia (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) were blocked in China, WeChat turned out to be the most convenient tool for students to contact peers and language teachers. This section will highlight three advantages of WeChat for social networking and learning: (1) community building; (2) after-class learning opportunities; (3) long-term impact on the post-program learning.

First, using WeChat through the group chat function was critically important for community building and promoting a sense of belonging. Many students expressed that they used WeChat for consultation, organising activities, and caring for each other’s health. These

²¹ One student, Ying (Female, Age 70, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) did not use WeChat because she did not use a mobile phone in general.

²² See Chapter 3 for the explanation of how WeChat was used during the program and Section 4.2.3 for the evidence from surveys that the use of it was significant for students’ learning.

helped reduce the anxiety of being in an unfamiliar environment. Cheng (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) articulated this sense of belonging on WeChat in comparison with Facebook:

Cheng: “When you share Moments [in WeChat], you share to people you are more familiar with. On Facebook, you will add people you don’t really know, but on WeChat you will only add people you know. I think this is better. And in terms of group chat... Facebook also has group chat, but the one on WeChat, it has a *zhuti* (主题, topic).”

Researcher: “You mean, people in the group would have more in common?”

Cheng: “Yeah, that’s right.”

The word “topic (*zhuti*)” in her narrative revealed the sense of commonality. With a common background (language learners from Australia) and common goals (learning Chinese and exploring China), students had a stronger sense of community. The construction of such a community was a benefit of the ICS, as Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) mentioned that before the program, she always had WeChat but never used it, because she did not know who to talk to. But now that WeChat was the central tool for communication in China, the ICS obviously helped to make WeChat more relevant to the students’ daily needs.

Second, students also appreciated the instant feedback that teachers provided on WeChat in after-class hours, which enabled them to interact and learn regardless of space and time. Hiroko’s (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) statement was an example: “I was most impressed by the prompt, succinct, and helpful feedback I received [on WeChat]. The teacher [knew] that the feedback needs to be prompt in order for them to be helpful [...] [and were] totally dedicated to our learning [...] Very impressed.” According to Hiroko, prompt feedback from teachers after class was not only helpful for learning, but also contributed to a better teacher-student relationship. She used the word “impressed” twice to emphasise that the instant feedback received on WeChat was indeed a significant aspect in her sojourn.

Finally, WeChat also had a long-term impact on the post-program interaction. When they were interviewed three months after the program, 12 of the 17 interviewees were still contacting their teachers, peers and language partners through WeChat. They commented on each other’s photos in Moments and chatted about daily activities. The sustained connection

and its facilitation in language learning is best demonstrated in Dom's (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) narrative:

“[WeChat is useful] because even till today I still talk to my *Yuban* (语伴, language partner) *youdeshihou* (有的时候, sometimes), like *fa zhang zhaopian* (发张照片, sending a photo) and using like the “speak button” that you can practise in Chinese... I sent messages to my Chinese teachers when *Chunjie* (春节, Spring Festival), *yi ge Chunjie kuaile* (一个春节快乐, a message for Happy Spring Festival).”

Dom, from the post-beginner's class, frequently used Chinese when talking about his experience, confirming the connections maintained on WeChat benefited students' learning at the post-sojourn stage.

The examples in this sub-section have shown that the virtual community constructed on WeChat can blur the boundary between spatial and temporal differences which facilitates distant and instant interaction. Similar observations can be found in the literature on technology-mediated and mobile-assisted language learning. Previous studies have demonstrated that the Internet creates possibilities for exploratory, communicative, and collaborative learning (Hoven, 2006). In SLA, the interactional features of online chatting beyond class generate a learner-centred discourse community which promotes communicative autonomy (Darhower, 2002). The online community can elicit more language production, thanks to the reduced level of anxiety and power imbalance as well as increased control over tasks and confidence (Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006). In a word, the affordance of a virtual space such as on WeChat corresponds to the mediation role that the *techno-subsystem* (Johnson & Pupilampu, 2008) plays which facilitates learners' interaction in other interactive levels.

4.4.5 A common challenge: insufficient organised out-of-class activities

The previous sections have demonstrated ample opportunities for interaction in the out-of-class setting, however, a common challenge mentioned by interviewees was that organised out-of-class activities seemed to be insufficient. Such a regret was expressed in Jack's (Male, Age 19, Heritage, Intermediate, email) utterance: “Unfortunately, I did not attend any other

extra-curricular activities due to how hectic our schedules were. When I wasn't in class, I was out with Australian friends either sightseeing or simply exploring the city.”²³

In fact, there were some student activities available on campus that the participants could have been attended, but most participants were unaware of them. For example, there was a Chinese Speaking Contest for Foreign Students that every student was welcome to attend as an audience (field note 2015/12/10). There was also a cultural seminar the topic of which was Chinese language and dialects (field note 2015/12/7). However, only 4 students in the interview mentioned these. Many others were unaware of these activities or not interested. Students wished that they could have been given more information about student clubs or societies. In Irene's (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) words: “I would have been more encouraged to engage in extra-curricular activities if I had been told more about them!”

The lack of organised out-of-class activities may constrain the use of the resources available in out-of-class communities. For example, some students mentioned that although the language partner program was helpful, without careful organisation of gathering events, the chances for interaction could not be maximised. In Survey 2, most students mentioned that the average meeting time with language partners was only one or two days weekly, and the activities they did were mostly limited to dining. In addition, the interaction in the campus environment also required more explicit organisation. Some students said they wished they could have organised events that involved both participants and other local students. Moreover, the lack of organised activities may also prohibit interaction in the social environment at large, as many students had security concerns when exploring the city on their own. As Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) explained, one of the reasons she did not actively take on other extra activities is because she would be worrying about coming back late to the apartment in the unfamiliar environment. Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) was also told by her parents to never go out of the campus alone, which increased her anxiety about exploring the city herself. Students' perception of the lack of organised out-of-class activities deserves more attention from program designers.

²³ There was also an open-ended question in Survey 2 about the activities that students attended. Eight people mentioned traveling and sight-seeing. Six mentioned watching movies. Four wrote ordering food at restaurants. Another four attended student activities on campus, including watching a Chinese speech competition and attending a seminar on Chinese culture. The others left the answer to this question blank. As can be seen, very few students could articulate specific organised events.

The short duration of the program might be a factor, but previous research has shown that even a longer period of study abroad, in China particularly, cannot ensure sufficient campus activities. For example, Wen and Zhou (2009) focusing on heritage learners show that although students had high expectations of and interests in participating in campus cultural activities, most of them were disappointed because they did not reap the benefits. Some learners felt that mainland students tended to study very hard and disliked socialising. The researchers suggest that the campus community network is essential to international students in China because it is the main space to participate in after-class activities and expand social networks according to their own interests. Their argument is supported by Su and Spagna (2017)'s finding that the best-adapted sojourn students in China are those who are able to actively participate in student organisations and activities.

In a word, the evidence indicated that organised out-of-class activities were not only a desire of the participants but also a program intervention that could have promoted more interaction in different levels of spaces outside the classroom given better design and organisation.

4.5 Discussion: maximising the affordance for interaction in multi-levelled settings

The previous sections of this chapter have analysed the *affordances* of each level of environment during ICS for interaction opportunities that potentially trigger learning. This section further discusses how to maximise the interaction in each level of the settings. Four layers of space for interactions are especially worth mentioning: the classroom, the campus, the social space, and the virtual space. ICS program designers need to view the ICS as a multi-levelled intervention/affordance involving these four spaces and consider the ways of maximising each of them. Figure 4.5 visualises the multi-level settings in the ICS.

The multi-levelled affordance of the short-term ICS

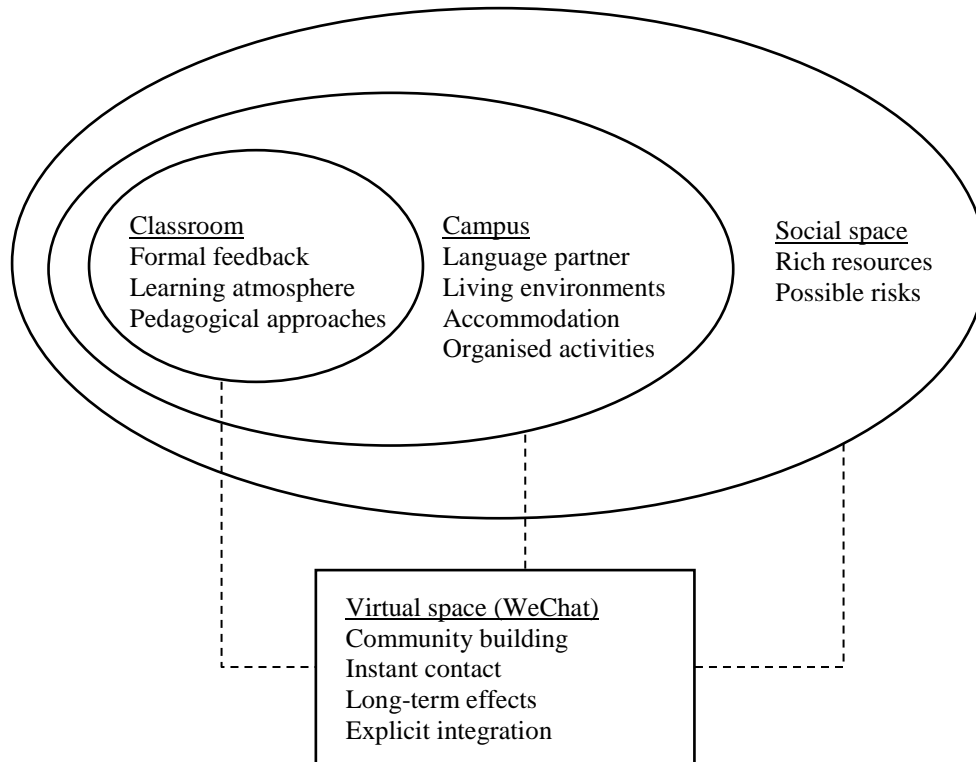


Figure 4.5: The multi-levelled affordance of the short-term ICS for interaction

In the space of **classroom**, the nature of ICS (i.e., its timeframe, structure, and purpose) can provide exceptional advantages for plentiful classroom interactions to occur. Although the interaction and learning process in the second language classroom (i.e., the ICS classroom) might share considerable procedural similarities with the foreign language classroom (i.e., the home-country classroom) (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000), the nature of ICS actually endowed the interaction with some specialties. For one thing, collective living as a cohort on a daily basis contributed to a closer and firmer rapport among participants, encouraging interaction and relieving the tension of receiving corrective feedback. For another thing, the interactive learning engendered by various pedagogical approaches is also an advantage of the ICS context due to its heavy reliance on longer instruction hours and contact times (e.g. interactive activities and games). To maximise these advantages in the ICS classrooms, appropriate pedagogical approaches are required. According to Bunce et al. (2010), successful teachers are capable of making the classes more interactive by holding students' attention with student-centred pedagogy. They note that since students do not pay attention throughout the entire class, certain techniques are needed so the students do not drift off or be absent minded. Even with the memorisation activities, pedagogical approaches can turn the

mechanical process into interactive meaning-making. The interactive class activities perceived as beneficial by students reported in this study can inform future programs.

In the space of **campus**, campus life as a “safer zone” can facilitate out-of-class interactions with different communities at its best. Campus life plays a special role in students’ sojourn life. It is out of the confines of the classroom walls but still protected by the institutional environment, in which students mostly interact with people they meet regularly. This chapter has discussed the opportunities for interaction from three aspects which are related to the campus life: the language partner program (Section 4.4.1), the accommodation placement (Section 4.4.2), and extra-curricular activities on campus (Section 4.4.5). It was found that while the former two features facilitated interaction to a great extent, the latter was perceived insufficient. To maximise campus life during the ICS, more organised extra-curriculum activities are needed. As (Whitworth, 2006) indicates, more support from program organisers is necessary in order to encourage international students to step out of the traditional classroom and engage in a wider variety of communities. Built upon the findings in this sub-section, a possible program intervention might be organising group activities (with clearer goals and instructions) for students with all other language partners and other students living in the same apartment block, so that the students would not limit their interaction to peers or only one language partner.

The **social space** outside university has great potential in breaking the “bubble” of the student cohort for interaction on more sporadic occasions with a wider range of communities. To maximise the resources in social life, students not only need to be encouraged to step out of their comfort zone but also need to be reminded of safety issues. Many studies emphasising the value of social environments for sojourners’ networking suggest students seek interaction opportunities as much as possible. For example, Liu (2010) argues that group-travel activities isolate students from native speakers and constrain the use of the target language, therefore should be minimised. However, in faculty-led and cohort -based ICS programs, the faculty should play the critical role of “Dean of Students”, that is, managing the non-academic lives of students including physical and mental health and safety issues (Goode, 2007).

Although in this study students did not encounter any threats to their personal safety and they all had a safe trip, some students still felt reluctant to interact with locals because of safety concerns (Section 4.4.5). On one hand, the sense of anxiety originated from the unfamiliarity with the target environment. This is in line with Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, and Shao (2010)’s finding that students’ and their parents’ views on risks to security in host

countries were mainly constructed via the media, the Internet, newspapers and through conversations with those who lived in the target country. However, negative news is not necessarily universal. The students need to be made aware that their sense of insecurity may arise from cultural misunderstandings (Deans, 2011) and excessive worry may prevent them from seizing good opportunities. On the other hand, students also need to be reminded about situations in which real risks might occur. Although sojourners at university level are young adults “coming of age” who are more capable of handling emergencies (Mitchell et al., 2017), they would also seek continuity of many aspects of their usual leisure activities, such as going out to pubs, clubs and parties, and liquor consumption (Selwyn, 2008, cited in Mitchell et al., 2017). Precautions about any risks while social networking with strangers during leisure activities are undoubtedly crucial for students’ personal wellbeing in China. An informative pre-departure session, close monitoring of students’ social networking activities during the sojourn, and developing program practitioners’ professional knowledge (Rhodes, Loberg, & Hubbard, 2014) are possible areas of development.

The **virtual space** – the online community constructed through the mobile app WeChat – also promoted interaction opportunities. Maximising these functions on WeChat will benefit interaction in other levels as a result of the bridged connections. For example, integrating WeChat into the formal language curriculum may facilitate classroom pedagogy; establishing chat groups involving learners and their language partners may help expand the learning community; organising campus or social events by information sharing on WeChat may link the learners to more diverse real-life contexts. To maximise the virtual space, explicit instructions and program intervention might be necessary. In this study many students still used WeChat in English. WeChat was primarily used as a communication tool and not explicitly integrated into the language curriculum. Some useful resources on WeChat such as Subscriptions, Moments, video and audio calls were not sufficiently deployed by participants. Particularly in the ICS context, other researchers found mobile blogging or journal writing to be efficient ways for learners to document, share, and reflect on their study abroad experiences (Burston, 2014; Comas-Quinn, Mardomingo, & Valentine, 2009; Godwin-Jones, 2004). These activities will help learners engage with the foreign culture (Comas-Quinn et al., 2009) as well as foster intercultural development (Kukulska-Hulme & Bull, 2009). In a word, it is important to increase students’ awareness of using the virtual space strategically and, ultimately, promote networking in the target language through this cutting-edge social tool in China.

4.6 Concluding remarks

To conclude, this chapter has answered the question of to what extent the ICS facilitated interaction in different settings. It found that the Sydney-Beijing ICS Program facilitated students' interaction in the multi-levelled environment in China – the classroom, the campus, the social space and the virtual space. Informed by an ecological perspective, the chapter has focused on the affordances for interaction in multiple environmental systems.

In the classroom, the affordances provided in the ICS were formal corrective feedback, the learning atmosphere derived from a sense of “comradery” with peers, and pedagogical approaches that helped to engage students. Some of these classroom features were unique to the ICS due to its different class structure and learning goals from the non-ICS courses. On campus, the affordances discussed included the language partner program, immediate living environments, accommodation, and organised campus activities. They provided “safer zones” for interaction than off campus. In the social space, this study has found that rich resources were available. While grasping opportunities required the courage to break the “bubble” – the safe confinement of the campus life - the gains would pay off the efforts. In the virtual space, the mobile social networking tool WeChat afforded community building, after-class learning, long-term impact on the post-program learning. Despite these advantages, a common challenge of insufficient organised out-of-class activities was experienced by the cohort, which might hinder the full exploitation of resources in the out-of-class spaces listed above.

The findings have sharpened our understanding of the dynamic affordances for L2 learners' interaction in China, which has not been fully explored in the SA-in-China literature. Suggestions provided have highlighted organised campus activities to maximise the resources on campus and mitigate the risks off campus, and explicit intervention on the use of WeChat to link other levels of interaction in the virtual space. Since much research cautions that students often do not take full advantage of the opportunities offered by ICS (Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Miller & Ginsberg, 1995; Wilkinson, 2000, cited in H. Allen, 2010), it is vital to make them aware of the available resources in the target environment with more program intervention. The next two chapters will move on to investigate how these interaction opportunities in multi-levelled settings facilitated students' language learning (Chapter 5) and culture learning (Chapter 6).

Chapter 5 Language use and acquisition in the program

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has reported findings about the first key construct of in-country study (ICS) – interaction. This chapter will investigate the second key construct, that is, language learning, by answering the following question and sub-questions:

Q2: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to language learning?

Q2-1. Did the ICS facilitate students' amount of, and time on, the use of the Chinese language (CL)?

Q2-2. Did the ICS facilitate students' use of the CL in authentic contexts?

Q2-3. How did students interpret their experience of language use in authentic contexts?

Q2-4. How can the ICS be maximised for using the language in authentic contexts?

This chapter will use data from surveys, observations and interviews to answer these questions. The theoretical foundation of the analysis is an ecological perspective towards language learning, which embraces both the value of language use on the social plane and the acquisition process on the individual plane. Language learning is shaped by and emergent from real-life events, involving the creation of incentives and learning resources to use the language. Two critical issues are the awareness of language variability (Shohamy, 2007) and talking analytically about language (Kramsch, 1993). Hence, this chapter will examine language learning not only in terms of the amount of language use but also in terms of the nature of language use for authentic meaning negotiation and self-expression, which, as will be uncovered, potentially leads to language awareness.

The chapter will be structured as follows. **Section 5.2** will report survey results which illustrate that students perceived the amount of time to use CL (Q2-1) and their ability to use CL in authentic contexts (Q2-2) were enhanced during the ICS. **Section 5.3** and **Section 5.4** analyse data from interviews and observations in depth to explain how authentic language learning in class and utilising the authentic resources for language use out of class were realised in the ICS (Q2-1, Q2-2). **Section 5.5** moves from the external use of CL to the internal process, explores students' analytic thinking of these authentic experiences,

challenging some presumptions about language learner and standard language (Q2-3).

Section 5.6 will discuss these findings in relation to the “seamless” feature of the learning experience during the ICS for authentic language use and learning (Q2-4). **Section 5.7** will highlight key findings and conclude the chapter.

5.2 Survey results: enhanced Chinese language (CL) use in authentic contexts

This section compares the results from the pre-departure survey (Survey 1, see Appendix A) and the end-of-program survey (Survey 2, see Appendix B) regarding students’ CL use and perceived CL ability. Specifically, Section 5.2.1 will revisit some of the results of Scale A and B that have been mentioned in Chapter 4, with a focus on using the CL in different contexts. Next, Sections 5.2.2-5.2.3 will analyse the results of Scale D – Self-perceived Chinese language abilities. The mean score of each item in the scale indicates whether the students in general perceived the ability described by that item as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor. The two dimensions in Scale D – language abilities in class tasks (*Dimension One*) and language abilities in authentic tasks (*Dimension Two*) – will be analysed in Section 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 respectively.

In the following sub-sections, bar charts generated by Excel will be used to illustrate the comparisons between Survey 1 and Survey 2. Results from Paired Sample Tests conducted with SPSS will be presented to show whether the differences are statistically significant. It will be uncovered that students not only perceived that the amount of using the Chinese language (CL) out of class increased during the program, but also their ability in using the CL for authentic tasks was enhanced.

5.2.1 CL use frequencies (revisiting pertinent results of Scale A and B)

Chapter 4 has already analysed the results of Scale A and B which revealed that the ICS program facilitated students’ interaction with teacher, classmates, and native speakers in different settings. Six items in these scales explicitly looked into students’ use of the CL in these interactions, namely:

- a1-3. Answering questions asked by your teachers in class
- a2-3. Speaking Chinese with your classmates in class
- b1-1. Making informal conversation with Chinese native speakers in Chinese
- b2-1. Making informal conversation with your classmates in Chinese after class

b1-2. Asking Chinese native speakers to practice Chinese with you.

b2-2. Asking your classmates to practice Chinese with you after class.

This sub-section revisits the results of these items. The mean scores are presented in Figure 5.1. The results of the Paired Sample Test are shown in Table 5.1, indicating that the differences of scores in Survey 1 and Survey 2 are statistically significant.

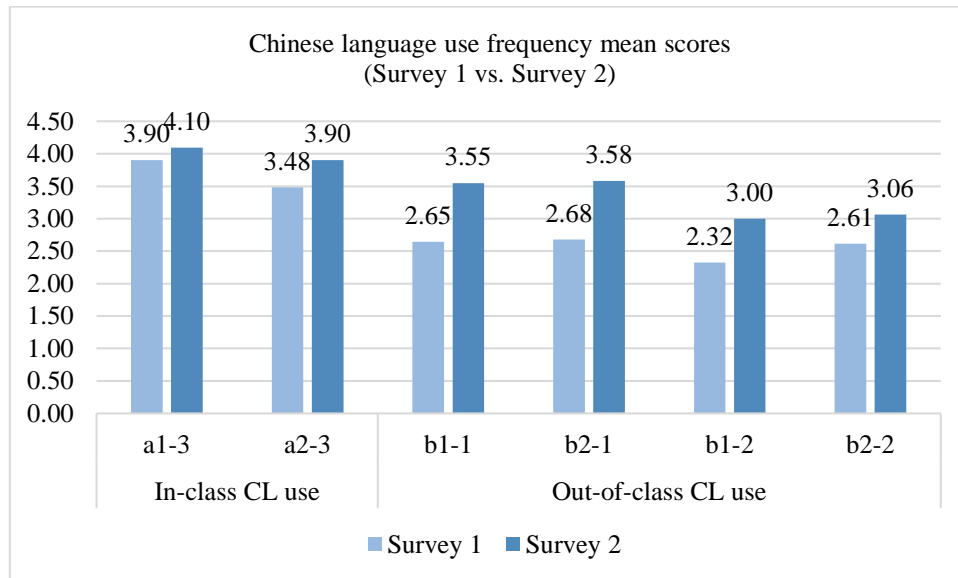


Figure 5.1: Chinese language use frequency mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 5.1: Chinese language use frequency (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_a1.3 - S2_a1.3	-.194	1.167	.210	-.622	.234	-.924	30	.363
Pair 2	S1_a2.3 - S2_a2.3	-.419	1.432	.257	-.945	.106	-1.630	30	.114
Pair 3	S1_b1.1 - S2_b1.1	-.903	1.814	.326	-1.569	-.238	-2.772**	30	.009
Pair 4	S1_b2.1 - S2_b2.1	-.903	1.248	.224	-1.361	-.446	-4.030***	30	.000
Pair 5	S1_b1.2 - S2_b1.2	-.677	1.351	.243	-1.173	-.182	-2.791**	30	.009
Pair 6	S1_b2.2 - S2_b2.2	-.452	1.338	.240	-.942	.039	-1.880	30	.070

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Note: S1 stands for Survey 1; S2 stands for Survey 2

According to Figure 5.1, the mean scores of both items for in-class CL use (a1-3, a2-3) are higher than the items for out-of-class CL use (b1-1, b2-1, b1-2, b2-2), in both Survey 1 and Survey 2, but the scores for the latter four items increased to a greater extent in Survey 2. The results from the Paired Sample Test shown in Table 5.1 further confirmed this finding, in that the scores of items b1-1, b2-1, and b2-2 increased significantly in Survey 2. These findings indicate that although students used Chinese in class more frequently than outside classroom, the amount of informal Chinese language use in out-of-class settings increased tremendously during the ICS.

It implies that the ICS might have the potential to facilitate language use in authentic contexts. The next two sub-sections will further explore perceived CL abilities in class tasks (Scale D – *Dimension One*) and authentic tasks (Scale D – *Dimension Two*).

5.2.2 Perceived CL abilities (class tasks) (results of Scale D-1)

Dimension One in Scale D was designed to examine students' perceived CL abilities in class tasks. It contains eight items listed below:

- d1-1. Listening to and understanding what the teachers say in class
- d1-2. Listening to and understanding textbook or exercise related recordings
- d1-3. Speaking Chinese in class with Chinese teacher
- d1-4. Speaking Chinese in class with classmates
- d1-5. Reading Chinese passages in textbook and workbook
- d1-6. Composing paragraphs in Chinese
- d1-7. Recognising Chinese characters
- d1-8. Writing Chinese characters

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 5.2 and the results of the Paired Sample Test are shown in Table 5.2.

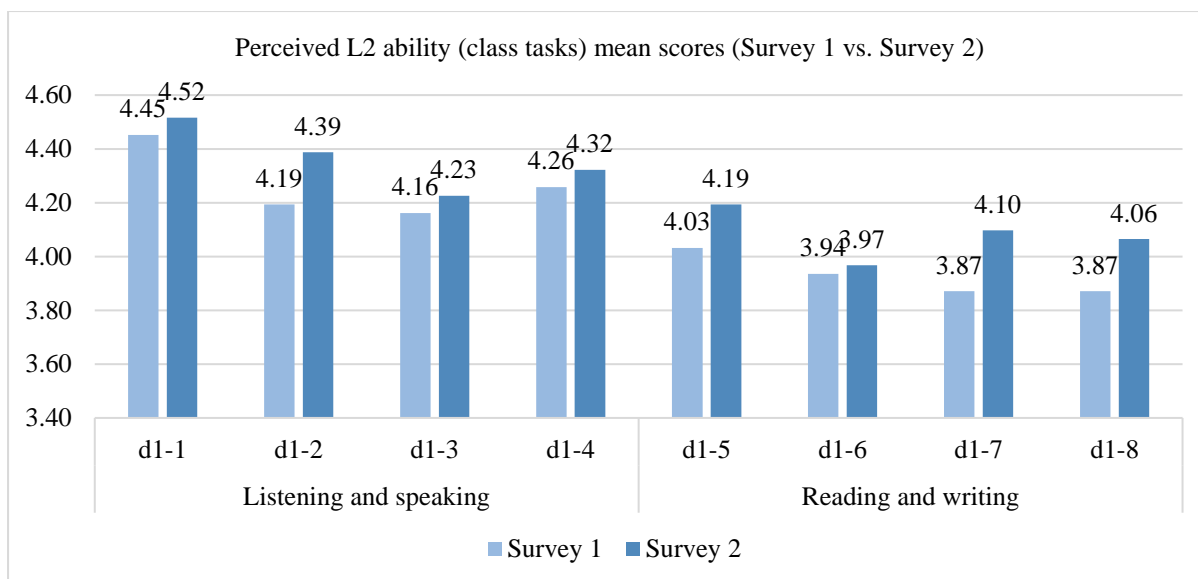


Figure 5.2: Perceived Chinese language ability (class tasks) mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 5.2: Perceived Chinese language ability (class tasks) (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_d1.1 - S2_d1.1	-.065	.892	.160	-.392	.263	-.403	30	.690
Pair 2	S1_d1.2 - S2_d1.2	-.194	.703	.126	-.452	.064	-1.532	30	.136
Pair 3	S1_d1.3 - S2_d1.3	-.065	.998	.179	-.431	.301	-.360	30	.721
Pair 4	S1_d1.4 - S2_d1.4	-.065	.680	.122	-.314	.185	-.528	30	.601
Pair 5	S1_d1.5 - S2_d1.5	-.161	.969	.174	-.517	.194	-.926	30	.362
Pair 6	S1_d1.6 - S2_d1.6	-.032	1.197	.215	-.471	.407	-.150	30	.882
Pair 7	S1_d1.7 - S2_d1.7	-.226	.884	.159	-.550	.098	-1.423	30	.165
Pair 8	S1_d1.8 - S2_d1.8	-.194	1.108	.199	-.600	.213	-.972	30	.339

Note: S1 stands for Survey 1; S2 stands for Survey 2.

Based on Figure 5.2, it can be seen that in general, regardless of the learning context (i.e., ICS or non-ICS), students perceived that their listening and speaking abilities (d1-1 to d1-4) were higher than their reading and writing abilities (d1-5 to d1-8) – possibly due to the

difficulty of recognising and writing Chinese characters since the scores for item d1-7 and d1-8 were amongst the lowest. Apparently, the scores of all items increased in Survey 2, with d1-2, d1-5, d1-7 and d1-8 being most obvious. These increased scores might suggest that the content related to the textbook was easier for students during the ICS, and their abilities in recognising and writing Chinese characters improved. However, from the results of the Pair Sample Test, we can see that none of these increases in scores is statistically significant (Table 6.2). Therefore, although there might be students who perceived some level of improvements in their ability in using Chinese for classwork, it was not a significant feature of the whole cohort. Also, the lack of a significant increase in scores might have resulted from the already high scores in Survey 1 (highest mean = 4.45; lowest mean = 3.87), leaving less space for improvements.

5.2.3 Perceived CL abilities (authentic tasks) (results of Scale D-2)

Dimension Two in Scale D was designed to examine students' perceived CL abilities in authentic tasks out-of-class. It contains five items as follows:

- d2-1. Listening to and understanding Chinese on media products (movies, dramas, etc.)
- d2-2. Listening to and understanding what native speakers (other than teachers) say
- d2-3. Speaking Chinese with native speakers other than teachers
- d2-4. Reading authentic Chinese articles (e.g., newspaper, on the Internet, etc.)
- d2-5. Reading and understanding Chinese contents on the street

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 5.3 and the results of the Paired Sample Test are shown in Table 5.3.

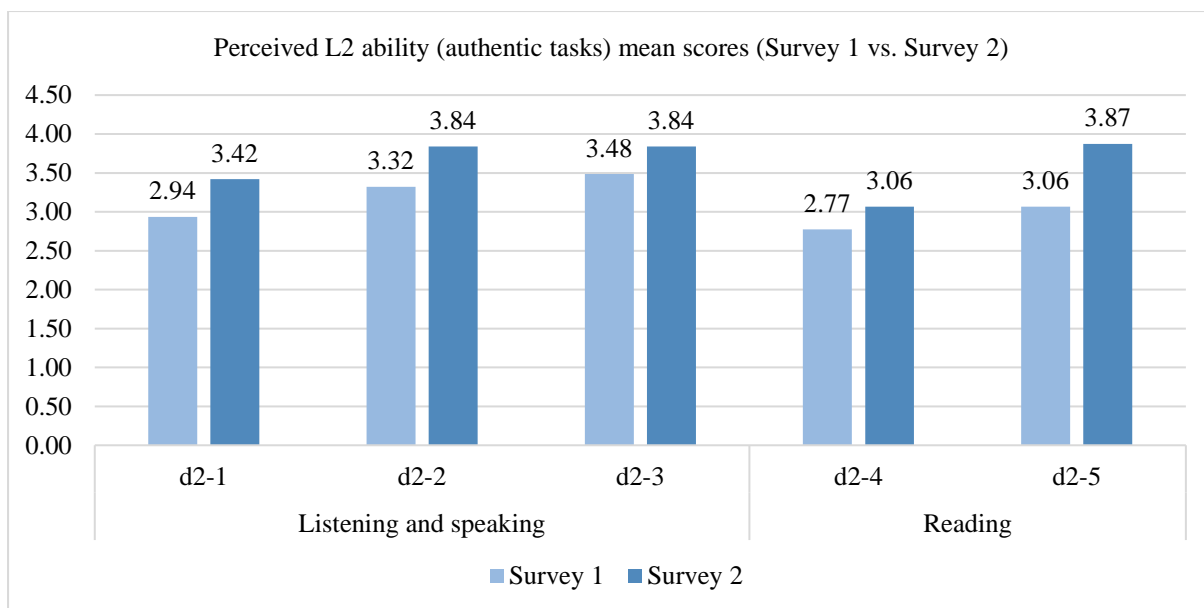


Figure 5.3: Perceived Chinese language ability (authentic tasks) mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 5.3: Perceived Chinese language ability (authentic tasks) (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_d2.1 - S2_d2.1	-.484	1.061	.190	-.873	-.095	-2.540*	30	.016
Pair 2	S1_d2.2 - S2_d2.2	-.516	1.151	.207	-.938	-.094	-2.497*	30	.018
Pair 3	S1_d2.3 - S2_d2.3	-.355	.839	.151	-.662	-.047	-2.356*	30	.025
Pair 4	S1_d2.4 - S2_d2.4	-.290	1.071	.192	-.683	.102	-1.510	30	.142
Pair 5	S1_d2.5 - S2_d2.5	-.806	1.138	.204	-1.224	-.389	-3.946***	30	.000

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Note: S1 stands for Survey 1; S2 stands for Survey 2.

Comparing the mean scores in Figure 5.3 with those in Figure 5.2, two observations can be made. First, understandably, using the language outside of class for authentic purposes was much more difficult than in course-related situations, in ICS and non-ICS alike. Take the scores in Survey 2 for example, in Figure 5.2, the highest score is 4.52 and the lowest score is 3.97. In Figure 5.3, the highest score is 3.87 and the lowest is 2.77. The highest score in

Figure 5.3 for CL use in authentic tasks is even lower than the lowest score in Figure 5.2 for CL use in class tasks. The second observation is that in authentic contexts, the discrepancy between listening/speaking and reading was not as salient as in class tasks. It means that even if students did not encounter serious challenges regarding listening/speaking for formal class tasks, they might still find it difficult to conduct oral communication in authentic environments.

Moving on to compare the change of scores of the items in this scale. Table 5.3 illustrates that all but one items have seen significant increases in scores. The only item did not increase significantly was item “d2-4. Reading authentic Chinese articles (e.g., newspaper, on the Internet, etc.)”. The item with the most significant increase ($p < .001$) was “d2-5. Reading and understanding Chinese contents on the street”. It can be seen that the ICS had powerful impact on students’ perceived CL abilities in authentic contexts, especially in recognising linguistic resources in the environment. A possible explanation was that students had more experience in reading, e.g., the signs, advertising boards, and transportation notice boards during city exploration (as opposed to articles), which made them more aware of their ability in understanding those Chinese contents.

5.2.4 Summary of survey results

Survey results have revealed that the increases of out-of-class CL use and enhanced student abilities in using CL for authentic tasks were significant in the ICS. This finding echoes Ru et al.’s (2011) study on American sojourners’ pedagogical preferences that, compared to longer-term sojourners, short-term students preferred listening, speaking and Chinese character recognition to reading and writing. The researchers argue the most urgent desire of short-term students coming to China is the real application of the language, which gives them the greatest sense of accomplishment and even directly improves their survivability and life quality in China. In comparison, longer-term sojourners have already been adapted to the life in China to a degree, thus emphasise more on reading and writing skills. This study also finds that Australian sojourners perceived their abilities in authentic contexts improved to the greatest extent in the short-term ICS.

The numeric data in the surveys do not explain how the increased amount of CL use and the use of CL for authenticity was achieved during ICS. The following sections (5.3-5.4), drawn on the qualitative data will explain more about these findings and further explore the language learning processes during the program.

5.3 Authentic language learning in class: contextualised CL use

This section reports that language used in the classroom, although not carried out in the “real-life” setting out of class, also contributed to the use of Chinese for authentic purposes.

Authentic learning in the formal classroom is defined as an instructional approach that provides learners with opportunities to develop knowledge “embedded in the social and physical context within which it will be used.” (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2010: p.15). Authentic learning not only provides real-world relevance but also personal meaning to the learner (Radinsky, Bouillion, Lento, & Gomez, 2001). Therefore, authenticity ultimately lies in the “learner-perceived relations between the practices they are carrying out and the use value of these practices.” (Barab, Squire, & Dueber, 2000, p.38). Based on the findings of this study, the contexts promoting authentic CL use can be grouped into three headings: CL use related to authentic social contexts, CL use in *in situ* contexts,²⁴ and CL use in personalised contexts.

5.3.1 CL use related to authentic social contexts

As the students were immersed in the target environment, there were much more opportunities to establish connections between the classroom setting with real-life situations at large.

Many students mentioned in the interviews that one of the best things about the ICS was that they were able to apply the language knowledge learned in the textbook into their sojourn life soon after each class, such as taking transportation, ordering food, or paying for bills. Although these topics were also learned in the home country, students may not have sufficient chances to actually practice them in daily life. As Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) stated:

“All the chapters that were learned helped tremendously with day-to-day situations [...] For example, one of our topics was how to order food, which really helped during our stay since ordering food was the biggest concern for beginner’s Chinese students. The teachers even took us to the restaurant and made sure every student made an order (NO

²⁴ According to the Cambridge Diction, *in situ* refers to in the original place, or the place where something should be (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary>).

PINYIN ALLOWED!) ((original bracketed information with capital letters.)). Which was a really great learning experience.”

The bracketed information with capital letters indicates that students had to read the authentic menu in Chinese characters which usually does not contain Pinyin romanisation. This example may explain the survey finding that some students perceived their abilities in recognising and writing Chinese characters improved (Section 5.2.2), and students’ abilities of reading the content on the street in real life enhanced significantly (Section 5.2.3). From Jessie’s (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) experience, it can also be seen that authentic learning topics not only helped with students’ knowledge of the language itself, but also offered a valuable means for cultural integration. This point will be explicated with more detail in Chapter 6 on culture learning.

Class observation data illustrate in more detail how authentic use of the language was integrated into class activities. Excerpt 5.1 shows an example of students making a skit of possible conversations carried out in a real-life setting – in the Beijing subway station (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters). Before making the dialogues, two preparation tasks were done. The first was reviewing a text involving the expressions useful in the subway setting, such as asking for subway lines, prices, transfer stops. The second was familiarising students with the map of Beijing subway by showing the map on the touch-screen computer (Figure 5.4). On the touch-screen computer, students could easily zoom in and zoom out the map, draw lines for direction and marks for subway stations – foregrounding the process of studying the map *per se* to contextualise language use. These two tasks ensured that the language used in the dialogues was applicable to real-life situations when students were taking the Beijing subway travelling around the city.



Figure 5.4: The touch-screen computer in a classroom at the host university

Excerpt 5.1: A student skit about the Beijing subway

Level of class: post-beginner's

- 01 S1: *ninhao (.) qingwen wo zuo nage xian neng dao Tiananmen (?)*
Excuse me, may I ask which line goes to the Tiananmen?
- 02 S2: (Playing the role of a random passenger) *duibuqi (.) wo bu zhidao (.) qu wen shou piaoyuan ba*
(Playing the role of a random passenger) Sorry, I don't know. You may ask the ticket seller.
- 03 S1: *ninhao (.) qing wen wo zenme neng dao Tiananmen (?)*
Excuse me, may I ask how can I get to the Tiananmen?
- 04 S2: (Playing the role of the ticket seller) *o (.) nihao (1.0) ni xian zuo di wu xian (.) ranhou dao Wudaokou zhuan di yi xian*
(Playing the role of the ticket seller) Oh, hi! You firstly take the fifth line, and then transfer to the first line at Wudaokou.
- 05 *e ranhou (.) dao di liu zhan jiu dao le*
Well and then... you arrive at the sixth stop.
- 06 S1: *e (.) yi zhang piao duoshao qian (?)*
Well... how much is a ticket?
- 07 S2: *um shi (.) liang kuai*
Um, it's... 2 Kuai (Chinese dollar).
- 08 S1: *zhe shi liang kuai qian (.) xiexie*
Here's 2 Kuai, thanks.

- 09 ((After this presentation, the teacher made two comments. She first corrected the misuse of “*di wu xian*” (fifth line) and “*di yi xian*” (first line) in Line 04 noting that they need to use “*wu hao xian*” (No.5 line) and “*yi hao xian*” (No.1 line) for subway lines.
- 10 Then she commented that the Beijing subway used to cost 2 dollars wherever you go, but now, the price depends on the distance you travel.))

In these two students’ dialogue, both S1’s destination and S2’s descriptions of the route were based on the real world. In Line 09, the teacher focused on correcting S2’s misuse of the expressions for subways lines, so that they would not misuse or misunderstand them in real-life situations. In Line 10, the teacher also gave feedback on the content of the dialogue, reminding students of the price of the Beijing subway, so that they could be prepared to pay for the subway. This again echoes Jessie’s (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) comments above that language learning related to authentic social contexts contributed to cultural integration (see more in Chapter 6).

Apart from learning the language that is applicable to real-life situations, students were also encouraged to bring their life experiences in Beijing into the classroom as part of their linguistic resources. Many tasks required students to reflect on their experience in Beijing and share with each other. For example, in a “student photo gallery” task observed in the post-beginner’s class, students shared some photos taken in Beijing and gave short speeches about the stories behind the photos. Vignette 5.1 documents the details of a story presented by one student.

Vignette 5.1: Class activity – Student photo gallery

Level of class: Post-beginner’s

Every student brought a photo taken in Beijing to the class and told the story behind the photo. One student showed the class a photo which was, according to him, his favourite. In the photo, there was an ancient Chinese piece of architecture with a few electronic lines attached. The student explained in Chinese that he took the photo at the Forbidden City with his mobile phone. He said there was no “background” ((trying to use the newly learned word 背景 *beijing* for background)) to the photo, but he thought the colour of the scene was amazing. What he liked most about the photo was the

combination of Chinese ancient history and modern technology ((trying to use an unlearned word 技术 *jishu* for technology)). After his speech, the teacher corrected his pronunciation of *jishu*.

In Vignette 5.1, the student brought what he truly saw during his visit to a famous tourist attraction, as well as his own feelings and thoughts into the Chinese class. In his speech, the student applied the new word for “background”, reinforcing its usage. Also, the student used a more advanced word – “technology” – which was not expected to be grasped at his level. However, this word was the key information and directly related to the students’ main ideas, so the teacher corrected his inaccurate pronunciation. In this way, the student could learn the words more relevant to his own experience.

The examples above have indicated that authentic learning in the ICS not only provided students rich authentic linguistic resources but also stimulated them to take the opportunity for authentic sociocultural observation and experience sharing. Students at the home university cannot achieve the same level of authentic language learning, since they do not have those out-of-class experiences to bring into the classroom, and the class time may not allow every single student to share their experiences in class.

5.3.2 CL use in *in situ* contexts

Observation data provide evidence that students used Chinese in *in situ* contexts – that is, used Chinese to express information without moving it from its original place (see the explanation of *in situ* in Footnote 23). Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) maintained that the classroom is a site where *real* communication takes place and participation in classroom interactions is an integral part of participating in the social system being learned. This subsection will analyse the data from two aspects: first, using CL for classroom management; second, using CL to discuss or describe objects or phenomena within the classroom. It will be shown that the language classroom is not separated from the social context – it is, in fact, part of the social context.

First of all, the classroom is a real-life place for meaning negotiation, therefore, socialising into the use of classroom management language is also part of language learning for authentic purposes. For example, the Chinese word *xiuxi* (休息) is a common expression used between two class sessions for “to take a break”. Excerpt 5.2 and 5.3 (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters) show how students gradually acquired this word

through classroom management and eventually used it in a more advanced sentence structure after a week's study.

Excerpt 5.2: *xiuxi* (to take a break)

Level of class: post-beginner's

T = Teacher, S = Student

01 T: *women xiuxi yixia*

Let's take a break.

02 S: What are we doing now?

→ 03 T: <*xiuxi*> (pointing to her watch)

To take a break.

04 S: *xiuxi:::* is it break (?)

05 T: *dui. xiuxi*

Yes, break.

From the date of this excerpt, we can see that the interaction happened at the very beginning of the program. When the teacher said it was time for a break, some students could not understand and responded in English. The teacher did not explain the meaning of *xiuxi* in English. Instead, she pointed to her watch (Line 3), indicating she was saying something related to time. The student soon understood what the teacher was saying. In a later date during the program, another case when the teacher used *xiuxi* was observed. But this time, the students reacted differently. This second occasion is presented in Excerpt 5.3.

Excerpt 5.3: *xiuxi xiuxi* (to take a break for a while)

Level of class: post-beginner's

01 T: *hao (.) women de ke jiu shang dao zheli le (.) xianzai women xiuxi*

Alright, our class is over. Now let's take a break.

→ 02 S: *xiuxi xiuxi*

Take a break for a while.

03 T: *dui (!) xiuxi xiuxi (h)*

Correct! Take a break for a while! (Laugh)

- Up to you!
- 03 T+Ss: (hh)
- 04 T: *Hao (.) Women shi'er dian xiake.*
OK, we will end our class at twelve.
- 05 *Women jintian yaozuo duoshao zuoye? (h)*
How much homework do we have today? (h)
- 06 Ss: (2.0)
- 07 S2: *Ting nide* ↑
Up to you?
- 08 Ss: [(hh)
- 09 T: (hh)] *S2 shuo le women dajia yao zuo duoshao zuoye tingwode*
(hh) Student 2 has said that I am the one who decides how much homework you need to do today.
- 10 *suoyi dajia ruguo jue de henduo::*
So if you think it is too much ...
- 11 Ss: (hh)

In Line 1 when the teacher asked when to end the class, S1 responded immediately with *ting ni de* in Line 2, demonstrating his success in inserting the expression in a real-life situation (note that since some other learning activities took place after learning the structure as stated in the underlined sentence, the use of the structure was emergent rather than an intentional practice). In Line 5, the teacher further asked the amount of homework to be assigned – with some laughter at the end. The teacher's laughter implies that she knew it was quite unusual for a teacher to ask students such a question. S2 tried to experiment with the use of *ting ni de* in Line 7 with an interrogative tone, implying her suspicion about the appropriateness of the conduct. The teacher laughed and accepted the answer in Line 9 – 10, conveying an underlying meaning that “it was Student 2 who authorised me the right to give you as much homework as I want, so if you think it was too much, it was not me to blame”. From students' reaction in Line 11 we know that they understood the teacher's statement as an attempt to address humour.

In this example, the humorous encounter was initiated by S1 and S2's experimentation with a newly learned expression in classroom management, again in an *in situ* context, which further constructed the humorous reality in the classroom challenging the traditional power relationship. The effects of challenging the classroom power relationship on students' cultural

perceptions will be elucidated in Chapter 6. The point made here is that viewing the language classroom as an integral part of the social system, classroom language use is simultaneously emergent from, and constitutive of, life reality for authentic purposes.

The above examples have collectively demonstrated that the classroom experience can also be a real-life experience if we treat the classroom space as an integral part of the social environment. Emergent opportunities for language use in the classroom are valuable resources for authentic language learning.

5.3.3 CL use in personalised contexts

Authentic language use was also evident in using the language in personalised contexts which were genuinely relevant to students' own lives. This section will explicate that personalised contexts made the language use more relevant to students' own interests, self-expressions, and creativity. This point is in alignment with an ecological perspective which is interested in how the language learners are cultivated into the "authors" of the content in learning tasks in addition to linguistic and communicative skills (van Dam, 2002; Bannink, 2002).

Many students interviewed in this study mentioned that during the ICS, since the classes were more flexible than in the non-ICS context, students had more opportunities to use the language to discuss things they were truly interested in or found useful. For instance, Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) mentioned:

"The teacher was amazing and made the whole class feel so comfortable in her class and encouraged us to speak to her in Chinese, even if it was unrelated to the coursework [...] which made creating dialogues in Chinese more engaging because we could talk about topics that were true to our real lives. (underlines added by researcher)"

The first underlined sentence in Emily's utterance means that the teacher encouraged authentic use of the language without the constraint of the textbook and course requirement, which was appreciated by Emily. "Unrelated" content to the coursework implied that it was more related to the students' personal lives, which can be seen from the latter underlined sentence that they could talk about topics that "were true to" their real lives. A concrete example of "funny" activities which offered opportunities for learning the language out of

students' own interest was given by Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F):

“Probably the funniest one was when we were talking about like you know, *qu yiyuan kan daifu* (去医院看大夫, go to the hospital to see a doctor). And, someone was asking *zenme shuo* (怎么说, how do you say) like what's the body parts. So there was a big figure on the board of a body [that the teacher drew], and our teacher wrote every single body part. And then someone asked, like how do you say like the 'bottom' ((laugh)). So I think the coolest thing was, when there was vocabulary outside textbook, **we could feel free to ask questions** and then learn different vocabulary **we found useful and interesting.**”

This example echoes Emily's comment that although the names of body parts were not directly related to the course content for assessment, the students would love to learn some of these words that interested them. This activity was also mentioned by Rebecca who said it was her “favourite” moment in class and the body parts on the board was “the funniest looking diagram”. She laughed hard when telling me the story. Obviously, there was great pleasure for students in this lesson. Learning language relevant to students' own interests made the experience more engaging.

Personalised contexts for language use were also more emotion-evoking, so that the use of the language was more pertinent to the expression of self. One example was the “bucket list” task observed in the advanced class. The students were invited to share their future dreams or aspirations in their speeches, as depicted in Vignette 5.2 (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters).

Vignette 5.2: Class activity – Making a bucket list

Level of class: advanced

Every student wrote down his or her bucket list and shared it with the class. The following was the bucket list of one student:

“Wo xiangyao yuanli wenming, changshi yuanshiren de shenghuo, ye xiwang zhaoyige buyong anbujiuban pati de gongzuo. Wo xiang dao bama zhangda de difang zhuyizhu,

liaojie tamen cengjing de shenghuo. Wo xiangyao xue youyong, yinwei conglai meiyou tihui guo fuzai shuimian shang de ganjue. Wo xiangyao du wan yiben shu, yinwei yiben shu kailitou yihou yongyuan ye du bu wan. Wo xiang ershiyi tian bu baoyuan, suiran zhe hen nan. Wo haixiang yang yizhi ming jiao 'Xizang' de tuzi, yinwei Xizang hen leng, er tu mao hen nuan."

[Translation: I want to try out the primitive life far away from civilisation, want to find a job that did not require prescribed order and working routine. I want to live in a place where my parents grew up to know what their lives used to be. I want to learn swimming, because I never know the feeling of floating on the water. I wish to complete reading a book, as I would never finish a book once I started. I wish to live without any complaint for at least 21 days, although it is indeed difficult. I also want to pet a rabbit named after "Tibet", because Tibet is cold, and rabbit hair is nice and warm.]

The task allowed the students to play with their ideas, use their imaginations, and express feelings in the use of distinctive styles and rhythms. Some of the ideas used the language in the textbook (e.g., *anbujiuban de pati*, 按部就班地爬梯, describing a prescribed order and working routine), while others reflected on personal experience (e.g., swimming and reading books) and emotional attachment (parents' homeland). In the last sentence, the student above illustrated the aesthetic dimension of language use, using her imagination to connect two seemingly unrelated concepts (i.e., Tibet and rabbit). The ending words in the last three sentences rhymed (i.e., *wan, nan, and nuan*), signifying her proficiency in Chinese literacy. These evidences point to her superb ability in using the language for self-expression.

The third point is that personalised contexts can be generated through innovative tasks that encourage students to use their creativity. Vignette 5.3 gives a detailed description of how such kind of innovative tasks encouraged learner-generated context for language use.

Vignette 5.3: Class activity – Creating a taxi app

Level of class: Intermediate

The students were learning a lesson about transportation and had already discussed their experience of taking taxis in China. Now, they were asked to develop a taxi

booking app that would be useful for them. Student 1 said she would invent an app for those who wanted to be accompanied by a pet during their journey. Whenever they called a taxi, they could also select the kind of pet sitting in the cab when it reached the passenger. Student 2, based on empirical experience, hoped to create an app that would notify the passenger whenever the taxi driver was taking a roundabout way. Student 3 would like to develop an app combining transportation and dating. The taxi driver could be a very handsome guy or very pretty lady, who offered not only driving the cab but also taking the passenger to scenic spots or restaurants to have a wonderful date. Student 4 would design an app combining taxi booking and food delivery. When someone booked the taxi online, a menu would also be provided. The taxi would deliver the food to the customer so that the latter could enjoy the meal on the way to his/her destination.

This episode shows that the context for language use was not prescribed but generated by students' own creativity. Because the task was supposed to be creative, producing accurate language forms gave way to generating interesting ideas, hence the students were very motivated to engage and produce contents that were more practical (e.g., the roundabout and food delivering) or interesting (e.g., pet and dating) for them. Activities with personal relevance might be an advantage of the ICS context since there were longer class hours and less pressure of assessment to implement these tasks and learning activities which could be slightly "off-task" and not directly related to the course content. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the cohort-based nature of the short-term program helped establish a sense of comradery which might also promote personal experience sharing and self-exposure.

This section reports that the Chinese classes during the ICS program did contribute to the use of Chinese for authentic purposes. The contexts created in the classroom that promoted authentic CL use included those related to authentic social contexts, *in situ* contexts, and personalised contexts. These findings run parallel with the current literature on defining the authenticity of learning as already reviewed at the beginning of this section. To specify, the class activities related to authentic social contexts provided opportunities to learn language that was potentially useful in the real world (Radinsky et al. 2001). The language used in the *in situ* contexts in class also had real-life relevance viewing the classroom as an integral part of the social system (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). The language used in personalised contexts was valued by the learners themselves (Barab, Squire, & Dueber 2000) and offered personal meaning to the learner (Radinsky et al. 2001). The findings of this study

enrich the literature on authenticity by adding evidence from the ICS context (see Section 5.6 for a more detailed discussion). The next section will turn to the authentic use of CL in the out-of-class setting.

5.4 Utilising authentic resources out of class: autonomous CL use

As students were immersed in the target environment, undoubtedly, they had rich authentic resources out of class for language use. However, many researchers are concerned that the immersive nature of study abroad is often not fully utilised by students (Goldoni, 2013). Especially for English speakers learning another language, this challenge is more significant as “in an age of global English” (Mitchell et al., 2017, p.1), many places in international metropolises like Beijing offer English services. Many people in China have a basic command of conversational English as it is a compulsory course in schools. It is worth investigating how students utilised the authentic resources and even created language use affordances themselves during the sojourn.

This study uncovers students’ autonomous CL use out of class in various forms: for surviving social life, self-initiated, collaboration-promoted, and mobile-assisted. The first type will illustrate that language use to survive social life was emergent and dynamic, offering emergent affordances for language learning. The latter three categories will look into students’ proactive moves in seeking out, or creating affordances for, language use, highlighting a contributing factor – the conscious learning goal that students held even when they were outside classroom. The following sub-sections analyse these four aspects in turn.

5.4.1 Surviving social life beyond class

It might be obvious enough that students had to use the target language to survive the target social environment, as Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) articulated:

“Since we were in Beijing, when we went out [...] when we got lost and we had questions, obviously we would be **forced** to like think of the Chinese that we know and construct sentences with the limited Chinese we know. So it kinda did **force** us to like, you know, ‘oh what did I learn?’, ‘I’m pretty sure I learned this.’ [...] It **forced** us to

remember or to think back to our classes, and then, you know the teacher did mention how to say that [...] It just **forced** us to remember it.”

Mary’s use of the word “force” four times in a row well-demonstrates that the learning opportunities during ICS were simply unavailable or unmatched in the home country (Gore, 2005).

However, the data presented here will further illustrate that the use of CL for surviving was emergent and dynamic – it was the emergent need to use the language to solve real-life problems. The emergent nature of language use and learning is the focus of an ecological perspective. The following will give concrete examples.

The first example from Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) shows how language use was emergent and mediated by environmental factors. She described an attempt to buy a pair of boots as a result of the unforeseen weather conditions:

- 01 Jenny: I knew it was like really cold in Beijing, and I thought, okay, I’ll bring [...] a pair of boots which would keep my feet warm. But I did not think that snow would melt into water (laugh), [...] my boots were wet by the end of the second day. So [...] I went to the counter (the front desk at the student apartment) and ask like where could buy like a pair of boots... oh a pair of shoes. Cause I know how to say shoes. And then, they were like asking me, what shoes? And I was like, I was thinking, did I say it wrong? So I was like pointing to my shoes like “shoes”.
- 02 Interviewer: In Chinese? *Xiezi*?
- 03 Jenny: Yeah Chinese. Oh, I just said *xie*.
- 04 Interviewer: Oh okay. [...] How did the counter ask you what kind of shoes?
- 05 Jenny: Eh... What did they say...
- 06 Interviewer: They asked you that question in Chinese right?
- 07 Jenny: Yeah yeah. All this was in Chinese cause, their English was a bit...
- 08 Interviewer: Yeah, and you understood that they were actually asking you about what kind of shoes you wanted?
- 09 Jenny: I remember thinking that, you know, did I say it wrong? So I kinda understand that they were asking me what... like what shoes? [...] And then I didn’t know how to say boots in Chinese, so they just kinda gave up asking

and then they directed me to this department store. And then, they drew a map as well. And then as they were drawing, they were also like repeating the instructions. And I kinda know that they tried to slow down the speed of the speaking, which was good (laugh). And so, yeah like actually, they drew me a map like how to get there.

10 Interviewer: Did you find the shop?

11 Jenny: Yeah, I did (laugh).

The use of Chinese in Jenny's story was emergent from the local weather condition – the snow was very heavy on students' arrival, and from her lack of experience of such weather – her unawareness that the snow would melt into water. Of course, she knew the fact that snow melts, but it only became prominent for her when she was actually experiencing the situation. The ecological orientation values this kind of environmental affordances for emergent language use. The meaningfulness of the linguistic input was also emergent in the process, which can be seen in Line 4 – 9. When I asked her about the exact expressions used in the conversation, she was not able to recall them in the interview. However, she could actually comprehend the process of the real-life interaction back then. Her success in comprehending the Chinese was mediated by rich resources in the environment: the local context, the dawn map, the slowed down speaking speed of the receptionists. And finally, she managed to find the shop – which was the real-life problem to be solved in this exchange.

The language use for surviving social life was also dynamic and flexible, as illustrated by Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) who mentioned how shopping at the supermarket reinforced her language use for meaning negotiation, even though the language might not be “standard” or “accurate”:

“None of them speak English, even the supermarket (laugh). That reinforced to actually learn the new word of the product you wanna buy, or how to say like a basic phrase. You know, ‘I want to buy this, where can I find this’. Even if it's not the way people say it at the supermarket, you still, you know, you have to say it... because you are gonna go to the supermarket quite a few times to buy stuff, you can't always say ‘I don't know this I don't know that’.”

The underlined sentence in Myo's articulation indicates that although she was not completely confident in the expression she used, she had to try it due to the need to survive. In a later

interview sequence, she also mentioned that in Sydney “people would say [...] you’re not saying in Chinese, it’s more a literal translation”, but in China, producing the most accurate language became subsidiary to using the language for meaningful negotiation and problem solving.

In short, this sub-section has shown that the need to survive the social life afforded emergent and dynamic use of the CL which also contributed to the language pledge during the program. The following sections will focus on students’ autonomous use of CL in situations when they could actually escape using it.

5.4.2 Self-initiated CL use

Many students gave examples of how they proactively used CL even when they could actually use English (or remain silent) in those situations. As the students had many opportunities to use the content learned in class in real-life situations out of class, the confidence which was built bit by bit in the process had pushed forward their self-initiated CL use.

The story told by Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) serves as an example of this argument. In the following interview, she described a day when she was visiting a tourist attraction, trying to negotiate with the ticket seller and asking for directions from a guard:

01 Jenny: “You know how there is a park behind the forbidden city, we were buying tickets there. And then, you know, obviously since we asked, like since we’ve bought you know, the student’s ticket for the forbidden city, we asked to get a student ticket, and this is all in Mandarin. She’s like, ‘oh, are you... um...’ you know, ‘international students?’, and we’re like, ‘yeah’, and she’s like, ‘no, you don’t get any student ticket’.

02 And then afterward we were kinda, we wanted to go back to the front of the forbidden city, so half way there we were kinda not sure if we were in the right place, so we did stop to ask a guard of, you know, ‘where am I in the palace, I had a map’, and then, he’s like, ‘oh you are here’, and then we were like, ‘oh, if we wanted to go back to the

front door just keep walking’. So we got directions from one of the guards.”

03 Interviewer: “did you understand what that guard said to you?”

04 Jenny: “Yes! (With a happy tone) because we all learned [...] we were learning about direction. I just don’t remember when we learnt it. Yeah... that was like, the most conversation I had in Chinese (laugh).”

05 Interviewer: I: “Wow! That’s awesome.”

06 Jenny: J: “Yeah! And then, same day, we didn’t know where the nearest train station was, otherwise we would have to walk back to the train station we arrived at. But, we wanted to know if there was like, you know, a closer one, and so again I asked the guard, and it, probably because I wasn’t ready, it took me a while to actually collect my thoughts on how to phrase the question. And the guard was like, ‘oh, I can speak English you know’, (laugh), and I was like, ‘oh, I want to practice my Chinese’. And he was like, ‘oh okay’, and he waited for like half a minute for me to phrase the right sentence. And he was like, ‘it’s over there’.”

07 Interviewer: I: “That’s interesting. So you actually tried to use Chinese actively.”

08 Jenny: J: “Yeah I did try (laugh). I wouldn’t say I was successful every time but I tried.”

Taking the pieces of information together in this narrative will give us a better idea of how confidence was built up bit by bit in using the CL in authentic contexts. Before this excerpt of interview, Jenny told me that she had successfully bought a student ticket for another attraction. Here in Lines 1, she mentioned that based on her successful experience, she was trying to negotiate with the ticket seller again, with an emphasis on the fact that “this is all in Mandarin”. She could even clearly recall the conversation between her and the seller as shown in Lines 1. From the information in Lines 2-4, we can see that when she attempted to ask direction from the guard, she was very proud of herself for being able to put her knowledge into authentic use and understand what the guard said. In her second attempt of asking another guard for direction in Line 6, although she was not as ready and took a while to recollect her knowledge, she refused the guard’s offer of speaking English. Finally, she succeeded in this second attempt as well.

This example indicates that students' attempts in using Chinese in authentic out-of-class contexts were not always successful, but they accumulatively contributed to the motivation and confidence in future self-initiated language use.

5.4.3 Collaboration-promoted CL use

Students might be anxious about using the target language alone, but such anxiety was more likely to be mitigated when they were in collaboration with other peers or language partners.

Language use in collaboration with language partners was a recurring theme in students' interviews. The previous chapter already noted that the language partner program was beneficial for promoting social interaction. This section further shows that the language partner also facilitates the use of language in interaction. Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) mentioned: "Having a language partner gave me the opportunity to really attempt the practical application of the language skills I was learning." Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) also stated: "I think having that language partner there reinforces you to try like speak Chinese whether or not it's correct." From students' perspectives, the language partners indeed encouraged them to use the language with a lowered level of anxiety.

Students also used Chinese in collaboration with other more advanced peers and their language partners, which increased their language use with native speakers. Emily's (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) story illustrates well (emphases and underlines added by researcher):

- 01 "I found I spent time with other Australian's language partners as well, who were equally lovely to spend time with as my own language partner.
- 02 **One of the best days** was when I went to Nan Luo Gu Xiang²⁵ with an intermediate level Australian and his language partner.
- 03 The two of them made a real effort to make me speak in Chinese to them, to speak to locals in Chinese and to try to listen with an open ear. After that day **my application of Chinese improved impeccably.**
- 04 I think it was easier for my friend to help me because we spent time by ourselves so I didn't feel embarrassed in front of a larger group, and he was

²⁵ A famous Hutong in Beijing with historic buildings, now a popular tourist destination with restaurants, street food, music houses, bars and souvenir shops.

very understanding and patient with me. Before we met up with his language partner, he told me to try to speak in Chinese when he could. I think a big difference was that he spoke in Chinese with his language partner, and they just told me to try my best to listen and understand but I could respond in English to take the pressure off.

- 05 But after an hour or so I wanted to speak in Chinese so I would try to talk to them both in Chinese. Whenever I tried to say something, or wanted to know how to, my Australian friend and his language partner would tell me together an easy way to say it in Chinese. It was very low pressure situations all day which made me feel comfortable and confident.
- 06 Also he encouraged me to speak to local shop owners in Chinese and when I failed to communicate, he would step in. Actually one of the best things was that he would tell me how to say something in Chinese so I could say it myself to the shop owner. He did this with a lot of our Australian friends, so we all learnt how to order our favourite dishes at our local restaurant. [...] It was probably **my favourite and most memorable day** in China.”

In Lines 2, 3 and 6, the sentences with emphases demonstrate the significance of the event for Emily. The underlined sentence in Lines 3 points out explicitly the joint effort of a more advanced peer and his language partner. Lines 4 elucidates how Emily’s more advanced peer created a Chinese speaking environment meanwhile reducing her anxiety in speaking the language. The first sentence in Lines 5 suggests the positive effect of the collaboration – Emily became braver to speak Chinese on her own. The last sentence in Row 6 indicates that this kind of collaboration was not only a one-shot occasion. Emily’s vivid description of the day show that it was indeed a very memorable day for her.

This sub-section has suggested that collaboration-promoted CL use would pave the way for potential self-initiated CL use and facilitate students’ utilisation of authentic resources out of class.

5.4.4 Mobile-assisted CL use

The previous chapter discussed the value of WeChat for social interaction, and this section will further provide evidence for students’ use of Chinese on WeChat. Since WeChat was not deliberately used for language learning but more like a communication tool, using Chinese in

most cases was not compulsory. However, evidence from student interviews demonstrates that WeChat also facilitated active use of Chinese in authentic contexts.

WeChat facilitated the use of CL with language partners. For example, Rebecca (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) said in the interview:

Rebecca: "We (my language partner and I) did connect on WeChat and so it was easier to message each other because at least for me I could stop and think how to structure the sentences and everything [...] I was writing in Chinese, and then she wrote back in Chinese."

Interviewer: "Oh so on WeChat, you totally contact each other in Chinese?"

Rebecca: "Yeah."

Interviewer: "That's nice. So for the language partner, you practised Chinese more on WeChat than in face-to-face contact?"

Rebecca: "Yeah, I think so. Cause for us it was really difficult to speak to each other."

For beginners like Rebecca, using Chinese on WeChat was more achievable due to the asynchronous nature of the communication.

WeChat also facilitated the use of CL with teachers. In this program, the teachers took an active role in promoting Chinese use in their class group chats. For example, Selena (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) mentioned: "We could discuss our homework as well as just chat leisurely with our teachers. [...] Although we were able to use WeChat in English, our class decided to challenge ourselves by forcing ourselves to try and speak and type Chinese whenever possible." Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) also provided an instance in which one of the teachers who taught them to practise Tai Chi²⁶ "would speak in Chinese and explain" where they would meet and what they would be doing. When I asked Mary whether she could understand all exchanges on WeChat, she said: "Yes, because they were our teachers so they knew how much we could understand." This illustrates the important role that language teachers played in ensuring Chinese use on WeChat for real-life purposes.

The students were also impressed by some informal language practice activities on WeChat which facilitated authentic use of the language. Jenny's (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) description in her interview exemplifies this authenticity:

²⁶ An internal Chinese martial art practice.

- 01 Jenny: She (the teacher) asked us to post something on WeChat every day in Chinese.
- 02 Interviewer: What kind of posts?
- 03 Jenny: Just anything. Like what you've done for the day, what you found interesting, just anything you want to share [...].
- 04 Interviewer: Did you post?
- 05 Jenny: I did (laugh).
- 06 Interviewer: What was it? (laugh)
- 07 Jenny: Well I mostly posted **what I did for the day**. So like, oh I'm so tired after the class cause I have to like review. Or like my language partner took me for lunch or something [...]
- 08 Interviewer: And your teacher corrected your mistake?
- 09 Jenny: [...] Like she would take up her time to actually read all comments and she would answer as well. She would like **not only correct but she would answer**. Like 'oh that's nice you had a good day' or something like that.
- 10 Interviewer: So it's like really content-based, not just the structure and grammar.
- 11 Jenny: Yeah. It, it shows that, you know, she's taking her time **to be interested in what we do**. [...] So that was really nice.

It shows that when using the language to tell real-life stories, the learning process was content-based and went beyond just language structures. The three sentences with emphases highlight the use of language for authentic and meaningful conversations. The first sentence points to the linkage of WeChat activities with real-life situations that happened in the host country. The second and third sentences indicate that the teacher was not just interested in the linguistic structure but also showing her genuine interest in the content produced by students. Her feedback on students' posts was not only corrective but also meaning-making, turning a language practice into a real chat on daily life.

The examples in this sub-section support that WeChat facilitated students' active use of Chinese, especially with language partners and Chinese teachers, in authentic contexts out of class. Regrettably, this study did not obtain access to and related ethical approves for students' WeChat histories. It would be ideal for future studies to scrutinise in detail how

WeChat facilitates language use during ICS with more evidence from WeChat posting and chat histories.

5.5 From authentic CL use to noticing and interpreting the authentic experience

This section expands on the cognitive and internal process in the course of authentic language use, that is, students' noticing and interpreting of the experience. From an ecological standpoint, "talking analytically" is a manifestation of learner's internalisation of the knowledge acquired through social interaction. In this study, students' analytical talk in the interview revealed their increased awareness of language learning.

First, students were more aware of the emergent, non-linear, complex nature of the language learning process. Many students acknowledged that they should not expect to gain dramatically upon completing the program, and they valued the ability to use the language "on the spot", as Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) noted:

"I guess cause [because] language is not about writing and memorising and speaking, it's more about can you do it **on the spot**, can you utilise it, and how you apply it. Although I didn't feel this daily basis sort of I'm improving and I can speak much better than before, it's more... it's a progressive thing so you kinda [kind of] don't know it until you actually can utilise the language after you learn it."

The use of the language "on the spot" facilitated the cognitive skills of recalling and memorisation, which is demonstrated by Jenny's (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) articulation, particularly the underlined words:

"I find compared to before, it was easier to construct sentence [...] Cause you know, in China, you were kinda put on the spot a lot of times [...] We would be forced to like think of the Chinese that we know [...] it forces us to remember or to think back to our classes, and then, you know the teacher did mention how to say that."

Like Jenny and Myo, many students in the interview were not so interested in expressing how they improved on specific language skills. Rather, they were more articulate in their

improvements as a “user” of the language. For example, Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) believed she improved in her thinking pattern as a Chinese:

“I definitely found myself even thinking in Chinese towards the end [...] like when ordering food and buying things I would start to think in Chinese, when reacting to what my friends say, instead of “what” it would be “*shenme*” that kind of context [...] creating sentences in Chinese in my head without having to write them down first [...] slowly piece things together in my mind and just to say what feels right. This made a huge difference in my learning.”

Her transformation in “creating sentences in her head and say what feels right” signifies her identity as a proficient language user. All these examples have illustrated that students were more aware that language use is not only about exams and proficiency tests but is emergent and embedded in authentic life.

Second, many students challenged the idea of “standard language” showing their awareness of language variability.

Some students gained more insights into the dynamic accents and dialects in China. For example, Joyce (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) mentioned: “I was already able to understand the basic important information that we needed to know for these cultural trips, but my roommate needed me to confirm things such as meeting time and place, etc. However, we were both exposed to the fact that there are many different Chinese accents even in Beijing, so it will take time to understand what people are saying.” As an advanced learner, Joyce could understand the basic information about the tours quite easily, but in real life she noticed that it required extra efforts to decipher Beijing accents.

Other students were more aware that the “standard language” was not the only acceptable linguistic form to survive in the target environment. For successful socialisation and further development, one should recognise and not be afraid to try out “non-standard” language. This was evident in Myo’s (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) reflection:

“I delve myself as a person speaking and thinking in Chinese [...] like, oh I hear the person saying this phrase or they say like this, or the reaction is like they say in this way, you know, so I think I’ve kinda, tried to, although it doesn’t sound Chinese, I tried to adapt (to) that in my own way.”

From her expression “although it doesn’t sound Chinese” we can see that she recognised the diversity of the Chinese language which might sound different from what she learned in the standardised curriculum. By saying “I tried to adapt that in my own way” she notified her understanding of the personalised nature of the learning process.

Not only the linguistic forms but also the pragmatic aspects of the language could be fluid and dynamic, as acknowledged by some students. For example, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email), who I have quoted in the previous chapter commenting on another peer’s courage in taking every opportunity to interact (see Section 5.3.3), also expressed how this observation contributed to her awareness of language variability:

“Knowing how he improved his fluency made me drastically change one of my long-held professional principles (that foreign language learners always must be engaged in [...] culturally appropriate communication [...]). Now, I believe that during the post-beginner’s stage, in order to increase input and output in the target language, learners can participate in activities that can be considered **(slightly) inappropriate** by native speakers of that language – like asking taxi drivers their family backgrounds!”
(emphasis added by researcher)

Her wording of the “slightly inappropriate” use of the language indicates her increased awareness of the fact that linguistic and cultural appropriateness is a “spectrum” rather than a fixed frame. Language use is a choice among a range of potentially appropriate linguistic codes in one’s repertoire to accomplish personal goals, rather than merely generating standard and accurate target linguistic forms. Although she regretted not being brave enough to interact with Chinese people as her peer did, she indeed developed her understanding of the dynamic and flexible nature of language in general through the experience.

This section presenting examples of students’ analytic talks in interviews has underscored the effects of CL use on students’ internalisation of the knowledge gained. It has been argued that authentic CL use during the ICS facilitated students’ notice and interpretation of the emergent and non-linear nature of language learning, as well as their awareness of language variability.

5.6 Discussion: toward a “seamless” experience for authentic CL use during ICS

Based on the findings of this chapter, this section argues that the ICS not only increased the amount of time and opportunities for CL use; what is more important, it had great potential to provide a “seamless” experience for authentic language use. This section will make the recommendation to take advantage of the seamless nature of the ICS, allowing the in-class pedagogy and out-of-class L2 use to complement each other.

The seamless feature of the ICS experience means that the boundary between formal and informal learning environments became blurred during the program. “Seamless learning” (Chan et al., 2006, p.3) is a term originally used in the field of technology-assisted learning marked by continuity of the learning experience across different environments. This chapter borrows this term and expands on it to highlight the reciprocal relationship between the learning experience inside and outside the classroom. The seamless feature of the ICS experience under investigation had three levels. The **first** level was more explicitly and cognitively oriented (explanations in bold in Figure 5.5). The knowledge learned in class was easily applied to real-life settings. The authentic resources out of class were also brought into the formal classroom for language learning and use. The **second** level is more implicitly and affectively oriented (explanations in italic in Figure 5.5). On one hand, close rapport built outside of class contributed to a more relaxing and friendlier atmosphere in class, promoting the willingness to share life experience and personalised language use. On the other hand, conscious learning goals were brought into informal learning settings, encouraging language use out of class. **Third**, the facilitation of the technological tool WeChat further bridged the connection between informal communication and formal language practice. The three layers of the “seamless” relationship between formal and informal learning environments is presented in Figure 5.5.

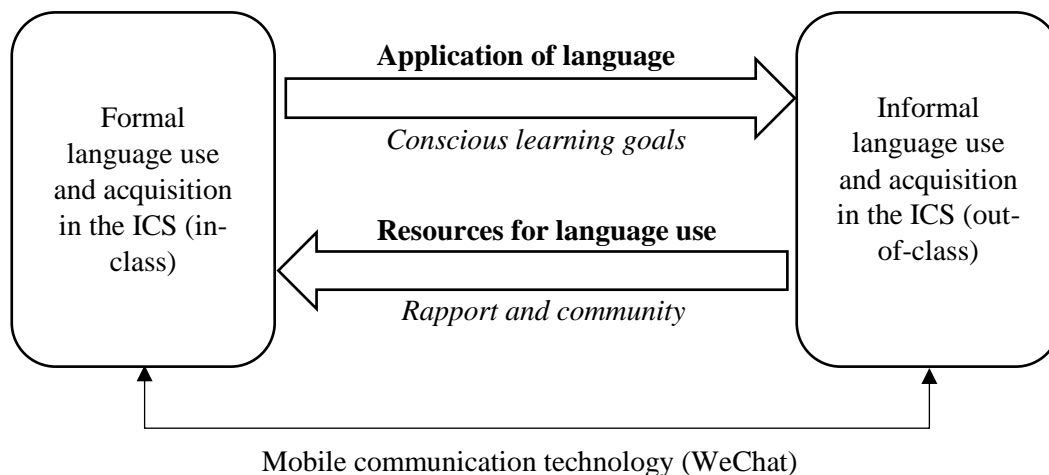


Figure 5.5: The “seamless” experience of the ICS for authentic language use and acquisition

Based on Figure 5.5, the remainder of the section will discuss each of the arrows connecting formal and informal language use and acquisition during the ICS.

In the ICS, students could actively apply the language learned in class into real-life contexts with a conscious goal for learning. The application of the language can be seen from the examples in which surviving the social life required the emergent use of the language – or, “being put on spot” in the students’ own words. Moreover, students were not only “forced” to use the language but also actively utilised authentic resources for informal learning, which can be seen from the different forms of self-initiated and collaboration-promoted language use. This finding is relevant when we refer back to the intention and extension of ICS as mentioned in Chapter 1. Different from tourism, ICS programs have pre-defined academic pursuits and many of them are associated with academic credits (Kingtoner & Palgrave, 2009). Also, as mentioned in Chapter 3 in a thick description of the program, one of the main purposes of the current program is to prepare students for the coming semester. With these conscious goals, students were more actively making efforts to use the language for their benefits. Although there are many Chinese native speakers, communities and diasporas in Australia potentially supporting out-of-class authentic learning, students might not have the same level of consciousness (or motivation) to deploy these resources.

Not only the informal learning but also the classroom formal learning can be facilitated by the ICS, due to the supplementary resources afforded by the informal setting. This was realised not only through the contextualised language use relevant to the social and personal lives of students, but also through the interpersonal relationships established on a day-to-day

basis which allowed more personalised language use. This is important when we consider the nature of “authenticity” for classroom language learning, as Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) demonstrate: “We maintain that the classroom is a site where real communication takes place [...], and that participation in this setting is an integral part of learners’ enculturation into the linguistic and cultural system being learned [...]. Teacher and students are co-performers as they shape the reality of classroom experience through interaction.” (p. 65) When applying their idea of authenticity into the ICS context, the sense of “comradery” (see Chapter 4) and rapport established outside of class will reshape the classroom reality and ease the anxiety and tension of classroom language use, facilitating classroom experience as a site for “real communication” to take place.

Furthermore, the dichotomy between language use in formal and informal environments can be further diminished with the mediation of communication technology, that is, WeChat in this study. This argument has been supported by the evidence that students’ use of language on WeChat with their language partners was authentic communication with a conscious learning goal, as well as their language practice with teachers which generated an authentic sense of interests in the content. The finding is relevant to the recent discussion in SLA on mobile-assisted language use (MALU) (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013). They suggest that the long-standing term computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is no longer a sufficient point of reference as we are in a post-CALL era. Language learners’ activities in another language on mobile devices might be related to learning, but learning is not always the prevailing activity. Therefore, they propose the acronym MALU to entail all kinds of activities on mobile devices that consciously and/or unconsciously contribute to language learning. Their proposal is in line with the emerging awareness in the field of mobile-assisted language learning to move beyond content delivery (language learning) to support collaboration and interaction (language use) (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). The ICS context can be an ideal site to experiment with MALU, because in such a context, mobile communication apps such as WeChat in China are best used as a language use platform potentially facilitating language learning.

A final note of this discussion is that to fully understand the “seamless” experience for authentic CL use during the ICS, students’ own noticing and interpretation of the authentic experience should not be ignored, as elucidated in Section 5.5. This interpretive dimension brings the interaction and language use on the social plane onto the mental and psychological plane (Lantolf, 2000). Through students’ analytic talks about their reflections, this chapter has uncovered their awareness of the emergent and non-linear nature of language learning, as

well as language variability. These aspects of awareness are critically important from an ecological perspective because they are pertinent to the redefined concept of educational success for language development. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the ecological perspective does not define language acquisition success as simply producing target-like language forms, nor does it merely consider the ability to communicate with a community according to its “norms”. It cares more about the subjective and relational criteria, such as aligning oneself in the social space, using one’s full semiotic potential, and “seizing the moment” and negotiating paradoxes (Kramsch, 2002). Applying these criteria to the ICS context, this section argues that the aspects of awareness aforementioned may help students sit more comfortably in an unfamiliar language and cultural environment, make personalised choices on language use, and use the language for self-expression and meaning negotiation.

5.7 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this chapter has analysed the extent to which the interaction during ICS contributed to language learning. In light of the inclusive understanding of language learning from an ecological standpoint embracing both social and cognitive SLA, valuing the subjective and relational dimension of success in language learning, this chapter has concentrated on students’ authentic use of Chinese for meaning negotiation and self-expression. It found that the ICS not only promoted students’ time on and amount of target language use, but also authentic language learning in the “seamless” experience of the ICS, blurring the formal and informal learning environments. This further facilitated students’ language awareness through critical thinking. In the formal classroom, authentic learning was manifested in contextualised language use: language use related to authentic social contexts; in *in situ* contexts viewing the classroom as a part of real-life world; and in personalised contexts related to students’ real experiences, thoughts and emotions. In the informal environments, students autonomously utilised authentic resources for language use: not only driven by the emergent need to survive, but also being self-initiated, collaboration-promoted, and mobile-assisted.

Based on these findings, the chapter conceptualised that the “seamless” reciprocal relationship between formal and informal learning has three levels. Cognitively, the knowledge learned in class could be applied to real-life settings, and the authentic resources out of class could also be brought into the formal classroom. Affectively, the conscious

learning goals could be brought into informal environments, while the rapport and community built out of class facilitated self-exposure and experience sharing in formal learning. In addition, the mobile communication technology, WeChat, further reinforced this mutual facilitation. Authentic use of Chinese was found to be beneficial for students' awareness of the emergent nature of language learning and language variability.

The three levels of relationships provided points of reference for maximising the ICS for authentic language learning and use. Teachers are recommended to design activities that use resources outside of class to complement course materials, and engage students to share their personal experience and thoughts. Students are recommended to capture the opportunities to apply and use the language with a conscious learning goal. Program designers are recommended to explicitly integrate WeChat into the program that further links formal and informal environments for authentic language use. The findings in the chapter have challenged the dichotomy between formal and informal environments for language use. In the Chinese literature, Q. Li and Liu (2017) criticise that Chinese teachers and learners in China generally lack the awareness to take initiatives to use authentic resources in the authentic environment; some teachers even do not recommend students to learn Chinese in a social environment due to the “non-standardised” nature of the language outside of classroom (i.e., *malu yuyan*, 马路语言, street language). This study agrees with Li and Liu's criticism, foregrounding the importance of language use for “authenticity” rather than a mere focus on “standardisation”. Only armed with the inclusive understanding of the processes and goals of language learning from an ecological perspective can the teachers and students fully exploit the advantage of the seamless feature of the ICS.

As already evident in some examples in this chapter, the language learning process is inextricably related to cultural experiences. The next chapter will explore the culture aspects of ICS, that is, students' cultural learning processes during the program.

Chapter 6

Cultural and intercultural learning in the program

6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have investigated the value of ICS for increasing interaction opportunities that possibly intrigued learning (Chapter 4), and how the interactions contributed to language use and acquisition (Chapter 5). These processes are not isolated from the sociocultural contexts; culture learning goes hand-in-hand with interaction and language learning. This chapter tackles on the questions regarding the third key construct of ICS – culture learning:

Q3: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to culture learning?

Q3-1. Did the ICS facilitate students' cultural learning – learning about Chinese culture through participation and description?

Q3-2. Did the ICS facilitate students' intercultural learning – cultural interpretation and cultural response?

Q3-3. What are the limitations of the ICS in facilitating culture learning during the program?

Q3-4. How can the ICS be maximised for culture learning?

Discussing culture learning in a separate chapter does not mean culture is separable from language. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), while some aspects of human practice are more “cultural” and others are more “linguistic”, both language and culture are involved along a continuum (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). The focus of this chapter is not to separate culture from language, but to explore from the perspective of teaching and learning, which cultural aspects should be integrated into the learning of an additional language.

The theoretical foundation of this chapter rests on a complex view of the nature of culture. The ecological perspective understands culture as practices and discourses, other than national attributes, pre-defined norms or systems with clear borders (Kramsch, 2008; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Therefore, culture learning should move beyond **cultural** orientation to **intercultural** orientation (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). The former means the learning of the target culture in its own right, including widely used informational/descriptive

approaches (learning what the target culture is like) and constructive/communicative approaches (learning how people in the target culture do or say things). The learning goals are to accumulate cultural knowledge and to produce target-culture-like cultural manners. These traditional approaches have been criticised for their narrowed understanding of culture (Kirkebæk, Du, & Jensen, 2013; Kramsch, 2011; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013): the native speaker is considered an inappropriate target norm in SLA given the large-scale variations in linguistic norms and linguistic competence among “native speakers” of the same language (Davies, 1991; Widdowson, 1994). By contrast, intercultural orientation means confrontations with multiple possible interpretations, including the “inter-interpretive” (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013: p.66) dimension of learning. The learning goals are to develop intercultural perspectives and identities, i.e., intercultural competence (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001) and symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2011). The two orientations to culture learning are not mutually exclusive and both should have some place in language education.

The detailed analysis of data applies Moran’s (2001) experiential culture learning model, which explores both cultural and intercultural orientations, entailing cultural participation, description, interpretation and response (Figure 6.1). However, Moran’s model is basically an instruction model focusing on designing classroom activities for experiential teaching (Moran, 2001: p. 124), which cannot fully capture the culture learning process during ICS that frequently occurs in natural settings. Therefore, this chapter has revised the model to encompass both instructional and natural settings. In Figure 6.1, *Participation* indicates participating in both in-class and out-of-class culture learning activities. *Description* means learning about what the target culture is like, such as its cultural products, practices, perspectives. *Interpretation* refers to understanding how culture works and explaining cultural differences – moving beyond learning the target culture in its own right to an intercultural sphere of understanding “how culture works, not only Chinese culture” (Ruan & Du, 2013). *Response* entails learning about oneself, that is, one’s feelings, thoughts and reactions to culture. The arrows in the model do not intend to delineate a linear sequence of how learning occurs; rather, they are used to suggest the order for analysis of the holistic culture learning process.

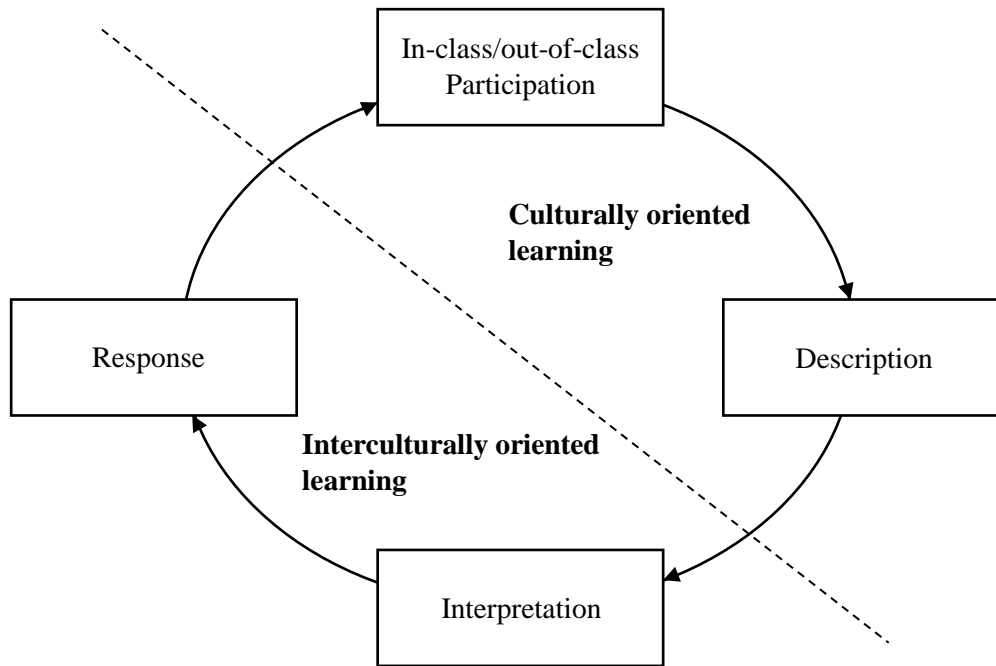


Figure 6.1: Experiential learning model for cultural and intercultural learning (adapted from Moran, 2001: p. 141)

Based on this model, Section 6.2 will analyse how frequently students experienced each step in the model and the perceived learning outcomes with survey data. Sections 6.3 to 6.5 will draw from interview and observation data, and give detailed accounts of the extent to which the ICS facilitated students cultural and intercultural learning. Section 6.6 will report a limitation of the culture learning during the Sydney-Beijing ICS. Section 6.7 will discuss on these findings and make suggestions for improvements. The findings will reveal that the ICS facilitated students' culture learning, with both cultural and intercultural orientations. However, some opportunities for deeper intercultural learning were missed. More explicit program intervention integrating the "symbolic dimensions" (Kramsch, 2011) of intercultural learning are needed to maximise the advantages of the ICS.

6.2 Survey results

The following sub-sections will report findings from Scale E and Scale F. Results of Scale E will uncover that students had more access to culture learning during the program, particularly through classroom instructions and out-of-class interactions with native speakers.

Students were intrigued to interpret culture and develop cultural perspectives, and they gained increased self-awareness. However, guided cultural interpretation might be lacking.

6.2.1 Culture learning frequencies (results of Scale E)

Scale E – “Culture learning frequencies” contains four dimensions (14 items) as listed below (shaded are items with significant rises in scores in Survey 2):

e1. Dimension one: Cultural participation

e1-1. Formal instructions on Chinese culture in class

e1-2. Doing simulated conversations according to Chinese customs in class

e1-3. Knowing Chinese culture through Chinese media products

e1-4. Knowing Chinese culture through interacting with Chinese people

e2. Dimension two: Cultural description

e2-1. Learning about the facts of Chinese culture

e2-2. Learning about how to communicate with Chinese people appropriately

e2-3. Learning about Chinese worldview and perspectives.

e3. Dimension three: Cultural interpretation

e3-1. Comparing Chinese culture with Australian culture or your own culture

e3-2. Trying to explain Chinese cultural phenomenon you encountered

e3-3. Instructions on analysing and explaining cultural issues.

e4. Dimension four: Cultural response

e4-1. Reflecting on your intentions and aims for learning Chinese

e4-2. Reflecting on your attitudes toward cultural differences

e4-3. Reflecting on the extent to which you decided to engage in Chinese culture

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 6.2. A Paired Sample Test was conducted to examine whether the differences of scores in Survey 1 and Survey 2 were statistically significant and the results are shown in Table 6.1.

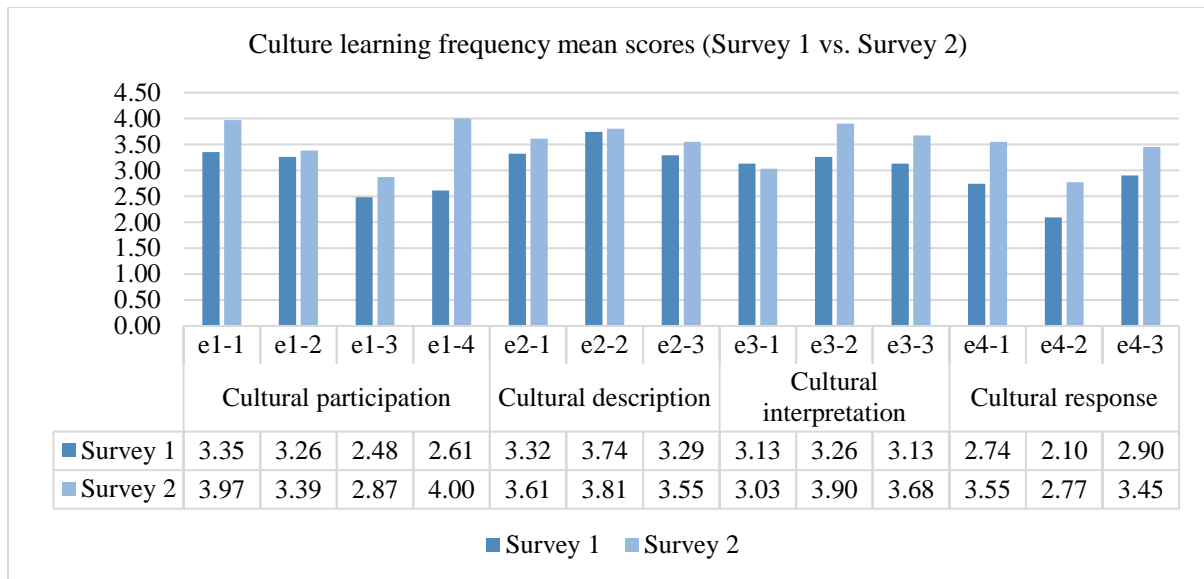


Figure 6.2: Culture learning frequency mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 6.1: Culture learning frequency mean scores (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Cultural Participation	S1 e1.1 - S2 e1.1	-0.613	1.283	0.230	-1.083	-0.142	-2.661*	30	.012
	S1 e1.2 - S2 e1.2	-0.129	1.544	0.277	-0.695	0.437	-.465	30	.645
	S1 e1.3 - S2 e1.3	-0.387	1.542	0.277	-0.953	0.179	-1.397	30	.173
	S1 e1.4 - S2 e1.4	-1.387	1.116	0.200	-1.796	-0.978	-6.921***	30	.000
Cultural Description	S1 e2.1 - S2 e2.1	-0.290	1.216	0.218	-0.736	0.156	-1.329	30	.194
	S1 e2.2 - S2 e2.2	-0.065	1.237	0.222	-0.518	0.389	-.290	30	.773
	S1 e2.3 - S2 e2.3	0.097	1.469	0.264	-0.442	0.635	.367	30	.716
Cultural Interpretation	S1 e3.1 - S2 e3.1	0.032	0.983	0.176	-0.328	0.393	.183	30	.856
	S1 e3.2 - S2 e3.2	-0.645	1.279	0.230	-1.114	-0.176	-2.808**	30	.009
	S1 e3.3 - S2 e3.3	-0.548	1.028	0.185	-0.925	-0.171	-2.971**	30	.006
Cultural Response	S1 e3.4 - S2 e3.4	-0.806	1.223	0.220	-1.255	-0.358	-3.673**	30	.001
	S1 e3.5 - S2 e3.5	-0.677	1.275	0.229	-1.145	-0.210	-2.958**	30	.006
	S1 e3.6 - S2 e3.6	-0.548	1.630	0.293	-1.146	0.049	-1.874	30	.071

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Note: S1 stands for Survey 1; S2 stands for Survey 2

Figure 6.2 shows that the means scores of all items except e3-1 increased in Survey 2, which means that most activities were perceived to occur more frequently during ICS than non-ICS. The only item that received a lower score in Survey 2 was Item e3-1 “Learning to analyse and explain Chinese cultural values.” However, results from the Pair Sample Test shown in Table 6.1 suggest that the decrease of the score was not statistically significant.

Table 6.1 presents increases of scores that are significant. Regarding the dimension Cultural Participation, the items with significant increases in scores are e1.1 and e1.4. It means that students had more instructions²⁷ on Chinese culture and more opportunities to learn about Chinese culture through interacting with native speakers. Regarding the dimension Cultural Description, none of the scores had significant increase in Survey 2. As can be seen, the scores for the items in this dimension were already very high in Survey 1. Open-ended questions asked students to name some knowledge about Chinese culture they learned (Survey 1 – Q4.7, Q4.8; Survey 2 – Q4.12, Q4.13). Answers also suggest that students already knew a range of facts about China and Chinese culture before the program (see Appendix K for a full list of students’ responses).

Regarding the dimension Cultural Interpretation, the scores for both e3.2 and e3.3 increased significantly. As mentioned, the score for e3.1 dropped insignificantly. It suggests that the ICS stimulated students’ reflective thinking on cultural issues, but explicit guidance on those reflections might be perceived lacking. One possible explanation, as reported in an open-ended question about the ways in which students learned about Chinese culture, is the lack of in-depth research projects on Chinese cultural issues during the ICS as some students would do at the home university.²⁸ Section 6.6 will revisit this limitation with more qualitative data and suggest that even during the short-term ICS in which insufficient time was allowed for in-depth research projects, some opportunities for deeper cultural interpretation were not fully utilised. In the dimension of Cultural Response, the scores for both items e4.1 and e4.2 increased significantly in Survey 2, indicating that the ICS stimulated students to reflect on their aims for Chinese learning and attitudes to Chinese culture.

²⁷ Since the survey results are self-report frequencies, these findings do not aim to describe how culture was taught in class; rather, they report how culture was learned by students from their own perspectives (e.g., some students may not be made aware that the teaching of, say, numbers, is also teaching the culture).

²⁸ In open-ended questions in the surveys (Q4.7-4.8 in Survey 1 and Q4.12-13 in Survey 2) students were asked about the ways in which they learned about Chinese culture. In both Survey 1 and 2, students mentioned instruction from teachers, information from textbook and discussion with classmates. However, in Survey 1, there were 5 students who mentioned “doing research assignments”, whereas there was no such answer in Survey 2.

The item with the most significant increase in score is “e1-4 Knowing Chinese culture through interacting with Chinese people” ($p < .001$). It indicates that culture learning through interaction with native speakers is a distinct advantage of the ICS. This finding echoes with the point made in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2, Table 4.4) that the interactional pattern between students and Chinese speakers shifted from “hearing” to “experiencing” the culture during the ICS. Although students also had opportunities to interact with native speakers through university life and the Chinese Table language group in the home department in Australia, only through the ICS could they experience in person the social life of Chinese people.

6.2.3 Perceived culture learning outcomes (results of Scale F)

Scale F, based on the expected outcomes of Moran’s (2002) experiential cultural learning model, asked students to rate their level of cultural abilities in terms of knowing what, knowing how, knowing why, and knowing oneself on a scale from poor, fair, good, very good, and excellent. This model also overlaps with Byram’s (1997) intercultural competence model entailing the aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Scale F has four dimensions (8 items) as shown below (shaded are items with significant rises in scores in Survey 2):

f1. Dimension one: knowing what

f1-1. Knowledge about the facts of China

f1-2. Knowledge about the values and perspectives of Chinese people

f2. Dimension two: knowing how

f2-1. Knowing how to communicate with Chinese people politely

f2-2. Knowing how to be integrated into Chinese society

f3. Dimension three: knowing why

f3-1. Understanding how culture works

f3-2. Awareness of cultural differences

f4. Dimension four: knowing oneself

f4-1. Awareness of your own cultural identity

f4-2. Awareness of your feelings and attitudes toward cultural issues

The mean scores of these items are presented in Figure 6.3. The results of the Paired Sample Test are shown in Table 6.2.

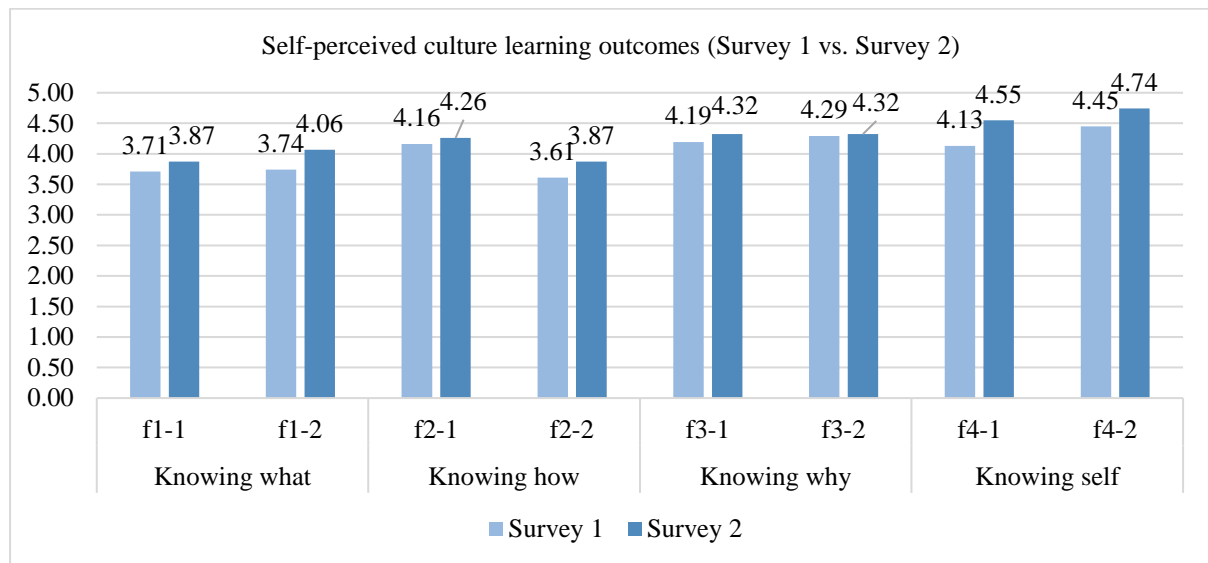


Figure 6.3: Self-perceived culture learning outcome mean scores (Survey 1 vs. Survey 2)

Table 6.2: Self-perceived culture learning outcome (Paired Sample Test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	S1_g1.1 - S2_g1.1	-0.161	0.820	0.147	-0.462	0.140	-1.095	30	.282
Pair 2	S1_g1.2 - S2_g1.2	-0.323	0.791	0.142	-0.613	-0.032	-1.941	30	.062
Pair 3	S1_g2.1 - S2_g2.1	-0.097	0.831	0.149	-0.402	0.208	-.649	30	.522
Pair 4	S1_g2.2 - S2_g2.2	-0.258	0.893	0.160	-0.586	0.070	-1.609	30	.118
Pair 5	S1_g3.1 - S2_g3.1	-0.129	0.957	0.172	-0.480	0.222	-.751	30	.459
Pair 6	S1_g3.2 - S2_g3.2	-0.032	0.657	0.118	-0.273	0.209	-.273	30	.787
Pair 7	S1_g4.1 - S2_g4.1	-0.419	0.720	0.129	-0.683	-0.155	-3.243**	30	.003
Pair 8	S1_g4.2 - S2_g4.2	-0.290	0.693	0.124	-0.544	-0.036	-2.334*	30	.026

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Note: S1 stands for Survey 1; S2 stands for Survey 2

From Figure 6.3, we can see that students generally had positive conceptions of their own cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes. In Table 6.2, both items “f4-1 Awareness of your

own cultural identity” and “f4-2 Awareness of your feelings and attitudes toward cultural issues” had significant gains. It can be seen that regarding learning results, “knowing oneself” is the most significant advantage of the ICS program. This aspect of culture learning will be expanded on with details from qualitative data in Section 6.5. The perceived cultural knowledge and skills in other dimensions were not enhanced much, measured by the quantitative data (although the qualitative data in the following sections will illustrate the transformation of students’ knowledge and interpretations that were not captured by the surveys).

6.2.4 Summary of survey findings

Survey results have shown that students had more access to culture learning during the program. The most significant findings are: in the classroom, they had more instructions on Chinese culture; out-of-class, they learned about Chinese culture through interacting with native speakers. Through these activities, students were intrigued to interpret the culture and develop cultural perspectives, and they gained increased self-awareness. A limitation of the ICS could be the lack of guided cultural interpretation, which may result in insufficient gains in deep cultural knowledge and analytical thinking skills for cultural issues.

However, survey results do not explain in detail which learning content and activities were integrated, how students described and interpreted culture, how they reflected on their cultural response, and if there was anything missing in students’ culture learning. Although there were some items with only insignificant increases in Survey 2, that might be due to the generalisation and ambiguity of the items in the scales. More details from qualitative data are needed to generate a fuller picture of students’ culture learning.

The following sections will complement the survey findings with qualitative data from interviews and observations. Since this chapter focuses on *learning* other than *teaching*, it will depart from the interview data to scrutinise which aspects were prominent or useful for students from their own perspectives. Observation data will be used to support, complement or contrast with interview findings. It will be argued that most students perceived that culture learning was well-integrated into the program in terms of cultural participation and description (Section 6.3), cultural interpretation (6.4) and cultural response (6.5). However, in accordance with the survey finding, guided in-depth cultural learning was not sufficient (6.6). To move beyond “cultural learning” and make the learning more “intercultural”, more efforts and explicit program interventions, especially focused, conscious and guided cultural interpretations are needed (6.7).

6.3 Cultural participation and description

This section gives a detailed account of students' participation in and descriptions of Chinese culture, which constitute *cultural orientation* – knowing about the target culture – in the model in Figure 6.1. It argues that students experienced various forms of cultural learning which led to diverse knowledge about China. The emphasis is on the diversity of Chinese culture. Regarding the learning process in class, it will report students' perceptions of culture-integrated course contents (Section 6.3.1) and the implicit culture learning through the classroom discourse (6.3.2). For the learning process out of class, the focus will be put on learning through cultural excursions (6.3.3) and interpersonal interactions (6.3.4). These activities set the foundation for the further development of their relative and historical views on culture, which will be the topic of a later section (6.4).

6.3.1 Learning through culture-integrated course contents: level-relevant patterns

Qualitative data show that interview participants perceived culture learning to be well-integrated into the course content; moreover, students from different levels of class had diverse patterns. Post-beginners were most impressed by the learning of Chinese songs and customary conversations. Intermediate learners were very articulate about the discussion of social issues and cultural values. Advanced learners emphasised regional culture and expressions with cultural connotations. Each sub-section deals with each level of class in turn.

Post-beginner's class: Chinese songs and customary conversations

Many post-beginners found that the learning of Chinese songs helped with their cultural insights and cultural integration. Students took pride in their knowledge of Chinese pop culture. For example, Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) mentioned: "We learned like two Chinese songs, and afterward we went to Karaoke, and we sang the same songs too. So it was really awesome... I actually sang a Chinese song!" Her exclamatory sentence signifies her pleasure in her ability to sing Chinese songs. Having some knowledge about Chinese songs also helped students integrate into Chinese society, which was illustrated by Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, email):

“Singing was definitely the most fun! It helped with culture appreciation, further insight to Chinese modern civilization [...]! I had a lot of **conversational starters** with my language buddy (and others) about Chinese songs too! Some were very surprised at my knowledge of Chinese songs despite my basic understanding of Chinese!” (emphases added by researcher)

It indicates that learning Chinese songs gave students more access to socialise with locals and helped them gain interest and respect from others. Although students could learn Chinese songs in the home country as well, there might not be as many opportunities to go Karaoke with friends singing the song learned, or use it as a conversational starter with Chinese people for interaction. These opportunities made learning Chinese songs a more prominent and relevant experience for students during the ICS.

For post-beginners, another impressive activity was learning customary conversations. Students gained more insights into the cultural practices of Chinese people, which would be especially beneficial for sojourns at their level. For example, Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) noted: “All the chapters that were learnt helped tremendously with day-to-day situations that I, as a foreigner, struggled with. But thanks to certain vocabulary help and applications of these classes really helped me integrate into Chinese culture a little more.” Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) also mentioned: “[N]eeding to call out for the waiter to get their attention in a restaurant (which isn’t expected in Australia)²⁹ was a very useful discovery for the rest of the trip.” As seen, for post-beginners, these little bits of knowledge of how to integrate into the social life in China was a main theme they focused on for culture learning.

Intermediate class: Social issues and cultural values

For intermediate learners, getting access was not the primary issue for culture learning – they were more interested in discussing Chinese social issues and cultural values.

Intermediate learners were very interested in discussing social issues. For example, Coco (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, F2F) recalled how they used Chinese to discuss social issues in class:

²⁹ In Australia, the waiter would come to the customers to take the order after they are seated. If the customers are not ready to order yet, the waiter would come back later. Whereas in China, the waiter would bring the menu to the customers and then leave. The customers need to call the waiter when they have decided on their order.

Interviewer: “Can you comment on your Chinese classes in the program?”

Coco: “[...] they went through things very like in detail, [...] like from my experience, we discussed a lot of topics in depth.”

Interviewer: “Can you give more examples, like what you discussed about?”

Coco: “I think it was more about the cultural stuff. [...] like how Australia um treats its elderly patients, [...] how it is like in China and like make comparisons, [...] we also had like a debate.”

This conversation was initiated by the interviewer’s “general” question about Coco’s comments about the Chinese classes, thus Coco’s specific comments on the discussion of social issues and their relation to “cultural stuff” highlight the successful integration of culture learning into the language learning, which gave the student a strong impression.

Many intermediate students also mentioned the learning of Chinese cultural values, especially through *suyu* (俗语, proverb). From the class observation, we can see how these values were reinforced through teacher-student talks. Excerpt 6.1 gives an example of how the value of hardworking was permeated in an intermediate class session (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters).

Excerpt 6.1: The learning of the Chinese value “hardworking”

Class level: Intermediate

Context: The teacher gave some examples of proverbs, including *Tian xia wu nan shi, zhi pa you xin ren* (天下无难事，是怕有心人: Nothing is difficult to the man who will try hard). When discussing the meaning of it, a conversation between the teacher and one student occurred.

- 01 T: *Zhege shi shenme yisi (?)*
What’s the meaning of this (idiom)?
- 02 S: *You Xin Ren:: shibushi huairen de yisi (?)*
Does *You Xin Ren* mean “bad person”?
- 03 T: *You Xin Ren shi huairen ma (?)*
Is *You Xin Ren* bad person?
- 04 *You Xin Ren jiushi (.) ni ziji hen xiang qu zuo yijian shi (.)*

- 05 *You xin ren* means if you really want to accomplish something,
ranhou ni jiu hui qu jihua (.) *qu nuli* (.)
 and you will plan it, work hard for it.
- 06 *zheyang de ren women jiao You Xin Ren.*
 This kind of person we call *You Xin Ren*.

In Line 2, the student misunderstood *You Xin Ren* (有心人) as *huairen* (坏人, bad person), thus the proverb would denote “nothing is difficult unless there is a bad guy”. In this logic, getting things done was related to the person’s quality of being kind-hearted, instead of being hardworking. In Line 4-6, the teacher explained the real meaning using personal pronouns *ni* (你, “you” in singular form) and *women* (我们, “we” in plural form). By using *ni*, the student was invited to resonate with the scenario; by using *women*, the teacher implied that the value is shared by the Chinese society. In this way, the teacher was inviting the student to think from a shared Chinese perspective, that is, hardworking is a key to success.

The learning of cultural values through *suyu* is a common point made by interview participants from the intermediate class (Jack, Irene, Coco). These cultural values were explicitly integrated into the instruction. However, as will be shown later (Section 6.3.2), cultural values also implicitly permeated the classroom discourse. Cases in which different values between teachers and students were evident could have provided resources for in-depth cultural interpretation, but they were not fully utilised in the Sydney-Beijing program, which can be seen as a limitation of this program (Section 6.6).

Advanced class: regional culture and expressions with cultural connotations

Since most advanced learners already had much knowledge about Chinese culture, they were very impressed by the access to variations of it through the ICS, such as Beijing local culture and other regional culture.³⁰ Although students from other levels of class also got insights into various Beijing and regional culture aspects through the immersion, advanced learners particularly related it more to the formal course content. For example, Alice (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, email) described in the interview how local food culture was integrated into the learning materials: “One of the texts was ‘chat about Beijing people’. The text talks about the different types of food in China, how people from different parts of China enjoy

³⁰ See Appendix K for examples from students about Beijing culture and regional culture.

different types of food.” She was also impressed by the learning of some Beijing dialect, such as *Kandashan* (侃大山, to chat idly) and *Gala* (旮旯, every nook and cranny).

For advanced learners, the learning of the Beijing dialect helped them be integrated into the local community through the device of accent. To give a typical example, Cheng (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, F2F), whose mother tongue is Cantonese, mentioned in the interview:

“I was in Guangzhou (a Southern city in China) before, but then when I went to Beijing I found the ways people talk are different. I think it’s good to touch on these dialects in class, since I would feel easier if I go out and talk to people when traveling around.”

The finding here is reminiscent of the main argument in Chapter 5 on authentic language learning – language variation should be a part of language learning rather than devalued as “non-standard” by Chinese language teachers.

Apart from Beijing regional culture, advanced learners also learned vocabulary, expressions and concepts that are rich in cultural connotations. For example, Linjia (Female, Age 19, Heritage, Advanced, email) mentioned *paichang* (排场, ostentation and extravagance) which she thought was useful for the understanding of social relationships. Alice (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, email) mentioned the expression *liangyan leiwangwang*³¹ (两眼泪汪汪) that denotes the Chinese sense of nostalgia. Cheng (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) gave examples of some newly emerged vocabulary developed under the influence of globalisation and the Internet, such as *zhai* (宅) and *Yimei'er*³² (伊妹儿). All these words carry rich cultural meanings and cannot be fully understood without knowing the embedded connotations.

This sub-section has found that a majority of students perceived that a range of cultural aspects were well-integrated into the course content, and they demonstrated level-relevant patterns of interests and focuses on culture learning. The topics of culture learning mentioned reflect the focus of culture teaching in China and the research interests of Chinese scholars. Some Chinese scholars define Chinese culture as having three levels: ideological culture

³¹ Literally means “tears in eyes”. It was originated from the proverb *laoxiang jian laoxiang, liangyan leiwangwang* (老乡见老乡, 两眼泪汪汪) – used when people from the same hometown meet or bump into somewhere else, the sense of intimacy makes them so happy that they even burst into tears.

³² *Zhai* originated from the Japanese word *taku*, used in Chinese to describe people who always stay at home. *Yimei'er* is a loan word borrowed from the English word “email”.

(*Yishi xingtai wenhua*, 意识形态文化, e.g., politics, economics, law, social mechanism), folk Culture (*Minsu wenhua*, 民俗文化, e.g., etiquettes, customs, high culture, lifestyles), and Chinese traditional spiritual culture (*Zhonghua chuantong jingshen wenhua*, 中华传统精神文化, e.g., values, beliefs, philosophy) (W. Zhang, 2014). Particularly, the importance of teaching cultural-specific vocabulary (*wenhua cihui*, 文化词汇, e.g., historical words, idioms, proverbs, words for objects or phenomenon specific to China) has been a major research interest of many Chinese scholars (e.g., L. Shi, 2013; Yanjun Wang, 2013; S. Zhang, 2012). It is a common belief that a cultural-specific vocabulary carrying rich hidden meanings is critical to communication in the Chinese language and the understanding of Chinese traditional spiritual culture. The culture-integrated course content in the Sydney-Beijing Program was apparently under the influence of these dominant thoughts in the field. As will be shown in later sections, these approaches are beneficial for students' cultural learning to some extent, but are not adequate enough for in-depth cultural interpretation and intercultural learning.

The sub-section above has analysed student perceptions of the culture-integrated course content in class, which was explicitly integrated into language learning. However, participation in classroom interactions is also an integral part of participating in the social system being learned (Section 5.3.2). Therefore, the next sub-section will explore students' perceptions of the classroom discourse during the ICS which was constitutive of a more implicit dimension of in-class culture learning.

6.3.2 Learning through the classroom discourse: open-mindedness and humour

Apart from the explicitly integrated culture-related course content, students also gained cultural insights implicitly through the classroom discourse. One may expect that students would experience hierarchical and formal classroom discourse in China and gain insights into traditional Chinese values such as a high level of respectfulness to teachers and a formality of personal relationships. These features are indeed how the Chinese classroom with a Confucius heritage is represented in the literature (e.g. Jia, 2006; Tang, 2010). However, the findings of this study differ from the previous literature and speak to the “new” or “non-traditional” classroom discourse in China. The two themes that emerged are open-mindedness and humour.

Open-mindedness

Students were fascinated by the fact that many social issues were open for discussion in class, contrary to their previous view that Chinese people were very conservative and “politically controlled” (Ying, Female, Age 70, Heritage, Advanced, F2F). For example, many students gave the example of the discussion of pollution issues they experienced in China. Since the program was carried out in winter, there were a few days with heavy smog. As Australian students had been living in a country taking pride in its superb natural environment, “sheltered” (Mary) from air pollution, they were concerned about the air quality in China. From the class observation, this issue was frequently raised by students in class across all levels, but the teachers were very open about the discussion and even integrated it into the learning process. Excerpt 6.2 is an example of the integration of the pollution issue into the learning of modal adverbs *mingming* (明明, clearly; obviously) and *jianzhi* (简直, really; virtually) (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters).

Excerpt 6.2: A discussion on the pollution issue in class

Level of class: advanced

01 T: *Zhe liangge ci doushi yuqi fuci*

Both these two words are modal adverbs.

02 S1 *yuqi fuci::*

Modal adverbs...

03 T: *dui (.) jiushi jiaqiang zhege yuqi de (.)*

Right. So they're used to strengthen the tone.

04 *Biru shuo zhege wumai (.) shangge xingqi meiyou hongse yujing (.) meiyou tingke.*

For example, the smog. Last week there was no red warning for the smog and the class was not cancelled.

05 *mingming yijing yanzhong wuran le (.) weishenme hai bu tingke (!) jianzhi tai bu yinggai le (h)*

Obviously, the pollution was very serious, why wasn't the class cancelled? It just shouldn't be like that! (h)

06 Ss: (hh)

07 T: *zhezhong de shihou doushi hen qifen de (.) hen shengqi de (.) jiaqiang yuqi de*

In this kind of situation (the speaker) is very furious, very angry. So strengthen the tone.

08 (The teacher asked students to make up their sentences)

09 [...]

10 S2: *mingming zhidao wuran yijing zheyang lihai (.) weishenme haiyao mai zheme duo de sijia che* ↑

Obviously, people know the pollution is already very serious, why do they buy so many private cars?

11 *mai yiliang bugou (.) yao mai liangliang (.) jianzhi shi tai zisi le (!)*

One car is not enough and they buy two cars. It's just so selfish!

12 T: *en. henhao (.) ting S2 de yuqi dajia jiu zhidao shenme jiao mingming le (.)*

Good. Pay attention to S2's tone, and you will know what *mingming* means.

13 [...]

14 (more examples from other students)

15 T: *gangcai ne (.) dajia zhege zuo de bucuo (.)*

Just now, you all did the practice very well.

16 *erqie ne (.) guanjian shi nimen de sixiang (.) haiyou neirong (.) feichang hao.*

Critically, your thoughts and contents were very good.

17 *meiyou neirong de hua (.) na zhege jiushi ganbaba de (.) duiba (!)*

If there was no content, then the (language) would be “dry”, right?

18 *dajia kaolü de wenti ye dou feichang you yiyi*

The issues you were considering were also very meaningful.

In Line 1 the teacher introduced the concept of *yuqi fuci* for modal adverb. S1's reaction in Line 2 shows that she was confused by this term, so the teacher tried to explain in Line 3, with a concrete example in Line 4. Since the strengthened tone and intense emotion was the key focus, it was important to find an example with which the students could resonate. Thus, the issue of smog was raised by the teacher. In her example in Line 5, she used a witty tone to ridicule the severe pollution. This induced students' laughter in Line 6 since it is usually the students who would wish the class to be cancelled, rather than the teacher. In this sense, the teacher considered the problem from the students' perspective to evoke more resonances

from them. Encouraged by the teacher, students all made sentences relevant to social issues such as medical insurance, garbage classification, plastic bag recycling, omitted in Line 9. Lines 10-11 demonstrate another students' sentence about pollution, which was confirmed by the teacher as a good one. The teacher's comments in Lines 15-18 illustrate that such reflections on social issues were valued.

Apart from the discussion on pollution, the textbook also included social issues such as *guanshangxing lifa* (观赏性立法, ornamental legislation) and *zhongguo yanmin* (中国烟民, Chinese smokers). Classroom discourse that is open to discussion on social issues impressed many program participants, as Ying (Female, Age 70, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) mentioned, she never expected this to happen prior to the program.

Humour

The second theme is that students gained new insights into the power relationship in the Chinese classroom through humour. The last chapter already touched on the topic of humour in class, which was deemed as a way of reframing classroom reality through *in situ* language use (see Section 5.3.2). This section analyses the phenomenon of humour in classroom discourse from the perspective of culture learning.

Although the concept of "humour" was not explicitly noted by interviewees, from their narrative we can see that they perceived the learning atmosphere in class to be very relaxed, friendly, and approachable. In other words, the power distance between teachers and students was not as large as they had imagined. For instance, Alice (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, email) remarked: "In my head, I always had the image of teachers at China being very strict and hard to approach, however I was wrong. The teachers at [host university] were very easy to talk to." Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, email) also claimed: "It was not hard to adapt to the teaching style [at host university] because it did seem quite comfortable, relaxed and, dare I say, even westernised style of teaching!" Her wording of "westernised style" indicates that she perceived a similar level of comfort and easiness to what she had been experiencing in Western countries where the power relationship in the classroom was usually regarded as smaller.

Students' successful socialisation into this classroom discourse can be observed from their initiation or co-construction of humour in class which altered the roles of the teacher and students and reframed reality. Excerpt 6.3 highlights the equality and democracy between students and the teacher (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters). The

episode happened when the teacher asked a student to describe what they did for last weekend.

Excerpt 6.3: Humorous encounter – you go we go!

Level of class: advanced class

- 01 T: *Ni nengbuneng fenxiang yixia shang zhoumo nimen zai Beijing wan de jingli (?)*
Can you share with us your experiences of entertainment activities in Beijing last weekend?
- 02 S1: *Women shang zhoumo::: Women zhou liu wanshang qu tiaowu(.) ranhou tamen liangge he de hen zui =*
Last weekend we... We went dancing last Saturday night, and two of them were very drunk...
- 03 Ss + T: = *O(hh)H!*
- 04 S1 *Ranhou S2 tiaowu tiao de hen feng de (h) [...]*
And S2 danced like crazy...
- 05 Ss: ((cheers and applauses))
- 06 T: *Na zhege zhoumo you shenme dasuan ma (?)*
Do you have any plans this weekend then?
- 07 S2: *Xiang qu chifan he chang Kala OK (.)*
We want to eat out and go karaoke.
- 08 T: *Wa (!) nimen yijing he tongxuemen yue le ma (?)*
Wow! have you already made an appointment with other students?
- 09 S2: *You yixie ren [yue le*
Yes, some of them.
- 10 S3: *LAOSHI] (!) NI QU WOMEN JIU QU (!)*
Teacher! you go we go (we will go only if you go too)!
- 11 Ss: [((Cheers and laughs))
- 12 T: ((Laugh))]
- 13 ((Later on, the class and the teacher scheduled a time for karaoke that weekend.))

S1's answer in Line 2 was a self-exposure of private life, such as "being very drunk" and "dancing like crazy", indicating that the learning atmosphere was supportive of talking about authentic personal experiences (again an evidence of personalised language use, see Section 5.3.3). In Line 3 the teacher joined other students' laughing and acted as if she was one of the students, which gave S1 a sense a safety to continue the account. In Line 6, the teacher encouraged students to tell more about their life experience. As a result, a humorous utterance – friendly teasing – was created in Line 10, in which S3 initiated an invitation to the teacher by saying "we will go only if you go too". Such an expression would not be considered a standard polite way to make a request, but in this context, obviously the utterance was not deemed as impolite or as misconduct. In fact, mild teasing is seen as a humour device to reduce social distance and create solidarity in the language classroom (Forman, 2011). In the end, the students were given the authority to reframe reality, as seen from Line 13 that they successfully invited the teacher for the karaoke in real life.

The findings regarding the classroom discourse in this sub-section are in contrast with how Chinese classroom culture has been represented in the previous literature. For example, in Lantolf and Genung (2002)'s study, Chinese learners felt that the dominant tone of the discourse that emerged in this classroom was one of hostility, and a learner recounted incidents which she viewed as an affront to her integrity as a person (when she was astonished that an instructor would openly attack or intimidate a student). Similarly, H. Li and Du (2013)'s study, based on Hofstede (1986)'s national culture framework, demonstrates the teacher-student relationship in China as having a large power distance. They state that students in China are expected to be obedient. Spontaneous questions and discussions in class might be seen as challenging to teachers' authority and thus disrespectful to teachers. However, these "typical" features of Chinese classrooms were absent in the current study from students' own perspective – students established a good rapport with teachers, felt free to criticise on social issues or initiate language play and humour in class, as well as changing their presumptions about the teacher-student relationship in China.

The incongruence of findings between this study and the previous literature echoes Louie (2005)'s statement that rapid social and educational revolutions in many countries can result in some aspects of data related to language and culture learning becoming quickly outdated. Modern China is witnessing innovation initiatives to transform the traditional classroom discourse and establish a dialogic teacher-student relationship (Li & Du, 2013). Students experienced some of these innovative movements first hand through the ICS. It should be recognised however that several factors step in and any generalisation of the

finding in this study should be made with caution. First, the destination university is a leading university with a well-known tradition of innovation and open-mindedness; it is unknown whether other universities share the same level of openness. Second, the short-term ICS was cohort-based and the classes were tailored particularly for language learners, in which deliberate innovative moves might be adopted; the results might not be generalised to other international students in China for degrees.

The above two sub-sections have critically analysed data regarding explicit culture-integrated course content and implicit culture learning through classroom discourse. The next two sub-sections will analyse data regarding out-of-class culture learning processes.

6.3.3 Learning through cultural excursions: “old meets new”

Cultural excursions provided students direct contact with different cultural products while visiting well-known tourist attractions. The program offered three organised cultural excursions on weekends, namely a tour to the Great Wall, a visit to the National Museum and another to the 798 Art Zone.³³ The trips provided bus rides to the sites and tourist guides. Apart from these program-organised excursions, students also organised small-group excursions themselves.

Students became aware of the diversity of Chinese culture through these excursions. As Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) stated: “My views of China previous to this study program was very narrow but now I have realised it is very broad and Chinese culture has different types of adaptations, each having different tastes.” While students were attracted by the profound traditional culture and ancient civilisation developed in the long history, many were also fascinated by the modern aspects of it, especially the merge of the two. An example has already been mentioned in Chapter 5 (Vignette 5.1) in which one student appreciated the charm of the combination of Chinese ancient history and the modern technology when he observed electronic cables attaching to ancient building walls. The term “old meets new” in the heading of this sub-section was from Joyce’s (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) comments:

“Although Beijing is becoming more ‘modern’, some areas still maintain tradition; the places where ‘old meets new’ where both sides exist together was quite interesting to

³³ The 798 Art Zone comprises a complex of old decommissioned military factory buildings having a unique architectural style. In recent years, it has been the main venue for different kinds of art exhibitions, festivals and events.

see, for example, traditional-looking shops selling modern things such as printed T-shirts.”

Her conceptualisation of “old meets new” represents many students’ understanding of what China looks like today. The following will detail how students learned about the traditional and the modern aspects of Chinese culture through different excursions.

Both excursions to the Great Wall and the Museum contributed significantly to students’ knowledge about traditional/ancient Chinese culture. The trip to the Great Wall was “a dream come true” (Dom, Myo) for students. Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) commented: “The visit to the Great Wall [...] [gave] cultural insight into [...] its celebrated place in Chinese tradition.” Experiencing the Great Wall was an emotion-arousal event, as Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) recalled: “I was like, ‘wow, I’m actually walking the Great Wall... I’m actually standing here in China now!’” Although many students read about the history of the Great Wall, only through the actual experience could they resonate with the historical significance of it. The trip to the National Museum was favoured by students who were interested in learning how Chinese civilisation had been developing throughout the history. For example, the coins used in different dynasties (Myo) and the prototypes of the Chinese flag and the ideas behind it (Coco). Linjia (Female, Age 19, Heritage, Advanced, email) commented: “The museum was very interesting as the exhibitions presented in depth and concise information about aspects of China that are not often discussed in class [...] in the form of wall sculpture.” Thus, the form of the exhibition made it easier for students to grasp the essence of Chinese history.

The excursion to the 798 Art Zone gave students new ideas about a different side of Chinese culture – in the form of contemporary art. As Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) stated: “[It] was a truly ‘new’ cultural experience, [...] a very unique area of Beijing which I had never imagined existed.” The expression “truly new” echoes Jenny’s (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) comment that the contemporary art was contrary to her previous understanding of Chinese art:

“I never really knew that China has, like such a wide range of art. Cause, you know when you think of China, it’s like kind of the really old and [...] ancient stuff, and kind of stuff similar to what you would see in like, you know, in like temples [...]. That was what I originally thought like Chinese art was. But then, [in the 798 Art Zone] it wasn’t anything similar to what I thought Chinese art would be. So I was [...] thinking of, oh

you know, they don't just have that kind of ancient art. They have a lot of more modern stuff as well.”

Jenny's previous understanding of Chinese art as “old” and “ancient” may represent some stereotypical ideas of Chinese culture held by many people, and the opportunity to experience more diverse forms of Chinese culture helped challenge these stereotypes.

Apart from the organised excursion to the 798 Art Zone, students also gained deeper insights into the modernisation of China through daily observations of its infrastructures and urban construction. Many students were amazed by the well-developed subway system in Beijing which was “very advanced and quite superior to Australia's train system” (Irene, Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email). Vignette 6.1 from my field notes described a “spontaneous trip” in which Cheng (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) experienced the high-speed inter-city train in person and was impressed by it.

Vignette 6.1: A spontaneous trip to Tianjin by the high-speed train

Field note (2015/12/16)

I was having lunch with Cheng. There was no class in the afternoon, so I asked her what she was planning to do in the afternoon. She thought for a while and said that she wanted to go to Tianjin. I was surprised since Tianjin is actually another city and there was only half a day left. Cheng told me it was okay because she had done some research on the Internet and found out that it only took thirty minutes to get there by the high-speed train – even less time than traveling from her home to the university in Sydney. She really wanted to experience the train, although there might be not enough time to see much in Tianjin. I accompanied her on the trip. On the train, Cheng said that she had heard about the *chuanshuo* (传说, legend) that even though the train was at high speed, it applied advanced shock absorption technology and a coin would stand still without falling. We took out a coin and did an experiment, putting it on the windowsill. Cheng was very excited to see that the coin really stood for a minute on the running train and filmed a short video of it (Figure 6.4). Cheng noticed from the speedometer installed in the train that the highest speed reached 285k/h, which she described as *shensu* (神速, literally “the speed of god”, which means extremely fast).



Figure 6.4: The screenshot of Cheng’s video – a coin stood still on the high-speed train

In the interview, Cheng recalled this experience and told me that because of this adventure, she felt she “had not a bit of regret for the ICS”. It had given her a strong impression of how advanced in development China had become.

The findings in this sub-section have revealed that the ICS had great potential for broadening students’ knowledge about China. They were more aware of the diversity of Chinese culture, especially the modernised facets of it.

6.3.4 Learning through interpersonal interactions: “unique details”

The survey results demonstrated that learning Chinese culture through interaction increased to the greatest extent during the ICS compared to non-ICS (see Section 6.2.1). Qualitative data further illustrate that it helped students get more “unique details” (Irene) about Chinese society.

Students learned about in-depth details of China through the interaction with their language partners since they felt it easier to discuss social issues more extensively with them. Students gained more knowledge about social issues in China, as illustrated by Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email):

“Since the atmosphere was more casual and personal, it was also much easier to ask questions about **less mainstream** aspects of Chinese culture and learn more **unique details** about life in Beijing. We were also able to have more interesting and **personalised discussions** about how we felt about Chinese society and comparisons with other places we had visited.”

The words in bold show that interacting with language partners creates opportunities to touch upon the complex and diverse nature of culture.

Even when the learner was not similar in age to the language partner, they could also have extensive discussion across a range of topics due to the good rapport. Hiroko's (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) case was an example, as she said:

“We chose to use our time together to discuss my observations of everyday experience in Beijing [...] which helped me greatly furthering my understanding of [...] Beijing people in comparison to, say, Shanghainese. At our last time together, she asked me if I knew the meaning of *wangnianjiao* (忘年交, the friendship despite difference in age). It was indeed *wangnianjiao* to us both.”

Although Hiroko had a discrepancy in age with her language partner, they could still become close friends. Through extensive discussion with her language partner, Hiroko learned about the cultural diversity of China, instead of seeing the national culture as a static entity.

Students also gained a particular detail about Chinese people through interaction with other acquaintances, that is, that Chinese people were more friendly and helpful than they had imagined. For instance, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) described: “I found them mostly friendly and very forward in trying to maintain conversation with us and interested in knowing about us, which was very pleasing to me and I enjoyed talking with them, even for a short while.” When students were exploring the city and sought help from locals, such impressions became even stronger, as Alice (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, email) said: “When we were in public and we didn't know the direction, we would have to ask people around us [...] I was surprised by how friendly most of the people were.” By using the word “surprised”, Alice demonstrated that the friendliness of Chinese people might have changed some of her assumptions.

The above two sub-sections have investigated students' out-of-class culture learning during ICS. An advantage of the ICS is that it offered multiple possibilities for different forms of participation in intercultural encounters. Some researchers differentiate “learning from experiences” and “experiential learning” – the former takes place in the life-world of everyday contexts with no act of active teaching involved (Moon, 2004), whereas the latter is usually used to describe the learning process with formal instructions, from which knowledge can be derived through abstraction and with the help of methodological approaches like

observation and reflection (Brah & Hoy, 1989; Usher & Soloman, 1999). In the out-of-class setting in this study, students had “experiential learning of culture” in addition to “learning culture through experiences”. This was because in the ICS, students travelled to the country of the target language with explicit educational purposes, organised cultural excursions, and language partners who were assigned conscious pedagogical responsibilities. Students actively used approaches such as observation, abstraction and reflection to deal with new phenomena and situations they encountered (i.e., the conceptualisation of “old meets new” and “unique details”).

What was missing in student narratives is the learning of communicative culture through immersion in the target culture and interpersonal interaction. A large body of literature on study abroad has demonstrated the benefits of study abroad to language learners’ pragmatic developments due to the cultural immersion and constant exposure to authentic use of the language (Kinginger, 2013). For example, giving advice (Matsumura, 2001), appropriate responses to the target language input (H. W. Allen & Herron, 2003), Chinese compliments (Jin, 2015), and Chinese affective final sentence (Diao, 2016). In the current study, although most students reported plenty of opportunities for out-of-class interaction (Chapter 4) and authentic use of Chinese (Chapter 5), they did not notice much about cultural conflicts and the pragmatic aspects that emerged from authentic language use out of class. It might be constrained by the methodology of this study that no recorded observation was conducted to capture language use in natural settings, in which students might have developed their pragmatics without realising them (see Chapter 8 for recommendation for future studies). But it might also be a limitation of the Sydney-Beijing Program that no immediate reflective activities were involved to encourage students’ critical analysis of the language used by themselves and others as a component of communicative culture learning. The limitation of the program will be explicated in more detail in Section 6.6.

Although with the limitation above, the findings in this study inform us that since the ICS offered different forms of participation in intercultural encounters, and engagement in different levels of interaction and contact with culture, it would foster diverse interpretations and cultural perspectives. Students’ cultural interpretation will be the topic of the next section. Two themes that emerged are relative and historical views on culture, indicating a movement beyond learning “Chinese culture” to “how culture works” in general (Ruan & Du, 2013, p. 56).

6.4 Cultural interpretation

This section finds that the ICS encouraged students to interpret cultural phenomenon from relative and historical perspectives. Although it is a common belief of researchers with an intercultural and ecological orientation that culture has come to be seen as “a set of open structures, lacking clear borders, and constantly changing” (Kirkebæk et al., 2013), less is known about how language learners conceptualise the nature of culture themselves. This section will present different relative and historical views on culture held by interviewees.

6.4.1 Relative views on culture

Students developed a “relative” view on culture (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013: p.24), which means they were more aware of within-group diversities and cross-group similarities. These views challenged the stereotypical boundaries between cultural entities (e.g., national culture, Western vs. Eastern culture, etc.) so that the students came to understand the complex and dynamic nature of culture.

First, many students commented on the heterogeneity of “Chinese culture” and were aware that over-generalisation should be avoided. The idea of diversity was facilitated by the interaction with different people in person, introducing different horizons. For example, Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) described her experience of talking to two language partners, both being female, holding contrasting ideas on Chinese business culture:

“[...] the business conversation was at dinner with another Australian and her language partner who said that she didn’t have high aspirations for business because of her gender [...] She described the culture of a men’s club in business where most negotiating happens over drinking and women physically can’t keep up with the drinking and therefore the negotiating. But I think that was just a personal view because my own language partner was very aspirational and wants to have her own business one day.”

Comparing these two diverse voices from different people, Emily realised that one should avoid generalising cultural practices in some cases to all Chinese people. Moreover, when encountering unhappy experiences, which are inevitable during any sojourn to a place with

unfamiliar systems, students also tried to prevent over-generalisation, due to more diverse social interaction with individuals. For example, Jack balanced between positive and negative aspects and felt that “overall the positivity [...] definitely outweighed the negativity”, because he met a “a tonne of amazing people” although some people were not as helpful than others. Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) also mentioned that although was aware of the social issues that existed at China’s current developmental stage, she saw Chinese people as individuals as opposed to a generalised whole confined by a fixed cultural system.

Second, students were also prompted to reflect on cross-cultural similarities, which facilitated their awareness that intercultural communication was achievable with efforts. When asked about “cultural shock”, interviewees all noted that although “there was quite a bit of differences to intake, nothing that was very strange or bizarre” (Jessie). They found many commonalities with their language partners such as “similar values (e.g., recognising the value of being multilingual) and interests”, “same sense of humour” (Selena), and similarities in “life direction (e.g., being aspirational to start their own business one day)” (Emily). These perceptions helped establish cross-cultural friendships. Students also gained insights into cultural similarities through comparing different cultures. For example, Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) noticed similarities between Chinese culture and her heritage culture – Korean culture, in terms of street food and promotion strategies. Joyce (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) also found that Chinese were “more open-minded and are more freely challenging the views and policies that they may not agree with” than she previously envisaged, thus “more similar to most ‘Westerners’”. This made her find it “much easier to communicate and interact with Chinese native speakers.” Moreover, observing cultural exchanges also made students aware that cultural boundaries are not fixed and do not impede communication among different cultures, as Emily’s (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, email) story illustrated:

“I watched a movie at the theatre at [host university], funnily enough it was an English film, so seeing Chinese students enjoying Western films [in Chinese subtitles] as much as we do was definitely eye-opening [...] made me understand that there isn’t as much of difference in culture as I thought it was and with enough effort, communication wasn’t actually so difficult.”

Since Emily was more aware that intercultural communication was possible with efforts, she mentioned in a later point that she believed it would be possible for her to appreciate Chinese films as well one day when she became fluent in the language.

6.4.2 Historical views on culture

Apart from relative views that recognise cultural diversities and challenge cultural boundaries, students also developed historical views on culture, acknowledging that culture is not a stable entity. It was manifested by two aspects: the understanding of culture as evolving with history and time, and the understanding of social issues by relating them to the developmental history.

The understanding of culture as evolving can be seen from students' comparison between their new insights into Chinese culture and their previous knowledge about China. The new insights have already been touched upon in previous sections regarding students' critical reflection on their (mis)assumption of Chinese culture and Chinese people. Apart from that, most students had been to China before (except Dom and Myo), either for traveling or family visit. Therefore, they were stimulated to compare their impressions about China this time with those from previous experiences. All students noticed that China had been developing and some aspects of Chinese culture had been changing – from more conservative to more open. As described by Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) about the development of Chinese society: “Last time I came to Beijing as a child, I remember thinking that it was very unclean and underdeveloped compared to Australia. I have noticed now that China is becoming more modern and advanced.” Joyce (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) also noted the change of Chinese people: “The Chinese citizens I met were quite friendly, compared to when I visited in 2007 [...] people were more polite and open to ‘outsiders’ and foreigners.” The observation of these changes allowed students to envisage that “Chinese society is getting better” (Irene).

Students also interpreted social issues in China by placing the country in its historically developmental stage. Although some students felt that there were still Chinese people who were indifferent, practical, and lacking manners in public, they felt that they could understand these phenomena better considering how the country had been developed throughout the history. For example, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) criticised that customer service staff in China did not show the same level of courtesy that she experienced in Japan and Australia. She also acknowledged that “the developmental stages of each country need to be considered. Only when we are well-fed, well-housed, and well-

clothed, can we afford to be courteous to each other.” Looking at cultural issues through a historical lens helped students to observe the generational difference of a culture, as Linjia (Female, Age 19, Heritage, Advanced, email) mentioned: “I think the Chinese culture is traditionally more conservative [...] Times have changed however and I think that the younger generation are more open minded and accepting.”

The examples in this section have illustrated that frequent encounters of within-group diversities and cross-group similarities during the ICS and witnessing culture change helped develop relative and historical views on culture. This is in alignment with the intercultural perspective on culture that viewing culture as *practices* in the plural form (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013), which problematises the notion of bounded speech communities and the “one language – one culture assumption” (Blommaert, 2005: p.216), highlights the “unfinalisability” nature of culture (Kramsch, 2008). The “transformation” (Moon, 2004: p.17) of learners’ perspectives is also an essence of intercultural learning, as learner’s internal experience (bringing experience from current cognitive structure) can trigger richer information based on the external experience (learning material such as object, idea, concept and image) (Marton and Booth, 1997, cited in Moon, 2004). In this study, interpersonal interactions in intercultural encounters encouraged reflections on presumptions about China as being a general whole as traditional and conservative. This finding contrasts to (Yang, 2012)’s result that students tended to use “face” and government control to decode what they had seen and learned in China, preventing them from learning about China from the local perspective. One explanation of this discrepancy of research findings is that Yang’s program was non-language-based, thus students might not have had sufficient amount and depth of interaction due to language barriers. Therefore, this study underscores the value of interpersonal interaction for the transformation of cultural perspectives.

In sum, this section has found that students developed relative and historical views on culture through the ICS. In other words, the ICS experience was beneficial to de-emphasise “norms” and “draw students’ attention to heterogeneity and change within culture” (Zhu, 2014: p.7). They developed the idea that “cultural realities are individually constructed around individual circumstances, and can transcend national culture descriptions and boundaries” (Holliday, 2011: p. 61). These relative and historical views on culture allowed students to be tolerant of differences, reinforced cultural understanding and empathy. In participants’ own words, the ICS experience was more about “the language and the culture are amazing and I can put up with differences” (Dom), and “positivity outweighed negativity” (Jack). Developing intercultural perspectives is a critical process toward

intercultural learning, as it moves beyond accumulating knowledge of other people and places to reach an understanding of the nature of culture and how culture works in general. It further stimulated reflection on intercultural identities, which will be the focus of the next section.

6.5 Cultural response

This section will show that based on the cultural participation, description and interpretation processes analysed in previous sections, students' motivation to learn Chinese and their self-awareness as an intercultural person had increased. This corresponds to the survey finding that the scores for the items in the dimension "knowing oneself" increased significantly in Survey 2. The circular model in Figure 6.1 suggests that cultural response would feed back into cultural participation, therefore play a critical role in cultural and intercultural learning.

6.5.1 Increased motivation for learning Chinese

All interview participants were more willing to explore Chinese language and culture, which can be attributable to three reasons. At the level of cultural product, students were fascinated by Chinese historical-cultural products. At the level of cultural practice, students were impressed by the kindness of most Chinese people when interacting with them. At the level of cultural perspectives, since students developed relative and historical views on culture, they were tolerant of cultural differences and social issues.

First, visiting remarkable cultural and historical sites reinforced students' intention to learn more about the country. For example, Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, email) mentioned that she would like to explore other cities of China: "This program has really intrigued me on various factors in relation to Chinese culture and I hope in the future I have another chance to visit the amazing country and explore more since I was only able to see Beijing." Students also developed more interests in learning the language through these cultural excursions, as Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) noted: "the cultural visits were fantastic because I think all of those things create more interests in, like 'oh okay, the culture, the history interests me and therefore I should learn the language'." Fascinated by the rich history and culture of China, students were more inspired to learn about its cultural products and the language.

Second, drawn from the experiences of interacting with native speakers and the positive impressions of them, students were more willing to interact with Chinese people. As Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) narrated:

“I really enjoyed most interaction I had using Chinese language with the local people. My attitude towards China and Chinese people definitely changed through this program, to a better one. [...] It gave me, some sort of, faith, or heightened degree of easiness, or comfort in Chinese people in mainland China [...].”

From Hiroko's inductive reasoning, the friendly conversations with Chinese people during the program changed her attitude towards China positively, which further led to her increased degree of comfort with Chinese people. Improved attitudes to Chinese people had a positive influence on students' motivation for learning Chinese, as Joyce (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) reasoned: “Since native Chinese citizens have been very welcoming and friendly, therefore leaving a good impression on me, I would like to visit China again in the future, and perhaps learn more about Chinese culture and history.” Based on their experiences of being treated nicely in interactions, students' motivation to communicate and learn increased.

Third, because of the relative and historical views on culture mentioned in the previous section, students were not demotivated to learn about China even when they were aware of some negative social issues in Chinese society. Most social issues encountered by students during the program were pollution, sanitary issues, heavy traffic, taxi roundabouts, service and poverty. When students were asked about their attitudes and feelings towards these situations, they all expressed that the problems were not difficult to understand considering the developmental stage of China and individual differences. For example, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) noticed that some service staff in China were very polite while others were not. Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) also mentioned that he felt some Australians very “loud and aggressive” and there were “rude waiters” in any country. Therefore, all students stated that those issues did not discourage them from learning Chinese.

Taken together, due to the reasons at the product, practice, and perspective levels as mentioned above, students' motivation to learn Chinese was increased. In Emily's (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) words: “Since going to China and living there for a month I am incredibly motivated to finish my major in Chinese studies and to hopefully

be fluent one day.” This trajectory runs parallel to Liddicoat and Scarino’s (2013) notion of interacting processes of intercultural learning: at the point of noticing cultural differences when encountering another linguacultural community, the learner reflects not only upon the diversity that they experience and observe, but also upon what the experience of diversity means for oneself – how one feels and thinks about the diversity, and how one reacts to and finds ways of engaging with diversity. In this study, students developed an eagerness to learn more about the culture through engaging with diversity, which is supporting (Chen, 2007)’s quantitative result that participants positively changed their social distance and attitudes towards the Chinese people after a study abroad program. In the intercultural orientation of culture learning, an individual’s “attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006) entailing respect, openness, curiosity and discovery are seen as an important construct of intercultural competence. These positive attitudes to Chinese culture were also evident in the current study.

6.5.2 Self-awareness as an intercultural person

Students were also more aware of themselves as intercultural persons, which can be seen from two aspects: the awareness of their multicultural background, and the awareness of their personal growth related to intercultural communication.

First, many students were motivated to reflect on their cultural background and had a stronger awareness of the values of being bi/multilingual and bi/multicultural. Both heritage learners and non-heritage learners were more aware of their cultural identities. Learners with a Chinese heritage were more aware of the advantages of being a heritage learner. For example, they could frequently offer help to lower level students (Cheng); some invited other students to join their family gathering (Alice); some took pride in their capability in oral Chinese and daily communication (Jack, Coco); and some perceived having greater tolerance of cultural differences (Jenny). Learners with the ethnic background of another Asian country were also aware of the complexity of their cultural identity. For example, Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) became more aware of herself as a multilingual person who was able to speak three languages – English, Korean and Chinese, as the people she met in China were attracted by her knowledge of Korean language, food and pop culture. Caucasian learners like Mary, Emily and Dom also recalled the benefits of their prior intercultural experiences for their adaptation to life in China, such as a previous visit to China (Mary), being a private tutor of a Chinese international student (Emily), and visiting other Southeast Asian countries (Dom). Both heritage and non-heritage learners believed that being

a bi/multilingual speaker helped them situate better within the unfamiliar cultural environment.

Second, some students found that they were more aware of their personal growth in various aspects such as a sense of global citizenship and being respectful and independent. Irene and Mary developed a sense of responsibility about solving the global issue of air pollution. Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) was showing more respect to others: "I suppose I was more respectful to people I met for the first time in China than in Australia, just because I didn't want to accidentally make a social blunder or offend anyone in case I was not aware of a custom yet." Alice (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, email) found that the program helped her develop independence since she had to seek for help herself in public:

"At home we're always protected by our parents. We get picked up and dropped off by car everywhere we go. And we're surrounded by familiar environment. However, in China I had to find places using public transport, and often we had to change between different lines in the Subway. Through this I gained my confidence in speaking to people in public and asking for their help"

The quote illustrates that being in another country or cultural system means the intercultural person has to learn to navigate the new environment, negotiate with others, and manage unpredictable situations. These examples collectively point to students' awareness of their capability of functioning as a social person crossing national borders.

This sub-section has found that students were more aware of themselves as intercultural persons – with a multicultural background and a developing personal growth related to intercultural communication. Learners' reflection on their intercultural identities is not only a critical process of intercultural learning but also an ultimate goal of it. As Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) stated, the core of intercultural learning is "to develop an intercultural identity through engagement with an additional culture." (p. 29) Ample evidence in the literature has portrayed ICS in China as an ideal site for personal growth and intercultural identity development, such as overcoming a narrow national identity and transforming into a more open-ended and adaptive intercultural identity (Tian & Lowe, 2014), maximising the advantages of "foreigner identity" (Du, 2015), becoming a "global citizen" (Lumkes et al., 2012; Su & Spagna, 2017b). Indeed, the SA experience in China is a very important "self-discovery" "life lesson" for participants (Cui, 2013: p.49).

The sections above have analysed how much the ICS program had achieved in facilitating students' intercultural learning. They have supported the survey result that students had more access to culture learning during the ICS with qualitative details. The next sections will uncover a limitation of the Sydney-Beijing Program (Section 6.6) and discuss what could be done to push it forward (Section 6.7).

6.6 Limitation: The depth of guided culture learning

A limitation found in this study of the Sydney-Beijing Program was the lack of in-depth culture learning. As already mentioned in previous sections, students did not have a big cultural shock, were not threatened by differences, and enjoyed most of their time in China. This can be interpreted both positively and negatively. On the one hand, it might be that students had a high level of tolerance to some obvious differences. On the other hand, however, it might also be a lack of awareness of deep cultural differences due to the short-term and superficial contact during the program. For example, Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) mentioned in his interview:

“There wasn't anything that was like ‘aw, cultural shock, I can't do with it’. [...] Probably air pollution, and public transport, being crowded. That were the only things that I was like, ‘oh that's, like, *Aozhou he Zhongguo bu yiyang* (澳洲和中国不一样, Australia and China are different). But like you can get over them very easily.”

In Dom's utterance, the differences perceived remained at factual levels. Understandably, for short-term ICS sojourners, the length of the stay is limited and they do not intend to be fully integrated into Chinese society as immigrants would (Kinging & Palgrave, 2009). However, since the major form of ICS programs to Asian destinations offered in Australia is short-term (Sidhu & Dall'Alba, 2017), what needs to be considered is how to maximise the short stay for more in-depth intercultural learning through program intervention.

The language classroom could be a form of intervention, but based on students' feedback and observation of this study, in-class intercultural learning was still not sufficient. In the interview, students perceived that although there were many culture-related topics integrated into classes, they hoped to explore them in greater depth. One typical response was from Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email):

“Cultural learning was fairly integrated throughout the content of what we learnt – Chinese food, Chinese idioms, Chinese calligraphy, etc. These did give us insight into the Chinese culture, however, these kinds of concepts felt quite shallow and stereotypical. They contributed to a very shallow and glossed-over understanding of “what China is like”. [...] I would personally have preferred to learn about Chinese culture in a more in-depth way.”

There were some opportunities for more in-depth guided culture learning observed but not fully utilised in the Chinese classes, indicating possible ways of improvements.

The first kind of missed opportunity was bringing out-of-class cultural observations into guided learning processes. Considering that students experienced cultural analysis and interpretation very frequently (see Figure 6.2, item e3-1, e3-2), how to bring these interpretations into the formal instruction and increase the depth and breadth of cultural discussion might be a point of reference for future improvements. For example, on the same day as I accompanied Cheng to Tianjin (Vignette 6.1), she made two very interesting observations which can be used as culture learning resources. The first one is the translation of *Goubuli* to “Go Believe”³⁴ (Figure 6.5) which Cheng commented as a *tiancai fanti* (天才翻译, masterpiece of translation). Another is a notice found on the host campus saying “*Bie renxing! Dihua!! Qing raoping!!!*” (Figure 6.6) on which Cheng commented: “*Zhuangyuan men shi you duo buguai a, rang baoan shushu dou pa le.* (状元们是有多不乖啊，让保安叔叔都怕了)”³⁵

³⁴ *Goubuli* (狗不理, literally: “Dog wouldn’t care it.”) is a brand of steamed stuffed Baozi from Tianjin, China. There are many explanations for the name, with the most popular ones relating to the shop founder’s nickname. In 2008, it decided to adopt an English name - Go Believe - in hope of better name recognition by foreign guests but received criticism from Chinese citizens (China Daily, 2008).

³⁵ The notice says “Do not be wilful! The ground is slippery!! please bypass!!!” Cheng’s comment means “the ‘champions’ (many students at the host university were top performers across the country in the entrance exam) are so naughty, scaring the campus guards”. Both *renxing* (任性, wilful) and *zhuangyuan* (状元, champion) have cultural connotations nowadays, and Cheng’s utterance (perhaps with her own understanding and experience underlying) linking these two ideas made the connotation even richer.



Figure 6.5: Cheng’s photo – the translation of *Goubuli* as Go Believe



Figure 6.6: Cheng’s photo – A notice with “*Bie renxing! Dihua!! Qing raoping!!!*”

Both cases came from out-of-class observations could have had the potential to elicit deeper interpretation of how culture influences language use and how language frames people’s perception in formal guidance. Regrettably, limited evidence was found in the current research for such types of activities in class.

The second type of missed opportunity, also related to the first one, was guided interpretations of negative impressions. As mentioned, students in the current study chose to accept and be tolerant of negative social issues they encountered, but it seems they still had difficulty in truly understanding these issues. For example, Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) expressed in the interview:

“I still don’t understand. I seriously can’t understand why people don’t stop for you or allow you to cross the road [in China]. I asked my teacher, and she said, ‘yes that’s, that’s true, China is like that’. So I asked another tutor, and then the tutor was like, ‘because they’re crazy’ and I asked, is there any real valid reason why they don’t stick

to the rules [...] and the tutor was like ‘I don’t, I don’t know myself’. [...] So I didn’t really end up getting a real valid reason [...] everyone wasn’t sure. [...] But for me [...] I cannot live here if it’s like this.”

In this interview, Myo was obviously very upset – not only about a different cultural practice she encountered but also about the failure of getting a valid explanation from teachers. Indeed, explaining controversial issues can be a challenging task, and the teachers should avoid making arbitrary, prejudice-loaded and judgmental explanations. In Wang and Guo (2017)’s study for example, a similar situation occurred in which a study abroad student asked a teacher why Chinese people always speak loudly in public. The teacher attributed it to practical needs of peasants working in the fields, which is criticised by the researchers as implying a prejudice about the bad manners of migrant workers. Although the teachers in Myo’s quote did not provide a prejudiced explanation, they nevertheless did nothing to help her develop a deep understanding. In fact, Myo’s sentence “everyone wasn’t sure” indicates that she noticed Chinese people can be confused by or disagree with some cultural practices although they live in that culture themselves, which might be a chance to develop deeper understanding about the complexity of culture. However, this opportunity was missed, which might lead to the negative consequence that Myo felt reluctant to live in China.

The third type of opportunity not captured in the Chinese classes during the program was helping students see how culture is constructed in discourse by encouraging them to critically analyse discourse embedded in language use. This approach is in accordance with the interculturality perspective in language teaching, that is, “the promotion of a critical understanding of culture discourses” (Wang, 2017: p.23). When teachers and students constructed different discourses through language use, it could have been developed into a discussion on different cultural perspectives. For example, when there was a collision of understandings on the word *youxinren* (有心人) (see Excerpt 6.1 in Section 6.3.1) by a student and the teacher, the student’s misinterpretation need not to have been treated merely as a mistake at the lexical level – there could have been a discussion on the misalignment of the cultural discourse on success. Excerpt 6.4 illustrates another conflict of values between students and the teacher about the key to success when the students were learning the word *kending* (肯定, must be) (see Appendix I for the full version with Chinese characters).

Excerpt 6.4: A conflict of cultural values in the classroom

Class level: Intermediate

- 01 T: *S1 meici tingxie dou quan dui (.) kending zenmeyang (?)*
S1 got all answers correct every time in dictation, she must be what?
- 02 S2: *Congming (?)*
Brilliant?
- 03 S3: *Kending hen yonggong (?)*
Must be very hardworking?
- 04 T: *Dui (!) Kending hen yonggong (!) Shibushi, S1 (?)*
Right! Must be very hardworking! Is it so, S1?
- 05 S1: *E:::*
Eh... (hesitating)
- 06 T+Ss: (hh)
- 07 T: *S1 meitian hua duo chang shijian xuexi (.) Fuxi gongke (?)*
how much time do you spend studying every day? And reviewing homework?
- 08 S1: *Yi ge zhongtou ↑*
One hour?
- 09 T: *Yi ge zhongtou (.) Suoyi shuo S1 kending hen yonggong(.)*
One hour. So we can say Student 1 must be very hardworking,
- 10 *hua yi ge zhongtou lai fuxi women de shengci*
spending (as much as) one hour to review our new vocabulary.

In this excerpt, the students were asked to use the word *kending* in a scenario to explain why S1 always got full marks. That is to say, in this activity, students needed to associate success with the quality of a person they thought to be most essential (by using “must be”). In Line 2 and Line 3, two students offered different answers, one being “brilliant” and another being “hardworking”. In Line 4, the teacher only acknowledged the latter answer. He further confirmed with S1 whether indeed she had been hardworking. In Line 5, S1 felt a bit hesitant to respond, so the teacher decided to conceptualise in more detail what constitutes the quality of “hardworking”, which he defined by the length of time spent on doing the task. When S1 gave an exact time of spending on revision, the teacher confirmed that she indeed worked hard. In this episode the teacher tried to help students understand Chinese people’s concepts

of “hardworking” by relating it to the amount of job done, the length of time spent, and the endurance of the person. These traits were seen by the teacher as more directly related to success than the gifted trait of being “brilliant”, a quality suggested by S2 in Line 2. Regretfully, this kind of conflict of values was not made explicit in any guided process.

This section has found that the lack of in-depth guided culture learning was a limitation of the Sydney-Beijing program and some potential opportunities for deeper intercultural learning were missed out. The next section will discuss these findings in relation to the approach of integrating “symbolic dimensions” of the intercultural as advocated by Kramsch (2011).

6.7 Discussion: From cultural learning to intercultural learning during the ICS

The findings above have answered the research questions proposed at the beginning of the chapter. The ICS has facilitated students’ culturally oriented culture learning to an extent that they participated in a wide range of culture learning activities (in-class and out-of-class, explicit and implicit, interpersonal and with the environment) and generated more diverse knowledge about Chinese culture (traditional and modernised, mainstream and unique details). It has also facilitated students’ interculturally oriented learning to an extent that, based on this diverse knowledge about China, they developed relative and historical views on culture, which potentially contributed to their increased motivation and self-awareness. It can be seen that experiencing and engaging with “diversity” was the essence of ICS. Similar findings are reported in Wang and Guo (2017), in which the sojourners were more aware of the “varieties of Chineseness” (p. 48). However, their study finding was limited to students’ awareness of regional differences in China, which was still bounded by geographical borders. This study adds a broader scope in that students also noticed variations regarding cultural values and practices, and this is a possible starting point for intercultural learning to occur.

An argument by Wang and Guo with which this study does not fully agree is that students’ critical reflection in relation to the diversities is “mediated by their stereotypes of Chineseness as a monolithic entity, creating contradictory, and ambiguous responses, which could in turn militate against intercultural competence” (ibid., p. 56). The authors give an example (ibid., p. 55) in which a student commented on Chinese culture as “whole” (i.e., many Chinese people make friends with foreigners to practise their English or because of face) and then implicitly denied the claim by citing a contradictory experience (e.g., the student herself made some really good Chinese friends not driven by these utilitarian needs).

Such contradictory and ambiguous responses are also found in the current study in which students moved between more generalised comments and those with more awareness of de-generalising them. However, rather than interpret this contradiction as “militating against intercultural competence”, this study would argue it is actually the very process of intercultural learning itself, which is in nature non-linear. Moreover, it is more than natural for an individual to have contradictory thoughts as identities and subject-positionings are in nature multiple, constantly being in conflict and negotiation (see more discussions on identity in Chapter 7). The goal of intercultural learning is not to eliminate a learner’s contradictory interpretations on cultural issues, but to make them aware of the possible multiple interpretations and the reasons behind them.

Apart from the potential of ICS for intercultural learning mentioned above, this chapter has also uncovered a limitation, that is, the lack of in-depth culture learning. Although evidence has supported the advantages of the ICS in facilitating accessing cultural learning resources and developing some forms of critical thinking on culture, students still commented that the culture learning in class should be in more depth. This implies that students did not gain new perspectives or interpretations (beyond facts) from the knowledge acquired in class. This finding echoes Feng et al. (2013)’s argument that the cultural excursions in short-term programs in China only make students exposed to cultural customs or products without helping them develop deep cultural understanding and critical analysis abilities. The current approach to culture with an emphasis on information and communication was not sufficient for intercultural learning.

Culture learning in language classrooms can become more “intercultural” by introducing symbolic dimensions (Kramersch, 2011). Kramersch criticises that while the current communicative language learning offers “a host of imaginative opportunities to acquire fluency, lexical accuracy and communicative effectiveness, several opportunities were missed for greater intercultural understanding.” (ibid., 364). To include a symbolic dimension to language teaching in the classroom, teachers are suggested by Kramersch (1) to use communicative activities for reflection on the nature of language, discourse, communication and mediation, (2) to pay attention to what remains unsaid or not sayable, (3) to bring up opportunities to show complexity and ambiguity, and (4) to engage students’ emotions in addition to cognition. This again points to the intercultural competence of teachers themselves (Pan & Wang, 2017). The current program has already witnessed some aspects advocated by Kramersch, for example, the open-minded classroom discourse and the humorous use of the language in class may index a change in hierarchical structure and power

relationship. However, there were also opportunities missed for deeper interpretation, as illustrated in Section 6.6. Since the symbolic dimensions of interculturality have rarely been scrutinised in the research on teaching and learning Chinese, including in the ICS context, there is much space for researchers and instructors to explore.

Two questions have not been addressed by Kramersch regarding the language learning approach with an emphasis on symbolic dimensions. The first is whether there is a most appropriate level (e.g., advanced level) at which to introduce it in class. The second is to what extent it is applicable to the short-term ICS. Kramersch has noted herself that in some cases, the opportunities for greater intercultural understanding were “deliberately side stepped as not relevant or not appropriate for the goals of the course” (2011, p. 364). It might also be possible that students’ language levels have not yet reached a point to be able to cope with these in-depth discussions (e.g., the observations presented by Figures 6.5 and 6.6 might only be possible for advanced learners). Also, while the ICS might make more room for flexible learning goals and thus more exploration on symbolic dimensions, the short-term ICS has its time constraint which might not allow enough class time for the approaches recommended by Kramersch. After all, the shifts in approaches to language education to give more emphasis on meaning and culture “do *not* replace traditional foci but add broadly to them” (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013: p. 1), which means that learning a linguistic code is still a fundamental focus of language education.

To address the above two issues, this study proposes that apart from classroom instructions, there is a need to introduce program interventions for guided out-of-class learning with a conscious emphasis on the symbolic dimensions. Through guided out-of-class activities, students from different levels can share their knowledge and experiences, while saving limited class time. One concrete intervention might be assigning group works involving students from different levels of classes to consciously collect and share their observations, especially those involving the authentic use of language (see chapter 5), with follow-up guided reflections either face-to-face or on WeChat. In this way, such observations as made by Cheng (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) about Figures 6.5 and 6.6 could present an opportunity for reflection upon its symbolic dimensions with more guidance, from which students at lower levels could also gain benefits.

6.8 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this chapter has answered the question of to what extent the interaction during ICS contributed to culture learning and argued that the ICS facilitated culture learning with both cultural and intercultural orientations. Students not only gained knowledge about China but also new insights contrasting with their prior assumptions. They developed relative and historical views on culture, which further contributed to their increased motivation to learn Chinese and their self-awareness as an intercultural person. A limitation of the program found was some students perceived the in-depth cultural interpretation to be insufficient and some opportunities for guided in-depth culture learning were missed. To maximise the ICS and move beyond *cultural learning* to achieve deeper *intercultural learning*, explicit program interventions are needed to design activities for focused, conscious and guided cultural interpretation on the symbolic dimensions of students' life experiences in China. The previous chapters have scrutinised the general pictures of program participants' interaction (Chapter 4), language use and acquisition (Chapter 5), and culture learning (this chapter). The findings have been drawn from the majority of students' experiences and perceptions. The next chapter (Chapter 7) will look into sub-group and individual differences, particularities and contradictory cases, to investigate the role of identity, self-concept and subjectivity in personalised trajectories.

Chapter 7

The influence of identities and self-concepts in the program

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters reported the major themes that emerged from a majority of students, giving a general picture of the whole cohort of students, answering the practical question of to what extent the ICS helped students' interaction, language learning and culture learning. However, as Kramsch (2002) pointed out, under the influence of globalisation, increased ethnic, social and cultural diversity has resulted in "individual differences" and variation moving to the centre of SLA research. This chapter explores the impact of multi-faceted identity and self-concept on students' ICS experience and diverse trajectories. It attempts to answer the following questions:

- Q4: What was the role of identity in participants' learning process in the ICS?
- Q4-1. What were the influences of demographic identity categories on students' ICS experience?
- Q4-2. What were the influences of students' self-concepts on their ICS experience?
- Q4-3. What were the influences of re-entry learner identity on their post-program learning experience?
- Q4-4. How can identities be dealt with in multiple timescales?

The analysis of identity in this chapter draws on student interviews, since identity is understood as a dynamic construct related to subjective positioning which cannot be fully captured by quantitative survey. Another reason for the qualitative approach is because the number of sub-group participants in the survey would be too small for quantitative methods. The theoretical foundation of the analysis is the ecological perspective that stresses the multidimensional and multiscale nature of identity: in complex systems like human relations, both self and the other are intrinsically pluralistic and possibly in conflict with each other, based on different spatial and temporal scales (Kramsch, 2008). The chapter will reveal that identities not only serve as antecedent conditions for the ICS, but also as factors constructed in moment-to-moment interactions during the study, as well as prolonged effects post the journey.

This chapter will be structured as follows. Section 7.2 focuses on the influence of demographic identity categories (Q4-1). It finds that while learning trajectories are deeply rooted in these identity categories, the latter can be in conflict or negotiation with each other, thus leading to individual differences. Section 7.3 scrutinises the influence of linguistic self-concepts on individual perceptions of their ICS experience (Q4-2). It reveals that students' self-concepts as language learners and language users, invoked from antecedent identity repertoires or constructed in moment-to-moment interactions, played a key role in shaping their individual perceptions of the experience, thus could explain contradictory cases. Section 7.4 investigates the influence of re-entry learner identity as a prolonged effect of the program (Q4-3). It finds that while many students developed an identity as more competent Chinese learners than non-ICS-students, some students were a bit unsure about such a positioning, pointing to the need of post-program facilitation.

Section 7.5 will discuss these findings in relation to the understanding of identity in multiple timescales from an ecological perspective and provide practical suggestions (Q4-4). It will propose a possible approach to deal with students' multi-faceted identity and self-concept: providing students with explicit support for critically analysing their own identities as invoked or constructed in different timescales.

7.2 The influence of demographic identity categories

This section focuses on the influence of demographic identity categories, specifically Australian nationality, Chinese heritage background, ethnic background of non-heritage background learners (in relation to previous intercultural experiences), and age and gender. It will be found that while student learning trajectories are deeply rooted in institutionalised identity categories, these identity categories can conflict or negotiate with each other, thus leading to different individual trajectories.

7.2.1 Australian nationality

All participants in the interview have Australian nationality.³⁶ Students' Australian identity was invoked when they observed cultural practices or social issues in China that differed from Australia. Although they acknowledged the diversity within the national boundary and

³⁶ In the survey, among 31 participants, 29 are Australian, one is a New Zealander and one a German. Regrettably the latter two were not recruited in the interview.

were caution about overgeneralisation (see Section 6.4 for relative and historical views on culture), national identity nevertheless influenced their interpretation of cultural differences. However, as will be shown, even with the same national background, students showed different patterns when comparing China and Australia.

Many Australian students took pride in their homeland as being highly advanced, clean, with good air quality, its society being open, relaxed and tolerant, its people being polite and agreeable, showing respect and courtesy. Some students believed that Australia was more advanced than China in certain social aspects. Jessie (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, email) cited sanitary issues, pollution, and the poverty rate in China, and stated that these differences were not hard to understand since "Australia is a high standard developed country as opposed to China that is developing". Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) also attributed her perceptions of China to her Australian background: "Maybe because we live in Australia [...] what stood out was the pollution." Apart from social issues, other students compared personal traits of Chinese and Australian people. Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) made a comment that "Australian culture is much more open and relaxed and society is generally more tolerant and willing to help". Rebecca (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) felt that Chinese mainland people, Hong Kong people, and American people in her observation all showed some level of indifference to strangers and "Australian culture I find is a bit more agreeable; [...] it's more welcoming, so nobody's afraid to say 'Hi' and 'good morning' to someone you've never seen before." Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) also noted: "Obviously personality affects this but, most people in Australia would generally try to be nice and not rude to strangers." These comments indicate that students took pride in their national homeland as being advanced in certain social aspects.

Interestingly, the comments above regarding personal traits were all from heritage learners; non-heritage learners used more neutral tones in comparing Chinese with Australians. For example, Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) observed differences in cultural practices but described them in a neutral tone, e.g., the need to call out for the waiter in restaurants and the behaviour of saving seats for friends in the cafeteria. Emily (Female, Age 18, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) also learned about the Chinese education system from her language partner which was "very different from an Australian view point":

“My language partner said that [...] only the students who demonstrated high intelligence at a young age would have a high-quality secondary school education and university prospects (this may have just been her experience, I’m not sure how applicable it is to all of China).”

The last sentence demonstrates that Emily was trying to avoid making an overgeneralised value judgment. In another example, the feature of Australian people described by Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) was different from Irene’s and Jenny’s:

“Before going there I had the impression that Chinese people were quiet and shy, whereas, as I realised after that that was much more a cultural product of being very polite, and not loud and aggressive like we probably are in Australia.”

Dom perceived that Australians were “loud” and “aggressive” whereas Chinese people seemed to be more quiet and shy, which was not a result of “indifference” as mentioned by Rebecca but was a way of being polite in his understanding. In general, the discourse of non-heritage learners’ narratives showed some differences to those of the heritage learners.

National affiliation and the superiority attached to it is often examined in the identity literature, and the study-in-China literature has uncovered competing results to those studies conducted in other geographical locations, due to a range of factors. Kinginger (2013)’s review of recent research suggests that there is tendency to recoil into a sense of national superiority – mostly American – when some students encounter challenges to the habitus associated with their national identity, which might result in their withdrawal from the negotiation of difference. By contrast, Du (2015)’s study focusing on American college students studying abroad in China uncovers that the experience did not pose serious threats to their identity negotiation and self-presentation, even if their identification as Americans was strengthened. Students in Du’s study used Otherness as their advantage to construct learning opportunities and took pride in their Chinese proficiency. Explanations offered by Du include the nature of the Chinese language (e.g., isolating nature of grammar), the location of the program (where the locals do not have standard pronunciation of Mandarin), and the design of the program (that students were housed and had classes with other peers). These factors shielded students from encounters that would potentially challenge their identity and self-presentation. Some of these explanations might also be applicable to this study.

Adding to the previous literature, this sub-section has found that Australian national identity was invoked when encountering differences between Australia and China, especially regarding social issues such as pollution. However, even with the same national background, students showed different patterns. It is possible that heritage learners were more sensitive to the negative aspects of China and the positive aspects of Australia, whereas non-heritage learners generally had more neutral perceptions. The following two sub-sections will further explore the influence of Chinese heritage background and ethnic background of non-heritage learners on students' ICS experience.

7.2.2 Chinese heritage background

This sub-section looks into the influence of the heritage background of heritage learners. The findings show two aspects: first, heritage learners had some ambivalent attitudes to China; second, the heritage background might impact on their learning processes and perceptions providing both advantages and drawbacks.

First, heritage learners had some ambivalent attitudes to China. The previous section mentioned that heritage learners seemed to be more sensitive to the negative aspects of China compared to non-heritage learners from their interview discourse. This finding is further confirmed here. Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) explicitly articulated her ambivalent attitudes in the interview:

“Like many Australian-Born Chinese people, I have a very ambivalent attitude towards Chinese culture. Many of us criticize Chinese culture. We see Chinese people as [...]. We've all heard the stories about [...]. We know that [...] (concrete examples omitted as too lengthy). I feel like there is a real sense of ‘survival of the fittest’ in China.”

In the underlined sentence, Irene used the first personal pronoun “we” to show her in-group identity as Australian-Born Chinese (ABC). She criticised Chinese culture using “we see”, “we've heard”, and “we know” to indicate the criticism is a common one based on shared perspectives, shared experiences and shared knowledge. Although to various degrees, all heritage learners in the current study reported some similar ambivalent feelings towards Chinese culture. However, all heritage learners in this study indicated that negative perceptions about China did not deter them from learning Chinese mainly due to their heritage connection. As Irene further illustrated:

“I am still highly motivated to learn the language and the culture because I find it significantly important for the future of the world, and even more so in my life where I identify both as Chinese and Australian.”

As can be seen, ambivalent attitudes to China are a prominent issue for heritage learners in Australia.

The second finding is that the heritage background impacts on heritage learners' learning processes and perceptions delivering both advantages and drawbacks. On the positive side, a common discourse of heritage learners' interviews is that being a heritage learner meant easier adaptation to life in China (see also Chapter 6, Section 6.5.2). As Selena (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) said: “Because my heritage culture is Chinese and I have been to China many times, I wasn't shocked by anything. Everything was very expected and comfortable.” Rebecca (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) also mentioned: “Because I was exposed to like... because my family was from Hong Kong, and so I would just always accept that there were cultural differences.” This self-perceived intercultural competence had advantages regarding heritage learners' adaptation and tolerance. A similar finding is found in Xu and Moloney (2017) that with some stimulations, heritage learners were able to “tap into and apply their funds of knowledge gained from their family life, as a point of reference for their intercultural enquiry, either in relation to, or going beyond, the textbook scenarios” (p.169). In their study, such a stimulation was an intercultural intervention in the foreign language classroom. The current study adds that the ICS experience is also an intervention to develop heritage learners' awareness of their “funds of knowledge”.

On the negative side, heritage learners might require making more effort in the program to up-grade their learning due to their familiarity with China. They might not have sufficient interaction and culture learning which can be partially attributed to their identity as a heritage learner. For example, Coco (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, F2F) mentioned that she did not proactively seek opportunities to interact with her language partner which could be partially attributable to her heritage background:

- 01 Interviewer: Did [your language partner] help with your Chinese study?
- 02 Coco: [...] (positive example omitted) But we did not really contact each other that much [...] Both of us ended up we didn't make that effort to communicate. [...]
- 03 Interviewer: Why didn't you make effort to contact her?
- 04 Coco: I don't know, I had my own classmates and like I think cause like I kind of knew them from Sydney that we wanted to explore together. So I think that might be one of the reasons... Like the places we wanted to go to we would just Google online.
- 05 Interviewer: Do you think it's necessary to be paired with a language partner?
- 06 Coco: I think it's necessary, um... especially for people who aren't familiar with I guess the place or the cultural practices in China [...] if you are struggling with like or adapt to the culture, surviving there and stuff. But I think like, because I have been to China before, I have Cantonese parents, I think I could get by without...

Lines 6 indicate that the lack of deeper interaction between Coco and her language partner might be associated with her heritage identity – it was possible to “get by without” extra help. Although most heritage learners found interacting with language partners very beneficial (see Chapter 4 Section 4.4.1), Coco's case represented another side of the story, giving us a fuller picture (it should be acknowledged that several other factors came into play such as personality, being accompanied by other Australian peers and the convenience of using the Internet for help as shown in Line 4).

Heritage learners might also perceive culture learning to be insufficient during the program due to their previous knowledge about China. This can be seen from Irene's (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) comment on in-class culture learning:

“Cultural learning was fairly integrated throughout the content of what we learnt [...] however, these kinds of concepts felt quite shallow and stereotypical. They contributed to a very shallow and glossed-over understanding of ‘what China is like’. My class was mostly composed of ABCs³⁷ and we knew those things already.”

³⁷ ABC here stands for Australian-Born Chinese.

As already mentioned in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.6), Irene perceived the culture learning in class to be too shallow, and through this quotation it has been made clearer that she attributed the perceived shallowness to the heritage background.

Although some patterns are uncovered above, individual differences in students' responses should be recognised. For example, while Irene reported insufficient in-depth learning, Coco (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, F2F) actually reported having many in-depth discussions in class (see also Section 6.3.1). From Section 7.3.1 we will know that she did not have high expectations for the program which could be one reason. While most students acknowledged their "funds of knowledge" as heritage learners, Joyce (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email), also Chinese heritage, as an advanced learner, found her knowledge of China and Chinese was lacking due to her sense of being more incompetent than other classmates (see also Section 7.3.2). It seems linguistic self-concepts play a more important role in accounting for individual differences. The influence of linguistic self-concepts will be revisited with more detail in Section 7.3.

The study abroad literature on language inheritance as a demographic feature also often documents highly individualised trajectories, especially regarding cultural adaptation. While some studies have recounted successful experiences of heritage language learners' integration into the host communities (Petrucci, 2007), others have suggested that a return to the ancestral homeland does not always guarantee that heritage learners will be received with a warm welcome (Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000). In the Chinese context, Jing-Schmidt et al. (2016) found that several factors influenced Chinese heritage learners learning trajectories when studying abroad in the ancestral homeland. While motivation and social participation had a positive effect on learners' integration, racial invisibility in the local community might lead to an identity crisis among these heritage learners. Although heritage learners in this study did not report serious challenges of cultural adaptation, possibly due to the short stay, they were indeed facing ambiguous realities in their learning experience with diverse trajectories.

This sub-section has shown that heritage learners had some ambivalent attitudes to China, but these attitudes did not deter them from learning Chinese due to the heritage connection. Also, identifying oneself as a heritage learner might impact on their learning processes and perceptions, giving both advantages and drawbacks. While heritage learners took advantage of their cultural familiarity to adapt to the life in China easily, the prior familiarity might require extra efforts (at least for some of them) to seize the opportunity for

interaction and getting new insights. However, individual differences should be acknowledged because the heritage background cannot explain the learning experience alone.

7.2.3 Ethnic background of non-heritage learners and previous intercultural experiences

This sub-section scrutinises the data from non-heritage learners in this study, who can be further categorised into Caucasian students and Asian background students (Japanese, Korean). The nationality of all the non-heritage learners is Australian. The profiles of the 5 non-heritage learners recruited in the interview are presented in Table 7.1. All of them were learning Chinese as a major and were experienced in learning language(s) other than Chinese. Their Chinese levels were post-beginning or intermediate. Three of them had been to China before the program. Their demographic features resemble the profile of the bigger cohort to some degree.³⁸

Table 7.1: Profiles of non-heritage learners in the interview

Pseudonym	Ethnic background	First language	Gender	Age	Level*	Is Chinese your major?	Have you been to China?	Have you learned any language(s) other than Chinese?	Interview method
Mary	Caucasian	English	F	19	1	Yes	Yes	Yes, French (advanced)	F2F
Emily	Caucasian	English	F	18	1	Yes	Yes	Yes, French (native-like)	Email
Dom	Caucasian	English	M	19	1	Yes	No	Yes, German (advanced)	F2F
Hiroko	Japanese	Japanese	F	62	1	Yes	Yes	Yes, English (advanced)	Email
Myo	Korean	Korean	F	19	2	Yes	No	Yes, English (native-like) and Japanese (advanced)	F2F

* 1 = post-beginner's, 2= intermediate

Based on the interviews, this study finds that while ethnic background might have an impact on students' perceptions of cultural issues during the program, the possible influence of

³⁸ Among the 10 non-heritage learners in the survey, 8 were at beginning-intermediate level (6 post-beginners and 2 intermediate learners), 2 were advanced learners (regrettably neither of the two non-heritage advanced learners were recruited in the interview). Seven non-heritage learners (70%) were Chinese majored. Another 7 had been to China before. All of them (100%) were learning or had learned other language(s) than Chinese.

previous intercultural experiences should not be neglected. The following will analyse each non-heritage case.

The three Caucasian students reported that neither looking different in appearance nor cultural distance posed serious threats to their identity and self-esteem. Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) had been to China before in 2011 with her dad and younger sister. She did not feel anything shocking the first time when she went there, because she had “met a lot of Chinese people already in Australia” and had “already been to Asia two times before (to Thailand and to Japan)”. The only situation in which she felt a cultural difference related to her identity as a Caucasian Australian was when people came to take photos of her with her younger sister during her first visit in China, as she described:

Mary: When I first went to China, my sister also came and she was like six years old. And [...] people thought she was really really cute, because [...] we went away from Beijing and ran into the country area, and it was quite unusual for them to see like a little tiny kid like an Australian, and they always like wanna take pictures with her. That was kind of weird, like I never experienced that before [...]

Interviewer: What's your attitude to it? Is it acceptable or perhaps annoying?

Mary: Well I think it's fine. Like I don't think of it badly. I think it was just... different.

Interviewer: Did you experience the same thing this time in Beijing?

Mary: Well not this time, because it's more common to see foreigners in Beijing.

Looking different in appearance might result in some peculiar experiences during the in-country stay, such as attracting the attention of locals in Mary's case, but there might be conditions – being in rural areas or places where it is unusual to see foreigners. She did not experience the same situation during the ICS this time around as she explained because they were in Beijing. Despite this previous unusual experience, Mary found adapting to the life in Beijing was not difficult, because she already had many Chinese friends in Sydney, thus had “already known very well about what Chinese people are like”.

Emily also went to China before when she was ten with her family for traveling. Her experience this time “was much richer” and she “enjoyed the time a lot more”. Before the program she was mentoring an international student from China and she had been frequently contacting this student on WeChat even until the interview of this study. From her narrative, we can see that she conceptualised herself (as emphasised in bold words) as a very open-minded intercultural person:

“I had no difficult experiences in China. There was no culture shock because I have travelled to many countries in Asia since I was very young and I am used to being exposed to new things and I love new experiences. [...] I think it’s fantastic to be granted the opportunity to understand another culture better through travel. I am always eager to learn more and be thrown into situations that put me outside of my comfort zone.”

Because of this open-mindedness, Emily’s perceptions of China had been positive, as she mentioned: “I have always had positive experiences here. I still have wonderful feelings towards everything about China. [...] It was the best experience of my life and I have made lifelong friends and developed a passion for Chinese people and Chinese culture.”

Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) was very active in interacting with native speakers during the program, because his goal for the program was to “speak a lot of Chinese, ask stupid questions and make mistakes”. He was brave enough to arrive in Beijing a day prior to most other students and got up at five o’clock the next morning to explore Tiananmen Square and Forbidden City on his own in the heavy snow. It was his first time in China so everything was fresh and new to him. Dom felt that he had a lot of “misconceptions” about China because he had never been there before, and the trip made a difference to him:

“I think like I probably had the typical Western idea of China being much more strict and autocratic [...]. But I didn’t really notice that too much. Probably at Tiananmen when I was taking photos like 不能照照片 (*buneng zhao zhaopian*, photo prohibited) and I was like, ‘oh okay’. I was like, ‘maybe’. But probably like those things like that we and western countries like to put emphasis on. I didn’t notice as much. And it wasn’t the most important thing. It was more the culture was interesting, the history, and the people were very friendly. So that might have changed my perceptions a bit.”

From the above quotation we can see that being in China in person for the first time changed some of Dom’s presumptions. However, even though Dom had never been to China, he had other overseas experience:

“Before I going to China, I was in the Philippines [...] I think culturally, um, not very similar to China but, very polite culture. [...] So I think I was prepared for, the difference in language, if anything. [...] I think it was probably that earlier experience made me a bit more ready to deal with... and more tolerant towards cultures.”

The above three cases of Caucasian students indicate looking different in appearance or cultural distance did not pose serious threats to these students' identity and self-esteem. Although having different trajectories, they were all open to differences which could be attributable to their previous intercultural experiences.

The two Asian students also demonstrated a similar pattern of the influence of ethnic identity and previous experiences. Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) with a Japanese background was more critical of the service manners in China than other students, as she said: “In commercial situation in my own vernacular culture, customers (the one who pays money) are ALWAYS ‘the God’, thus, must be treated with utmost care and politeness; it does not seem to be so in China. (originally bracketed information and capitalised letters)”. However, her professional knowledge of language and culture (she was a Japanese teacher in Singapore and Hong Kong before moving to Australia, currently doing a Diploma of Foreign Language majoring in the Chinese language) allowed her to analyse and understand cultural differences: “Many of the differences I experienced I believe, can be explained by the different norms expected to follow in the situations that are being participated. Also, the developmental stages of each country need to be considered.” Her previous experiences with China also contributed to her tolerance of cultural differences: “I am already greatly predisposed to Chinese culture through many factors (e.g. previous residential experience in Singapore and HK., having a Chinese spouse (Hong Kong) for almost 40 years and by default having many Chinese friends, etc.)”

Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) with a Korean background was an experienced multilingual speaker and language learner. She speaks fluent English, Korean, Japanese and intermediate Chinese. She was very articulate about her philosophy of language learning, for example, she believes that learning a language is not only about learning the vocabulary and grammars, but “whether you can use it on the spot”. It was her first time in China but, for her, “since there were many similarities with Korean culture, there wasn't like ‘oh my god, this big shock’”. She was not only a multilingual speaker but also a frequent intercultural communicator. She volunteered as a language partner at the home university for international students who wanted to improve their English. Therefore, she was

very anxious to seize the opportunity to interact with a language partner of her own in Beijing and tried to use Chinese whenever possible.

The cases in this sub-section have clearly demonstrated that ethnic background might have some influence on students' cultural perceptions and the extent to which cultural comparisons were made. However, how students chose to deal with cultural differences was powerfully impacted by their previous experiences. They simultaneously had multiple identities, being non-heritage learners of Chinese on one hand, and experienced overseas travellers, multilingual/multicultural persons and intercultural communicators on the other hand. These previous intercultural experiences might help explain why these non-heritage learners did not perceive big cultural distance or threats to their cultural identity.

It has been mentioned that Du (2015) found no serious identity crisis among American students in China, but the researcher did not explore whether such a high level of integration was associated with students' previous intercultural experiences. This study is in agreement with Du's finding in that the Australian students did not experience a serious identity crisis either. However the current study extends this explanation by taking into consideration students' previous experiences. These experiences prior to the sojourn may also contribute to students' self-concepts (see Section 7.3) of their intercultural capability which positively impacts on their willingness to interaction and negotiation of differences. This finding can be supported by Feng, Bu, and Li's (2013) survey result that intercultural adaptability is one of the key factors that determine the willingness to use the target language outside of class during studying abroad, because it directly reflects learners' socio-psychological distances with the target language and culture. This study based on qualitative data further argues that although non-heritage learners of Chinese might have larger socio-psychological distances in terms of cultural background, their previous intercultural experiences in various forms can help narrow the socio-psychological distances and enhance intercultural adaptability.

7.2.4 Age and gender

A majority of participants in the program were female young-adult students aged 18 – 23 (see Appendix C for the demographic features of survey participants). It was also the demographic feature of the interviewees. Among the 17 interview participants, 15 were female, 2 were male; 15 were aged 18 – 22, the other two were 62 and 70 respectively. This section will first look at some common issues regarding the majority of students, and then examine the particular cases.

Interview data gives us a general picture of what it meant to be travelling abroad as a female young-adult student. One of many students' goals for the programs was to "develop independence" (Alice, Joyce), "travel alone" (Ming) or "leave family for a while" (Rebecca). The eager for independence demonstrates the "coming of age" (Mitchell et al., 2017: p. 38 and p. 209) dimension of their identity which will arguably influence sojourners building of friendship and social networks. In this study, students frequently mentioned how having a same-aged language partner enriched their experience in China and occasionally noted that a same-gendered partner would be preferred. Also, students sought continuity with some aspects of their normal leisure activities, such as going out to pubs and parties. However, being young females, they were also concerned about going out alone and usually moved in groups, as Rebecca (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) mentioned:

Rebecca: "I would have probably explored a lot more on my own... but my family just kept telling me, 'never go out on your own, even during the day', like, 'never go out on your own'. So I always got really terrified (laugh)."

Interviewer: "Okay, so you thought going out alone is very dangerous in China?"

Rebecca: "Yeah... By the second week I was just like, the only thing dangerous was just trying to cross the street (laugh)."

Being a young female student and under the multiple effects of family pressure and language anxiety, Rebecca would always find a companion whenever going out. The safety issue during ICS has already been discussed in Section 4.5 regarding social interaction out of the safe confinement of campus life. This section further adds that the safety issue might be more of a concern for female students. For example, Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) reported that she and her friend encountered a male stranger in China who came up to ask for their phone numbers which she found a bit unpleasant. Moving in groups and taking special care during leisure activities were issues to be aware of by female young-adult students.

The two senior students, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) and Ying (Female, Age 70, Heritage, Advanced, F2F) were both hardworking students. As Hiroko described, instead of going out after class, she usually went back to the dormitory for study: "I believe there were enough revisions and previews to do for the class every day after school – I wanted to study well for the program." Ying was also very articulate about how well-behaved she was: she never missed a class, got full attendance and

did self-study when there was no class. She also borrowed books from the library and finished them during the month. As Ying said, since it was unusual for students at her age to go on this kind of program, she really cherished the opportunity. It was noticeable that both Hiroko and Ying were fascinated by how China had developed throughout the years since their first visits to China in the 1980s. Witnessing Chinese people's dramatically improved life quality and increased friendliness to foreigners was a central topic of their cultural perceptions.

Being senior students did not affect how they were treated in China much. They could get on well with their language partners and because of their cultural backgrounds (Japanese and Indonesian), they adapted to life in China quite well. A little difference occurred when Ying and Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) went to the Forbidden City and bought entry tickets, while both of them showed the ticket seller student cards, Jenny got a student ticket whereas Ying got a senior ticket, which they found very funny. This story was told by Jenny in the interview and she noted that it made her aware of how seniors are respected and how it is unusual to see senior university students in China. In previous study abroad literature, the role of age has surfaced in studies indicating the experiences of older adult students are largely different from younger participants (Kinginger, 2013). This current study provides evidence that senior students' experiences indeed differed from young adults to an extent that they tended to be hard-working students and spent less time on recreational activities.

The only two male students, Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) and Jack (Male, Age 19, Heritage, Intermediate, email), did not have much in common, except that both were very active in taking opportunities in speaking Chinese. Dom's story has been well-depicted in Section 7.2.3. Jack was not only an active student in the classroom, frequently asking questions and actively answering questions from teachers, but was also keen on helping other students practise Chinese in leisure times, due to his competent oral Chinese. These examples echo the finding in Section 4.4.3 that some male students took proactive moves in speaking Chinese in public, not being afraid to make mistakes, which impressed other participants. However, more evidence might be needed in future studies to exactly identify the gender differences of Australian students (e.g., whether male students are generally more extroverted and "brave" to speak in another language, etc.).

In the study-in-China literature, Yu and Watkins (2008) provide some quantitative evidence that gender significantly predicts Chinese language acquisition. Wang, Hong, and Pi (2015), also relying on quantitative data, find that female students are more likely to be

positively influenced by online social support regarding psychological adaptation. Due to the limited sample for quantitative analysis in this study, it is unknown if their findings apply to the participants under investigation. In addition, gender is found to be a critical issue in the literature in an American context, due to the widespread belief of Americans that sexual harassment is a characteristic of foreign societies throughout the world (Block, 2007). Kinginger (2013) also finds evidence in the literature that perceptions that elements of language are gendered may limit the development of proficiency. Neither issues regarding gender were found in this study, perhaps because of the short-term and the cohort-based nature of the program, which sheltered students from deeper interactions that elicit these gendered issues.

This section has explored the influence of demographic identity categories on the ICS experience. The evidence from the current study and the previous literature illustrates their powerful effects on an individual's learning trajectory. However, in many cases analysed above, individual differences are acknowledged. In this sense, identity is best understood as both socially framed (Ehrlich, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2008) as well as actively constructed and negotiated by individuals, and both of these two aspects exert influence on the learning process. The next section will investigate the impact of students' identities which are more directly related to SLA, that is, their linguistic self-concept. It will uncover more explanations behind individual differences.

7.3 The influence of linguistic self-concepts on individual perceptions

This section finds that students' linguistic self-concepts have the power to explain individual trajectories and contradictory cases – why some students were more active or held more positive perceptions than others, even though they fell into the same institutionalised identity category. Linguistic self-concept concerns “the participants' sense of who they are as language learners and users, and their ability to negotiate personal identities through a second language.” (Benson et al., 2012, p.184). This section finds that two domains of self-concepts played a key role in shaping individual differences: self-concept as a language learner, and self-concept as an (in)competent language user. It will be uncovered that these self-concepts could be invoked from students' antecedent identity repertoires as well as constructed in moment-to-moment interactions.

7.3.1 Self-concept as a language learner: goals and expectations

Students had different understandings of language learning and therefore had different expectations and emphases on different aspects of it.

Since the Sydney-Beijing ICS was a short-term program, setting realistic goals and expectations was very important for students' perceived progress and confidence-building. For example, Mary (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) was dissatisfied with her improvements because she had set very high expectations which were not achievable:

Interviewer: Have you achieved your goals for the program?

Mary: Well my main goals were like being able to understand spoken Chinese a lot better. Before I went I thought like... I had really great expectations, like I thought I would be like, when I came back Sydney I would be like fluent [laugh]. But it's not true. It takes a long time.

Interviewer: So what was your biggest development?

Mary: Well I think my comprehension is a bit better, but it was just not as good as I wanted to be.

From this interview, it can be seen that despite her perceived gains in comprehension, Mary was still not satisfied with her improvements, as she "had really great expectations" and "would be like fluent", which she then realised was impossible to achieve in such a short period of stay abroad. Compared to Mary, Coco (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, F2F) who did not have the unrealistic expectations of "being fluent" or "knowing everything", was more happy about the progress she made in the program:

Coco: "My goals were like... [...] I didn't have many high expectations for the trip [...] Like I didn't expect to be fluent or like know everything. But it like brought me above higher to [the level] than I was before. I think I've already achieved my goal and it benefited my study. So I'm quite happy about it."

These examples indicate that it is important to set achievable goals rather than too ambitious goals.

Students' self-concept as a language professional might make them more critical of their learning processes. This can explain some particularities in the interview data. It has

been mentioned previously in Chapter 6 that most students perceived in-class student-student interactions increased during the program. However, Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email) provided a negative example. She wrote in her email interview questionnaire in a quite professional tone:

“Classroom management in interactive activities, especially amongst students was insufficient (it was mostly ‘head-on lecture’ style). In post-modern framework of foreign language learning, learning amongst learners (learners learning from each other) is clearly recognised to be very effective and beneficial. [...] Nor do I think that we have much varied learner-learner interactions at [home university]. In order for the meaningful learner-learner interactions to take place, specific, clear, and targeted instructions must be provided from the classroom instructors.” (underlines added by researcher)

Hiroko commented above that interactive activities among students were insufficient, which was also a drawback of the classes at home university, indicating that the limitation was not unique to the ICS. Considering that other students were impressed by the highly interactive classes and gave vivid examples of activities in the interviews (see Chapter 4), the question here is why Hiroko perceived things differently. It has already been mentioned above that she is a very traditional, rigid learner being a senior student (Section 7.2.4). Taking a closer look at Hiroko's personal profile shed more light on the influence of her professional background.

As mentioned in Section 7.2.3, Hiroko was not only a language teacher herself teaching Japanese but also was a very experienced language learner, had mastered English and was now doing a Diploma of Foreign Language. In her response above, the underlined sentences provide evidence of her attempts to showcase her professional knowledge in language education. The term “in post-modern framework of foreign language learning” demonstrates her moving beyond personal feelings to the higher level of professional discourse, which was not seen in anyone else's interview. Her deeper insights into language teaching may be a cause of her critical thinking about the classroom experience, which means, she might be more “picky” than average students, assessing the experience through a professional lens. Indeed, student-student interaction can be a challenge for all kinds of classroom-based instructions and requires a large amount of innovative initiations from teachers and curriculum designers.

7.3.2 Self-concept as an (in)competent language user

This sub-section finds that there was a reciprocal relationship between students' self-concept as a competent language user and using the language in interaction. The sense of being an incompetent language user might negatively influence the learning process.

The reciprocal relationship between language use and self-concept as a competent language user has already been evident in Jenny's (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) case in which she gradually developed the confidence to actively use Chinese for asking directions, even when she was offered the opportunity to speak in English (see Section 5.4.2 for details). The way she told the story using a happy tone implied that the first successful experiences of asking direction gave her a sense "it was the right way of doing it" by testing her knowledge in real life, thus on the second occasion when she was not as ready and took a while to collect her thoughts, she rejected the guard's offer of speaking in English and insisted on using Chinese for practice. Jenny's case echoes Dom's (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) reflection that "I think probably meeting all the people made me more motivated to [...] speak more. Cause we could have another conversation at the *canting* (Canteen), speak to someone and practise, and then you got that little like that sense of accomplishment when you felt like you were making progress." One successful attempt after another in making conversations with locals can contribute to students' self-concepts as competent language users in moment-to-moment interactions.

Self-concept of being a competent language user was not necessarily always related to whether they could generate accurate language forms and not make any mistake; rather, it was more about problem-solving and self-accomplishment. This point was made explicitly in Selena's (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email) narrative when she described her experience of chatting up the service staff when she was having her nails done in a salon: "It was a great opportunity to practise my language as they were very patient and forgiving with my mistakes and inability to completely express my meaning. I'm glad I had the courage to speak up and start conversation rather than just sit there in silence for an hour." From this quotation we can see that although Selena was aware of her imperfect expressions, she was still "glad" about it, indicating a sense of achievement. Students' language learner identity (rather than tourist identity) during the sojourn may contribute to their sense of being a competent language user, regardless of their actual linguistic ability. For example, Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) as a post-beginner, mentioned about the difference between his tourist identity when travelling to Philippines and the learner identity as a competent language user during the program in China:

“When I was in Philippines I could not speak the dialect there, Tagalog, so I thought I was more prepared in China because I didn’t have the language barrier, you know, I could speak a little bit, but yeah...”

This statement indicates that although Dom acknowledged that he could only “speak a little bit” of Chinese, he was “more prepared in China” as a language learner than in Philippines as a mere tourist. It might not be true that he really did not have any “language barrier” as a post-beginner, but this self-concept of being a competent language user gave him the confidence in his ability to solve problems and accomplish things in China.

Self-concept as a (in)competent language user is not a static situation, and the same student may have contradictory perceptions under different circumstances. Joyce’s (Female, Age 22, Heritage, Advanced, email) case serves as a good example. She mentioned that because she had a semester’s gap of learning Chinese before coming to the program and felt that to be disadvantageous in language ability, it was harder for her to catch up with everyone else in class:

“I felt that I wasn’t as confident in my Chinese level even in the Advanced class compared to most of my classmates, since I had missed studying Chinese for a whole semester [...] so things were often a bit awkward in class for me.”

Realising that her language ability might not match her peers, Joyce conceptualised herself as an incompetent member in class, which had some negative influence on her classroom interaction. However, in other situations when Joyce realised her ability in conversing with native speakers, she was more encouraged to communicate with them in Chinese, as she narrated:

“I found Chinese citizens I met were quite friendly compared to when I visited in 2007, because my Chinese level had improved since I started learning Chinese: I was able to have conversation with the people I met at the airport and also with the taxi driver on the way to the student apartment.”

The self-concept of being able to communicate had a positive impact on Joyce’s perceptions of Chinese people which encouraged her to converse with them. The successful interaction in

turn contributed to her better conceptualisation of herself as a competent language user. From Joyce's examples we can see that self-concept as an (in)competent language user was not stable but was constructed through interactions.

Interview data also illustrated how the misalignment between students' self-concept of language ability and their class levels would impact on the learning experience. Some students felt that their language ability was not in accordance with the class level they were in, therefore not learning as sufficiently as they expected, as shown in Jenny's (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) interview:

- 01 Jenny: One of the disadvantages that stood out for me was, there wasn't enough levels. because I finished second year Chinese here [in Sydney], they put me into the immediate level. But [many people] spoke Cantonese at home [at this level], so...um...
- 02 Interview: You felt very difficult?
- 03 Jenny: Yeah [...] like I couldn't understand like 80 percent of the teacher's spoken Chinese. So I dropped to beginners' class. But everyone was first year's. I was kinda like, my Chinese level was above them, but below the intermediate. Yeah, so beginners' [level] was too easy, and the intermediate level was too hard.
- 04 Interviewer: Did you still learn from the beginners' class?
- 05 Jenny: Um... I did learn, because, half of them were new vocab. But the grammar structure was pretty much... I did most of them here [in Sydney]. But sometimes there were some new grammar structures, or like a new way to use the ones we've previously learned. So I did still learn in the beginners' level. But not as much as I hoped.

The intermediate level was too difficult for the second-year student Jenny but was perceived too simple for another second-year student, Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email). She mentioned: "The problem I had was with the content – for the intermediate class, it was a bit too easy and not in-depth enough. Some of the vocabulary and grammar[s] we had [were] already learnt at [home university] and the new content wasn't challenging." Irene was also the one who mentioned that being a heritage learner, she expected more in-depth culture learning (see Section 7.2.2). Both Jenny and Irene finished the second-year Chinese study at the home university and both being heritage learners, Irene felt the intermediate class

was too simple whereas Jenny felt it too hard. This was perhaps because Irene is a Cantonese speaker as Jenny pointed out, whereas the latter is not. Both students' self-concepts were in misalignment with their actual class levels which led to less learning progress than they expected.

This sub-section has found that the sense of being a competent language user might exert positive influence on students' engagement in the target environment. Self-concept was not a stable concept; it often stemmed from the interaction of using the language. Neither was linguistic self-concept necessarily in accordance with the "actual" language level (determined by standard language tests); it was more about problem-solving and self-accomplishment. The misalignment between students' self-concept of language ability and their class levels may also negatively impact on their learning in some cases.

The examples in this section illustrated that students' self-concept as a language learner and language user could be invoked from students' antecedent identity repertoires as well as be constructed in moment-to-moment interactions. This feature of linguistic self-concept echoes Lemke (2002)'s notion: "We have a speciali[s]ed identity for every person we meet, for every activity we engage in, but each of these grows in part out of our prior patterns of interaction with others, as well as the uniqueness of the moment." (p.74) Therefore, the idea of a diverse and dynamic self-concept can help us understand and explain individual learning processes and contradictory results.

7.4 The influence of re-entry learner identity as a prolonged effect

The previous chapter (Chapter 6 Section 6.5) examined the influence of the ICS on students' identity development as a part of their intercultural learning. It was found that students developed increased motivation for learning Chinese and self-awareness as an intercultural person. These areas of development might be remained and reinforced post program. This section further explores how re-entry identities exerted prolonged effects on students' learning at the post-sojourn stage. As Kruse and Brubaker (2007) note: "Defining study abroad as a process, rather than an event, implies that [...] students should be supported after their return" (p. 147). Students' re-entry study³⁹ should be considered an inseparable

³⁹ Most program participants enrolled in a new Chinese Unit of Study at the home university when the new semester began in March 2016. Among the 19 students who participated in the post-program interviews, only three students were not taking Chinese, due to various reasons. Joyce was graduated from the university at the time. Jessie's science degree did not allow her to uptake any more extra elective units. Cheng also did not have extra credit points for the Chinese units.

component of the holistic ICS experience. This study finds that while many students developed an identity as a more competent Chinese learner than other students who did not participate in the program, some students were a bit unsure about such a positioning.

Many students perceived themselves to be more competent than non-ICS students in the new semester. They generally felt that the vocabulary and characters learned during the program served as a sort of preview for the study in the new semester. As Jenny (Female, Age 20, Heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) illustrated: "I found vocab that I've learned during the Beijing study shows up here [in the new semester at the home university] [...]. Especially with that recent assignment that I had, it did help like, I didn't have to translate those phrases because I did like already understand them." Students also felt their background knowledge about China was more advanced than other learners, as Coco (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, F2F) mentioned:

Coco: "So right now [in the new semester at home university] we are looking at more like social aspects about China [...]. I think knowing the culture, knowing the history, from the in-country program, helped me to understand like more the context, like with the subjects and the things I'm learning in my current Chinese unit."

Interviewer: "Do you think you can do better than those who were not in the program?"

Coco: "I think maybe the understanding, yes."

Because of these advantages in both language and culture learning, many program participants felt more confident in their current Chinese study. As seen in Mary's (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) interview:

Mary: "I think [in the current Chinese course I am doing] like that the people who went to Beijing now are a lot far ahead than the people who didn't go."

Interviewer: "And why is that?"

Mary: "I think quite often they are more confident to speak in class and something like that."

Interviewer: "Are you more confident to speak in class too?"

Mary: "Yeah! Definitely!"

According to Mary, she and many other program participants gained confidence to engage in classroom interactions, and therefore had more advantages than other students who did not

participate in the program. These positive examples echo with Isabelli's (2007, cited in Wang, 2010) finding that SA students benefit more in the post-SA formal instruction than non-SA counterparts.

Despite the positive examples above, some students were a bit unsure about their positioning at the post-sojourn stage. The problem was concentrated on the relevance of the learning content in the new semester. For example, Myo (Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) was not sure whether her knowledge gained in the program was applicable in the new semester:

Myo: "I had definitely learned a lot, but [...] I haven't really found much relevance, or connection between what I've learned, which is a shame I think. [...] like you can utilise it definitely, like I utilise in all my essays so far when I'm writing now, but, in terms of what they [the teachers] seek... look for in your actual assessment, it's not that but a different one..."

Constrained by the assessment requirements, some vocabulary words learned in the program were not the ones used in the current textbook, and therefore they were not the ones expected to be used in student assignments, even if they were also appropriate in terms of meanings. This may impede Myo from developing a re-entry identity as a competent language learner.

Another student Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) mentioned that more guidance on the choice of further studies should be provided by the department at the home university:

"I think the only difficult thing that I think coming back was I didn't know whether to do Chinese 2A or 3A. I wanted to push myself like, oh, I'll do 3A and learn the grammar and see what happens. [...] But maybe after the in-country study, it might be good option to say like, okay let's sit down and check and see what you were going with your Chinese..."

Dom developed the self-concept of being a more competent learner and would like to challenge himself by moving to a higher level after the program, but he was uncertain about it. He needed some advices to have a clearer idea about himself in terms of his language ability. As can be seen, although the program was already over, program organisers may need

to take the responsibility for students' re-entry study and identity construction, providing advice and consultations.

7.5 Discussion: Understanding identities in multiple timescales

The data analysed in this chapter has highlighted the multidimensional and multiscale feature of identity, which is in alignment with an ecological orientation to identity in SLA. The ecological theory believes that in complex systems like human relations, both self and the other are intrinsically pluralistic and possibly in conflict with each other, based on different spatial and temporal scales (Kramsch, 2008). Because of this relativity and diversity of the self, individual difference and variation have moved to the centre of language acquisition research (Kramsch, 2002). This section will first discuss the three critical timescales related to the understanding of the influence of identity in the ICS, then discuss the implications pertinent to program implementation.

7.5.1 Three critical timescales for understanding the influence of identity

Based on the ecological view of identity, this chapter argues that three critical timescales should be considered to understand the influence of identity on students' ICS processes and perceptions: prior to the program, during the program, and post the program. The most prominent identity features in different timescales found in this study are illustrated in Figure 7.1.

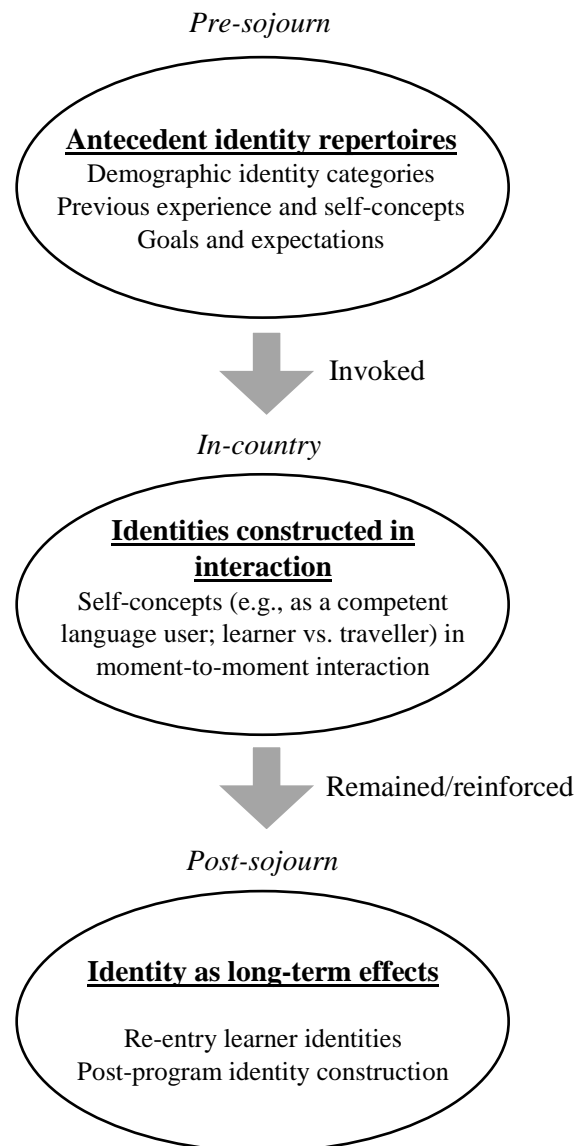


Figure 7.1: Understanding the influence of identity on ICS in three timescales

First, students' antecedent identity repertoires are able to be invoked during the ICS. These identity repertoires can arise from students' demographic identity categories as shared histories and memories, but also from their individual previous experience and pre-existing self-concepts. According to Kinginger's (2013) review of the literature, much identity-related SA research concerns traditional identity categories represented by demographic features and has uncovered the powerful influence of national identity, language inheritance, gender and age on students' social engagement, as was observed during the sojourn (see Section 7.2). However, this study has found that these institutionalised identities cannot shape the learning experience alone, as they are invoked on different timescales and in constant negotiation with

each other, thus leading to different individual trajectories. Students' previous experience, perceptions, expectations and goals also step in as analysed in Section 7.2 and 7.3.

In the analysis above, Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, F2F) and Irene (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, email), who are both Australian nationals, showed different sentiments regarding cultural differences between China and Australia. While Dom as a Caucasian student, interpreted the behaviour of people in his own culture as loud and aggressive and Chinese people as quiet and polite, Irene as an ABC perceived Chinese people to be generally ruder and more indifferent than Australians, perhaps due to her closer contact with wider range of Chinese locals. While both of them are identified as Australian, their ethnic background and previous experience also stepped in. Hiroko (Female, Age 62, Non-heritage, Post-beginner's, email), with a Japanese background, was not satisfied with the customary culture in China, which she contrasted with the delicate polite culture in Japan. Nevertheless, her identity as a language specialist and intercultural person allowed her to take it as a cultural lesson to be learned, rather than arriving at a rush value judgment. Indeed, "the performance of identity is not a matter of articulating one identity, but of the mobile[s]ation of a whole repertoire of identity features" (Blommaert, 2005, p.232). These findings are in accordance with Lemke's (2002) species-specific metaphor to describe this developmental trajectory from an ecological perspective: an organism-in-community is characteristic of its type such as species, culture and caste habitus, but also individual uniquely, divergent from the typical pathway of its species to some degree.

Second, students' identities enacted in interaction during the ICS are not only invoked from pre-existing identity repertoires but also emergent through moment-to-moment interaction. Such a post-structural stance of identity has already been accepted by recent study-abroad literature on identity (Du, 2015; Duff, 2012; Norton, 2000), including that in the Chinese context (Jing-Schmidt et al., 2016). In particular, this current study argues for a reciprocal relationship between students' self-concept as a competent language user and the learning processes during the program (Section 7.3.2). Benson et al. (2012) find that the study abroad experience has a strong impact on the participants' sense of self as learners and users of the target language: their linguistic self-concepts shift from language learner to language user, which is often influenced by "changing perceptions of the relative values of linguistic correctness and ability to communicate in the study abroad setting" (p.185). This study adds to their finding and argues that students' self-concept of being a competent language user (regardless of their actual language accuracy and fluency) developed through the ICS will, in turn, exert positive effect on their interaction next time around. The lack of

such a self-concept might hinder effective interaction and learning. It indicates that in the ICS, a key issue of concern is how to help students build up positive self-concepts as language users in the target environment. In other words, help them develop the mindset that the goal is not simply mastering of linguistic codes but “aligning oneself in the social space, using one’s full semiotic potential, ‘seizing the moment’ and negotiating paradox” (Kramsch, 2002).

Third, at the post-sojourn stage, although the program is over, it has a long-term effect on students’ learning through identity work and as confident language users. Considering the temporal dimension of the human learning environment, the ecological perspective acknowledges the effects of momentary events over a longer timescale, and identity plays a main role in this. As Lemke (2002) indicates, our identity mediates and affords our momentary performances and our efforts to construct long-timescale continuities and trends. Two critical points made by Lemke are especially relevant to this study. The first point is that long-term change through short-term change can only be achieved as long as the latter is not erased too soon, does not quickly fade, and is reinforced by subsequent events which makes for a kind of persistent change. It is relevant to the finding in this study that strengthening positive learner identity may reinforce students’ further study in the new semester. The second point is that what really shapes long-term learning is not how often we have occasion to repeat some learned practice or way of interacting with environments, but how intensely these experiences matter to us. It is relevant to this study in that the maintained identities may be a result of the emotional, touching, memorable, enjoyable moments, as well as the sense of camaraderie constructed during the sojourn, which made students perceive the experience as a meaningful and significant period of time for their entire life.

A question frequently asked in the SA literature is how and to what extent aspects of development during time abroad can influence the post-sojourn experience – and how long exactly the influence will last. It is indeed an unsolvable puzzle, because a student’s life upon returning to the home country again consists of numerous complex environmental systems and the in-country study just becomes another part – varying in its degree of importance – of their past memories. On one hand, the program surely influences students’ future decisions to varying degrees, on the other, subsequent events post the ICS may reinforce or constrain the effects of identity features constructed or developed during the sojourn, which point to the importance of post-stage assistance from program organisers.

7.5.2 How to deal with identities in multiple timescales?

While previous research has explored the dynamic and diverse feature of identity to a great extent, it mostly fails to propose practical methods to deal with students' individualised features of identity. An exception is the study by Jing-Schmidt et al. (2016), in which the authors suggest programmatic intervention to align program design with students' learning goals and to support those goals by increasing opportunities of meaningful and sustained participation in practices of the local community. They also offer specific recommendation for heritage learners – giving explicit instruction on the culture-specific conceptions of race and nationality in China and the social context and manner in which it may impact the heritage learners' experience in the ancestral homeland. Another study by Jessup-Anger and Aragonés (2013) also highlights some attentive practices to meet different students' unique needs. The researchers examine students' self-identification and agency during time abroad and classify their participants into four types: the loner, the mediator, the messenger, and the learner. Each type of student can benefit from a unique set of strategies to maximise the short-term study experience in the foreign country.

While their suggestions are very valuable, the implications of this chapter also suggest that neither recognising the complexity of identity nor the general advice of customising the program to students' own needs is sufficient. Since the process of learning an additional language is highly dynamic and personalised, students should be given instructions or support in developing the ability to analyse their own identities as invoked or constructed in different timescales, in a rational way. That is to say, students not only need to learn about others but also need to learn more about themselves. This ability is described by Kramsch (2008) as a feature of symbolic competence from an ecological perspective: symbolic competence is not another skill that language users have to master, nor is it merely a subfield of communicative competence; rather, it is a mindset that can create affordances if “the individual *learns to see him/herself through his/her own embodied history and subjectivity* and through the history and subjectivity of others.” (ibid, p.668, emphasis added by researcher)

A possible approach one might envisage is encouraging students to reflect on the possible range of their identity repertoire before and after the program, not only in terms of their national or ethnic categories, but also in relation to their previous experiences and self-concepts. This process might be aided by group discussions or journal sharing, so that students can be made aware of how different understandings of themselves may lead to diverse trajectories. As we have seen in the data above, there were students who were already quite aware of the importance of conceptualising themselves as language users, such as Myo

(Female, Age 19, Non-heritage, Intermediate, F2F) who mentioned the importance of “using the language on the spot” and Dom (Male, Age 19, Non-heritage, Post-beginner’s, F2F) whose goal was being “not afraid of making mistakes”. Both of them were very active in seeking opportunities for interaction and speaking Chinese. Their ideas and experiences can serve as valuable advice for other participants.

7.6 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this chapter exploring the influence of identity and self-concept on participants’ ICS experience has argued that from an ecological perspective, multi-faceted self-identity powerfully influences students’ in-country learning in multidimensional ways: as antecedent conditions, as emergent effects constructed in interactions, and as prolonged effects directing future practices. The findings have highlighted that these complex identities and self-concepts interact, intersect, become invoked on different timescales, and are in constant negotiation with each other. Because of this relativity and diversity of the self, individual difference and variation have moved to the centre of language acquisition research (Kramsch, 2002). However, acknowledging individual differences does not mean we should meet every individual’s personalised need, which is impossible to achieve after all. It has been suggested in this chapter that giving explicit instructions or support in developing students’ ability to analyse their own identities as invoked or constructed in different timescales in a rational way might be a solution. That way, students’ can develop the mindset and ability to situate themselves in the dynamic environment of the target country for their own needs, and maximise the power of their own subjectivity, autonomy and agency.

Chapter 8 Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter of the thesis will conclude the findings and evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the study have been achieved. It will first recapitulate all the findings from Chapter 4 to Chapter 7 by referring back to the research questions proposed at the outset of the research. Then, it will discuss these findings at the practical level and theoretical level and offer implications for practitioners and researchers. At the practical level, the chapter will discuss how the findings of the thesis respond to the debates around the effects of short-term ICS, and how to improve the current ICS. At the theoretical level, it will discuss how the findings contribute to the ecological perspective on language education. This chapter will end with the limitations of the thesis and recommendations for future research.

8.2 Recapitulation of findings

This study had two main objectives at the outset of the research: to explore whether the in-country study was beneficial for Australian university students learning Chinese, and how the in-country experience can be maximised. To meet these objectives, this thesis has attempted to answer four questions: (1) Q1: To what extent did the ICS facilitate interaction in different settings? (2) Q2: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to language learning? (3) Q3: To what extent did the interaction during ICS contribute to culture learning? (4) Q4: What was the role of identity in participants' learning process in the ICS? An ecological framework and a mixed-method research design (the "quan-QUAL" design) were adopted to investigate the research questions.

Answering these questions from an ecological perspective, this study has argued that while the ICS promoted in-class and out-of-class interactions which further facilitated language and culture learning to a great extent, Australian students' identities and self-concepts also played a core mediating role throughout individual learning trajectories. To maximise the ICS, participants should be made aware of not only the available diverse affordances for interaction, language use/acquisition, and cultural/intercultural learning, but also the importance of critical thinking on their own experiences and identities. Developing this mindset is the key to actively and fully utilising and even creating affordances for a

successful ICS. The following will recapitulate findings from each of the findings chapters that expand on this main argument.

Chapter 4 answered the question that to what extent the ICS facilitated interaction in different settings. It argued that the program facilitated interaction in a multi-levelled environment in China – the classroom, the campus, the social space and the virtual space – with different affordances that possibly encourage learning. In the *classroom*, the affordances provided in the ICS were formal corrective feedback, the learning atmosphere derived from a sense of “comradery” with peers, and pedagogical approaches that helped to engage students. Some of these classroom features were unique to the ICS due to its different class structure and learning goals from the non-ICS courses. On *campus*, the affordances discussed included the language partner program, immediate living environments, accommodation, and organised campus activities. They provided “safer zones” for interaction than off campus. In the *social space*, this study has found that rich resources were available. While grasping opportunities required the courage to break the “bubble” – the safe confinement of the campus life - the gains would pay off the efforts. In the *virtual space*, the mobile social networking tool WeChat afforded community building, after-class learning, long-term impact on the post-program learning. Students were encouraged to make full use of these affordances. Despite these advantages, a common challenge of insufficient organised out-of-class activities was experienced by the cohort, which might hinder the full exploitation of resources in the out-of-class spaces listed above. More organised activities connecting the multi-level spaces during ICS are suggested.

Chapter 5 analysed the extent to which the interaction during ICS contributed to language learning, focusing on the amount of language use, language use for authenticity, and students’ analytical thinking of their experiences for authentic language use. It found that ICS promoted authentic Chinese language use and acquisition in the “seamless” experience – blurring the formal and informal learning environments. In the *formal* classroom, authentic learning was manifested in contextualised language use: language use related to authentic social contexts; in *in situ* contexts viewing the classroom as a part of real-life world; and in personalised contexts related to students’ real experiences, thoughts and emotions. In the *informal* environments, students autonomously utilised authentic resources for language use: not only driven by the emergent need to survive, but also being self-initiated, collaboration-promoted, and mobile-assisted. Based on these findings, the chapter conceptualised that the “seamless” reciprocal relationship between formal and informal learning has three levels. Cognitively, the knowledge learned in class could be applied to real-life settings, and the

authentic resources out of class could also be brought into the formal classroom. Affectively, the conscious learning goals could be brought into informal environments, while the rapport and community built out of class facilitated self-exposure and experience sharing in formal learning. In addition, the mobile communication technology, WeChat, further reinforced this mutual facilitation. Authentic use of Chinese was found to be beneficial for students' awareness of the emergent nature of language learning and language variability. The three levels of relationships provided points of reference for maximising the ICS for authentic language learning and use.

Chapter 6 investigated the extent to which the ICS contributed to culture learning. The findings revealed that the ICS facilitated students' culture learning with both cultural orientation and intercultural orientation, based on a cycling experiential culture learning model. Regarding *culturally oriented learning*, students experienced various forms of cultural participation and description which led to diverse knowledge about China. The emphasis was put on the diversity of Chinese culture. In class, explicit culture-integrated content covered a range of topics with some different patterns among three levels; students also gained new insights into "untraditional" classroom discourse – open-mindedness and humour – in China. Out of class, students experienced how "old meets new" through cultural excursions, and learned about "unique details" through interpersonal interactions. These activities not only helped students obtain diverse knowledge about Chinese culture, but also helped develop a relative and historical view on culture in general, moving beyond cultural learning to the *intercultural sphere* of cultural interpretation. The intercultural perspectives developed further stimulated the reflection on intercultural identities as cultural response, and students found themselves to be more aware of their increased motivation to learning Chinese and their identity as an intercultural person. This self-awareness potentially could feed back into cultural participation. A limitation of the program found was that some opportunities for guided in-depth culture learning were missed. More explicit program intervention integrating the symbolic dimensions of interculturality are needed to maximise the affordances and advantages of the ICS.

While the previous three chapters focused more on the experiences and perceptions of the majority of students, **Chapter 7** explored the influence of identity and self-concept on participants' ICS experience, which helped to explain more sub-group patterns, individual differences and contradictory cases. It analysed students' identity in three respects, namely, demographic identity categories, linguistic self-concepts, and re-entry learner identity as a prolonged effect of the program. It found that although demographic identity categories

powerfully framed sub-group students' experiences and perceptions, individual differences were evident. Students' self-concepts invoked from previous experiences, goals and expectations, and self-concepts constructed in moment-to-moment interaction as (in)competent language users might have more power in explaining these individual differences. Considering the temporal dimension of the human learning environment, the influence of identity in a longer timescale has also been scrutinised in this study, and the findings point to the importance of post-program support in retaining and reinforcing the positive identities developed during the program. Taken together, this study proposes that the influence of identity on ICS should be understood in three critical timescales: as antecedent invokable repertoires available prior to the program, as dynamically constructed factors in moment-to-moment interaction during the program, and as prolonged effects post the program. A possible solution to dealing with dynamic identities in multiple timescales is providing explicit support in helping students to critically analyse their own identities as invoked or constructed in different timescales so as to maximise the power of their own subjectivity, autonomy and agency for the ICS.

These findings have adequately met the objectives of the study, giving us a fuller picture of and deeper insights into the potentials and limitations of the Sydney-Beijing ICS Program in facilitating Australian university students' Chinese learning. The suggestions made in each chapter have provided clearer directions of how to maximise the ICS with future improvements. This study offers implications at both practical and theoretical levels, as will be elucidated below.

8.3 Practical implications

At the practical level, the results of this study will redound to the benefits of stakeholders in Australia and in China, including program sponsors, program administrators and language teachers, and student participants.

Program sponsors, as well as students themselves, will be informed about and made aware of the value of the short-term ICS experience which may impact on their decision-making. Chapter 1, Introduction of this thesis, has discussed the debates around the effects of short-term ICSs (Section 1.4) and shown the controversial opinions on this topic. Indeed, if we evaluate a short sojourn abroad from the mere cognitive perspective (i.e., whether students gained in their vocabulary, grammar and linguistic codes, and accumulated typical

cultural knowledge as background information about another country), or from a narrowed version of sociocultural perspective (i.e., whether students developed native-like linguistic norms through language socialisation), the ICS might only have a limited effect (e.g., as seen in some studies reporting limited or unbalanced gains⁴⁰).

However, if we recognise that mastering another linguistic code and being inducted into another social norm are not the only purposes of study abroad (which are not the ultimate goals of SLA in general after all), the short-term ICS will be seen more as a significant life event for participants despite its short duration. The ecological perspective adopted in this study allows us to evaluate the sojourn more in relation to subjective and relational criteria, uncovering the value of ICS as a self-exploration journey of subject-positioning, negotiating paradoxes, understanding culture as complex and evolving, and even reframing reality through language use (Kramsch, 2002). These qualities are vital to the cultivation of intercultural skills of university graduates that are highly demanded in multicultural workplaces prominent in ethnically diverse Australian society (Dall'Alba & Sidhu, 2015; Scharoun, 2016).

Program administrators and language teachers will be guided on what should be emphasised in their practices to facilitate students' learning in China. As (Kinginger, 2010) points out, students' opportunities for success while abroad can be enhanced when they are taught how to turn everyday experiences, events, and activities, including conflicts and obstacles, into opportunities for learning. It is more so in the short-term ICS, as Landon, Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2017) argue that "fostering higher-order learning outcomes in short-term study abroad requires more than a philosophy of 'just do it.'" (p.6) and more explicit program interventions are vital.

This study has provided in each findings chapter suggestions for maximising the brief but precious time abroad. Chapter 4 on Interaction has suggested more program-organised activities connecting the multi-level spaces (classroom, campus life, social life, virtual space on WeChat) in the target environment to construct interaction opportunities for students. Chapter 5 on Language use and acquisition has recommended that the reciprocal relationship between formal and informal environments should be fully utilised to maximise the ICS for authentic language learning and use. Chapter 6 on Culture learning has indicated that more program interventions integrating the symbolic dimensions of interculturality are needed to

⁴⁰ see Davie, 1996, Lapkin et al., 1995, Wilkinson, 1998 for the limitation of ICS on language learning, and see H. W. Allen & Herron, 2003, Day, 1987, Pearson-Evans, 2006, Brecht & Robinson, 1995, Laubscher, 1994, Wilkinson, 2000 for the limitation of ICS in cultural aspects.

maximise the affordances and advantages of the ICS. Chapter 7 on the influence of identity has demonstrated the need to give students explicit support in critically analysing their identities as invoked or constructed in different timescales so as to maximise the power of their own subjectivity, autonomy and agency during the program. These recommendations further confirm some previous suggestions regarding guided-journaling and faculty-led activities (Walters et al., 2017), pre-program orientation (Barkley & Barkley, 2013; Liu, 2010), and post-program support (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007), but also add richness to them.

Students themselves may also apply the recommended approaches above to maximise the ICS experience for their own benefits. Kamdar and Lewis (2015) emphasise the necessitation of a focused effort aiming at pushing students to engage and explore on their own, “because the incentives to do so are minimi[s]ed on short-term trips.” (p. 9) The discussion on identity and self-concept in this thesis has also pointed to the power of students’ autonomy and agency. Therefore, the practical implications of this thesis are valuable not only for program providers but also participants themselves if they are made more aware of all the contextual affordances available and the power of their own subjectivity.

8.4 Theoretical implications

At the theoretical level, this study has furthered our understanding of the theoretical framework of an ecological perspective on language education.

Firstly, this study has systematically adopted the ecological perspective to investigate the key constructs of a particular intervention (i.e., ICS) covering a broad range of topics, which has validated the depth and breadth of the theory in practical application. While the ecological perspective has been used to examine different constructs of language learning in separate studies with different emphases, such as, language use in discourse (Sarangi & Roberts, 2002), cross-cultural learning (Scollon, 2002), and identity (Lemke, 2002), the key constructs of interaction, language learning, culture learning and identity have seldom been jointly and thoroughly scrutinised under the umbrella of the ecological theory. This study allowed the ecological perspective to be used to look into an affordance for learning from various angles, generating a fuller picture and a deeper understanding of the intervention. In this sense, the implementation of the ecological perspective in this thesis has filled the gap identified in Section 1.4, that is, inconclusiveness in the literature, by adopting an

overarching framework to conduct a more fine-grained and theoretically convincing investigation.

Secondly, this study has demonstrated that the redefined success and goals of language learning from an ecological perspective should be valued and recognised with more academic attention to the ICS context. As mentioned, although the ecological perspective has been applied to several multilingual and multicultural contexts, such as immigration contexts (Kramsch, 2008), second language classrooms (Bannink, 2002; Lantolf & Genung, 2002; van Dam, 2002), multicultural workplaces (Sarangi & Roberts, 2002), Chinese e-learning contexts (An, 2014; Tong & Tsung, in press) and minority education in China (Tsung & Cruickshank, 2009), it has seldom been used to analyse the ICS context. This study has added heft to the theory by offering fruitful empirical data and vivid personal stories from program participants, further confirming the necessity of more attention to the renewed version of educational success defined for language learning.

Lastly, this study has provided more nuanced knowledge of how an ecological perspective is applicable to the understanding of ICS. Although the Literature Review of this thesis explicated how an ecological perspective goes beyond the cognitive and social SLA to embrace broader views on interaction, language learning, culture learning, and identity, it is yet to be known which dimensions regarding each of these constructs can become more salient in the ICS context. Table 8.1 outlines the new knowledge generated in this thesis in comparison with the knowledge regarding the four key constructs of ICS established in Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.

Table 8.1: Theoretical contributions of this study to understanding the key constructs of ICS

	Interpretations from an ecological perspective as reviewed in Chapter 2:	How this study expands on and adds to the interpretations by applying the ecological perspective to the ICS context:
Interaction	Interaction offers affordances for learning; Interaction occurs at different levels: interpersonal, intrapersonal, and between human and physical environments.	In the ICS, interaction occurs at different levels of the target environment: classroom, campus, social space, as well as virtual space which connects the other three spaces.
Language learning	Adds to the social orientation and stresses that language use and learning are emergent in real-life contexts; Focusing on the awareness of language variability and talking analytically about language	In the ICS, language use and learning are emergent in a “seamless” context given the reciprocal relationship between formal and informal environments.

Culture learning	Challenging the notion of bounded speech communities and “one language - one culture” assumption and transforming into “new” intercultural speakers	In the ICS, experiencing “diversity” first hand is the core of cultural and intercultural learning.
Identity	Identity is multidimensional and multiscalar, based on different spatial and temporal scales; Learner has the agency to select from a repertoire of different subject positions	In the ICS, three timescales are critical for the understanding of the influence of identity: prior to the program, during the program, and post the program.

The nuanced knowledge about the application of an ecological perspective to understand the ICS has identified some key areas of inquiry that may interest future research. While this study is a case study of a particular cohort, in one context, I believe that the patterns identified represent a qualitative enquiry with “generative power” rather than transferability or generalisability (Wardekker, 2000). The students’ experiences and perceptions cannot be generalised into those of all Chinese learners studying abroad in China globally, but may be seen to contribute to the construction of a complex and “multiple” picture of the status and needs of ICS sojourners in China.

8.5 Limitations and recommendations for future research

Despite the insights gleaned from this research, it suffers from three limitations.

The first limitation is that only classroom conversations were formally audio-recorded, whereas out-of-class observations relied on the researcher’s anecdotal field notes. The drawback is that this study was unable to capture students’ actual use of the language in natural exchanges out of class, how they initiated and took turns, as well as the potential cultural embodiment and symbolic identity works underlying those verbal cues. Even though detailed narratives regarding out-of-class learning processes were collected through post-program interviews, the retrospective reflection might be constrained by the participant’s memory capacity. It also falls short in the possibility that the participants provided socially desirable answers. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3 Methodology, student narratives also have advantages over audio-recorded observations not only in their logistic convenience but also in their ability to look into students’ own perspectives. Future studies may combine both methods to triangulate data sources.

Another limitation is that all research participants were self-selected. It is possible that these students were more motivated and successful learners, thus providing more positive

feedback on the program. The experiences, perceptions and stories of students with lower levels of satisfaction might remain uncovered. It is important for future studies on study abroad in China to closely scrutinise what environmental and individual factors constrained the learning processes of less successful learners from an ecological perspective, and how these challenges can be minimised. However, this study also stresses that although the successful experiences only come from a part of the students which cannot be generalised to the whole cohort, they can serve as invaluable references for future program organisers and participants alike.

The third limitation is that the potential intervention of conducting this research on students' ICS should be recognised. As the pre-program survey, end-of-program survey and post-program interview all requested students to reflect on their experience and perceptions, some development in students' critical thinking might be triggered by the methodology of this research *per se*. For example, at the end of my interview with Coco (Female, Age 18, Heritage, Intermediate, F2F), she told me that thanks to the interview, she seemed to be more aware of some aspects of her development that she never thought about. Following the axiology stance of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm (see Chapter 2 Methodology), the researcher's role is not absolutely independent of the results generated in the research. Therefore, I acknowledge that I do not know whether and how students would reflect on their ICS experience if this research had not been conducted. Nevertheless, I believe it is also important to acknowledge that, from the positive examples of students' critical analysis in this study, we are more confident that through guided reflections and intercultural intervention (e.g., Xu & Moloney, 2017), students may have a chance to develop their skills in critical thinking on the ICS experience at best.

8.6 Conclusion

To conclude, this study has met the two main goals set out at the outset of the research: to explore whether the Sydney-Beijing ICS Program was beneficial for Australian university students learning Chinese, and how the in-country experience can be maximised. Informed by an ecological perspective to language education, the answers go beyond the narrowed scope in terms of gaining linguistic codes and socialising into target-like norms, to embrace more subjective and relational criteria. The ICS has been found to have great potential in facilitating diverse aspects of interaction, language learning, and culture learning, but the

power of subjective identity factors and self-concepts of students has also led to individual trajectories. This study has advocated offering more explicit program intervention to maximise the advantages of ICS regarding the affordances for interaction, the authentic environments for language use, the diverse experiences for culture learning, as well as the power of subjectivity and agency of students to utilise and even create those affordances proactively. The findings of this research have made a substantial contribution to the practical field of study abroad and the theoretical domain from an ecological perspective.

I would like to end my thesis with a quote from a participant, Emily, who said:

“It was the best experience of my life. Seeing the real-life application of all of your hard work makes the effort seem worth it. I have made lifelong friends and developed a passion for Chinese and Chinese culture. Since going to China and living there for a month, I am incredibly motivated to finish my major in Chinese studies and to hopefully be fluent one day!”

Indeed, the ICS as a journey exploring the self, the other, and the world, would have a lifelong impact on sojourners. As mentioned in Chapter 2, aligning to the spirit of ecolinguistics’ principle frame of “ecosophy” (Chen, 2016, p.109), the language learning goal from an ecological perspective ultimately points to the equilibrium of nature, society, as well as self. We could anticipate that with future advancement and better intervention, the journey of ICS would definitely pave the way for realising this ultimate goal of language education.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-departure survey (Survey 1)

Code name:

Part one – background information

- 1.1 CHNS UoS in Semester 2 2015:
- 1.2 What degree/degrees are you working toward?
- 1.3 What is/are your major/majors?
- 1.4 Age:
- 1.5 Gender:
- 1.6 Nationality:
- 1.7 First language (mother tongue):
- 1.8 What other language/language(s) have you studied? What is your level of proficiency in that language/those languages? (Native like/superior/advanced/intermediate/novice)
- 1.9 What are your motivations for learning Chinese?
- 1.10 Have you ever been to China? If yes, please indicate when and for what purpose you went to China.

Part two – Interaction and language learning at [HOME UNIVERSITY] in Australia

Scale A: Classroom interaction scale

How often did you experience the following activities for learning?
(1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always)

	1	2	3	4	5
a1. Dimension one: in-class student-teacher interaction					
a1-1. Asking your Chinese teacher questions in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a1-2. Being corrected by your Chinese teacher when you made mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a1-3. Answering questions asked by your teachers in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a2. Dimension two: in-class peer interaction					
a2-1. Seeking help from your classmates during class activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a2-2. Being corrected by your classmates when you made mistakes in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a2-3. Speaking Chinese with your classmates in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a3. Dimension three: in-class attentive listening					
a3-1. Doing mind rehearsals when the teacher asked your classmates questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a3-2. Overhearing your teacher correcting your classmates' mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a3-3. Actively paying attention to your Chinese teacher's interactional style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scale B: Out-of-class interaction scale

How often did you experience the following activities for learning?
(1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always)

	1	2	3	4	5
b1. Dimension one: out-of-class learner – native speaker interaction					
b1-1. Making informal conversation with Chinese native speakers <u>in Chinese</u> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b1-2. Asking Chinese native speakers to practise Chinese with you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b1-3. Asking Chinese native speakers for help when doing Chinese assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b2. Dimension two: out-of-class peer interaction	1	2	3	4	5
b2-1. Making informal conversation with your classmates <u>in Chinese</u> after class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b2-2. Asking your classmates to practise Chinese with you after class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b2-3. Asking your classmates for help when doing Chinese assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scale C: Technology mediated interaction scale

How often did you experience the following activities for learning?

(1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always)

c: interaction through technological tools	1	2	3	4	5
c-1. Watching Chinese media products such as TV news, dramas, movies, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c-2. Learning Chinese with online tools such as websites, online videos, blogs, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scale D: Self-perceived Chinese language abilities

Please indicate your level of abilities in the following aspects.

(1 = Poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = Excellent)

Dimension one: class-related tasks	1	2	3	4	5
d1-1. Listening to and understanding what the teachers say in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-2. Listening to and understanding textbook or exercise related recordings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-3. Speaking Chinese in class with Chinese teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-4. Speaking Chinese in class with classmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-5. Reading Chinese passages in textbook and workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-6. Composing paragraphs in Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-7. Recognising Chinese characters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d1-8. Writing Chinese characters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dimension two: authentic tasks	1	2	3	4	5
d2-1. Listening to and understanding Chinese on media products (movies, dramas, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d2-2. Listening to and understanding what native speakers (other than teachers) say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d2-3. Speaking Chinese with native speakers other than teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d2-4. Reading authentic Chinese articles (e.g., newspaper, on the Internet, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d2-5. Reading and understanding Chinese contents on the street	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part three – Culture learning at [HOME UNIVERSITY] in Australia

Scale E: Culture learning frequencies

How often did you experience the following types of activities for learning?

(1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always)

e1. Dimension one: cultural participation	1	2	3	4	5
e1-1. Formal instructions on Chinese culture in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

e1-2. Doing simulated conversations according to Chinese customs in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e1-3. Knowing Chinese culture through Chinese media products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e1-4. Knowing Chinese culture through interacting with Chinese people					
e2. Dimension two: cultural description	1	2	3	4	5
e2-1. Learning about the facts of Chinese culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e2-2. Learning about how to communicate with Chinese people appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e2-3. Learning about Chinese worldview and perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e3. Dimension three: cultural interpretation	1	2	3	4	5
e3-1. Comparing Chinese culture with Australian culture or your own culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e3-2. Trying to explain Chinese cultural phenomenon you encountered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e3-3. Instructions on analysing and explaining cultural issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e4. Dimension four: cultural response	1	2	3	4	5
e4-1. Reflecting on your intentions and aims for learning Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e4-2. Reflecting on your attitudes toward cultural differences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e4-3. Reflecting on the extent to which you decided to engage in Chinese culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scale F: Perceived culture learning outcomes

Please indicate your level of abilities in the following aspects.

(1 = **Poor**, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = **Excellent**)

f1. Dimension one: knowing about	1	2	3	4	5
f1-1. Knowledge about the facts of China	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f1-2. Knowledge about the values and perspectives of Chinese people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f2. Dimension two: knowing how	1	2	3	4	5
f2-1. Knowing how to communicate with Chinese people politely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f2-2. Knowing how to be integrated into Chinese society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f3. Dimension three: knowing why	1	2	3	4	5
f3-1. Understanding how culture works	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f3-2. Awareness of cultural differences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f4. Dimension four: knowing oneself	1	2	3	4	5
f4-1. Awareness of your own cultural identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f4-2. Awareness of your feelings and attitudes toward cultural issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part four – Open-ended questions

IN-CLASS learning:

4.1 What were the main strengths of your Chinese classes?

4.2 What could be improved in your Chinese classes?

OUT-OF-CLASS learning:

- 4.3 How many Chinese friends do you have in Australia, how did you know them?
- 4.4 What did you usually do or talk with your Chinese friends? In what language?
- 4.5 Please name some out-of-class activities you attended to learn Chinese:

Technology-mediated learning:

- 4.6 Please name some tools you used to learn Chinese:

Culture learning:

- 4.7 Please name some information about China or Chinese people you learn in class.
How did you learn about the information you mentioned above?
- 4.8 Please name some information about China or Chinese people you learn out of class.
How did you learn about the information you mentioned above?

Part five – About the program

- 5.1 How did you hear about this Program?
- 5.2 What has influenced on your decision to enrol into this program?
- 5.3 Please list things you want to achieve through this program:
- 5.4 Please comment on the organisation and planning for this program:
- 5.5 Do you think the pre-program information session is useful? Why?
- 5.6 Do you have other suggestions for the organisation and planning?

Appendix B: End-of-program survey (Survey 2)

Code name:

Part one – background information

- 1.1 Your level of class at PKU:
- 1.2 What degree/degrees are you working toward?
- 1.3 What is/are your major/majors?
- 1.4 Age:
- 1.5 Gender:
- 1.6 Nationality:
- 1.7 First language (mother tongue):

Part two – Interaction and language learning at [HOST UNIVERSITY] in China

(Same as Survey 1)

Part three – Culture learning at [HOST UNIVERSITY] in China

(Same as Survey 1)

Part four – Open-ended questions

IN-CLASS learning:

- 4.1 What are the main strengths of your Chinese classes?
- 4.2 What can be improved in your Chinese classes?

OUT-OF-CLASS learning:

- 4.3 Please name some out-of-class activities you attended to learn Chinese:
- 4.4 How many Chinese friends did you have in China? How did you know them?
- 4.5 What did you usually do or talk with your Chinese friends?
- 4.6 How did the In-Country Study program help you to make Chinese friend?
- 4.7 What more could the program have done to help you meet Chinese native speakers?
- 4.8 How many days did you meet with your language partner per week on average?
- 4.9 What factors facilitated deeper friendships with your language partner?
- 4.10 What factors inhibiting deeper friendships with your language partner?

Technology-mediated learning:

- 4.11 Please name some tools you used to learn Chinese:

Culture learning:

- 4.12 Please name some information about China or Chinese people you learn in class.
How did you learn about the information you mentioned above?
- 4.13 Please name some information about China or Chinese people you learn out of class.
How did you learn about the information you mentioned above?

Part five – About the program

- 5.1 Do you have any further comments about the organisation of the program?
- 5.2 Do you have any advice for someone considering the program for next year?

Appendix C: Demographic features of survey participants

Nationality					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Australian	29	93.6	93.6	93.6
	New Zealander	1	3.2	3.2	96.8
	German	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18	12	38.7	38.7	38.7
	19	5	16.1	16.1	54.8
	20	6	19.4	19.4	74.2
	21	4	12.9	12.9	87.1
	22	2	6.5	6.5	93.5
	23	1	3.2	3.2	96.8
	62	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	F	26	83.9	83.9	83.9
	M	5	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Is Chinese your heritage language?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	10	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Yes	21	67.7	67.7	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

What is your first language?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	23	74.2	74.2	74.2
	Asian language	2	6.5	6.5	80.6
	Cantonese	4	12.9	12.9	93.5
	Mandarin Chinese	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Are you learning/have you learned any other language(s)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	8	25.8	25.8	25.8
	Another European language	14	45.2	45.2	71.0
	Another Asian language	2	6.5	6.5	77.4
	More than one language	7	22.6	22.6	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Is Chinese your major?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	9	29.0	29.0	29.0
	Yes	22	71.0	71.0	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

How many majors do you have?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 major	5	16.1	16.1	16.1
	2 majors	21	67.7	67.7	83.8
	3 majors	5	16.1	16.1	100
	Total	31	100	100	

Have you been you China before?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	4	12.9	12.9	12.9
	Yes	27	87.1	87.1	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

What is your level of class at the target university?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	post-beginner's	12	38.7	38.7	38.7
	intermediate	10	32.3	32.3	71.0
	advanced	9	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Appendix D: Class schedule in the ICS program

During the program, all three classes had the same schedule as presented in the table below. Practice class was for language practice and revision. Grammar class focused on Chinese grammars and reading/writing skills. Oral class focused on speaking/listening skills. Each class was taught by a different teacher.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-10:00	Practice	Practice	Practice	Practice	Practice
10:00-11:00	Grammar	Grammar	Oral	Oral	Grammar
11:00-12:00	Grammar	Grammar	Oral	Oral	Grammar
2:00-3:00			Grammar		Oral
3:00-4:00			Grammar		Oral
4:00-5:00					Practice

Appendix E: Face-to-face semi-structured interview protocol

The design of the interview questions followed Patton's (2015) advices. Six types of questions were integrated in the interview protocol: experience/behaviour questions, opinion/value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and demographic/background questions. Detailed guiding questions and possible follow-up questions are listed below.

Topic 1: Background information

Questions	Possible sub-questions
1-1. What was your level of class in the program?	
1-2. What is your nationality and mother tongue/first language?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is Mandarin Chinese your second language? ▪ What language do you speak at home with your parents?
1-3. What is your heritage background?	
1-4. What were your previous experiences of learning Chinese?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When did you started to learn Chinese? ▪ What class were you taking at the home university before going to China?
1-5. What were your previous experiences of visiting China?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was this your first time being in China? ▪ Did you perceive anything similar or different to your previous experiences in China?
1-6. How did you prepare for the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did you meet with any difficulty when preparing for the program?

Topic 2: In-class interaction and learning processes

Questions	Possible sub-questions
2-1. Please comment on the advantages of your Chinese classes during the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ structure and organisation of classes ▪ feedback from teachers ▪ interaction between teacher and students ▪ learning atmosphere ▪ assessments and assignments ▪ textbook and learning materials
2-2. Please comment on the limitations of your Chinese classes during the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ same as above

2-3. Please compare these features of your Chinese classes during the program with your classes at the home university.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What were the biggest advantages of having Chinese classes during the program compared to having regular Chinese classes at the home university?
2-6. Please comment on your interaction with teachers and other students during Chinese classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did you feel encouraged to speak out or ask questions in class? Why?
2-4. What were the most impressive/memorable/interesting moments in the classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can you recall any specific things you learned in class? ▪ Can you recall any activities? ▪ How they benefited your language and culture learning?
2-5. Please comment on the cultural learning aspects in your Chinese classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can you recall any specific things you learned related to culture? ▪ According to your perception, what cultural concepts were conveyed in the Chinese classes?
2-7. Have you heard about any other students' comments on their experience in class?	

Topic 3: Out-of-class interaction and learning processes

Questions	Possible sub-questions
3-1. What were the most impressive/memorable/interesting moments in the classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can you recall any specific things you learned out of class? ▪ Can you recall any activities? ▪ How they benefited your language and culture learning?
3-2. Please comment on the language partner arrangement in this program. <input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How often did you meet with your partner? ▪ What did you usually do with your partner? ▪ Do you think your language partner helped you with your Chinese language or culture learning in any way? Why or why not?
3-3. Apart from with your language partner, in what circumstances did you interact with Chinese people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who are they and how did you get to know them? ▪ Have they helped you with your Chinese language or culture learning? ▪ Do you think it is necessary to get to know Chinese native speakers other than your language partner? Why or why not?
3-4. Please comment on your experience of using WeChat during the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did you use it frequently during the program? ▪ Apart from administrative purpose, did you use it for any other purposes?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you think WeChat has facilitated your Chinese language or culture learning? Why or why not? ▪ Are you still using WeChat now? Please explain why you are or you are not using it after you came back to Australia.
3-5. Please comment on the cultural excursions organised by the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What have you learned from these excursions? ▪ Do you think these excursions have facilitated your linguistic development (in addition to cultural knowing)? Why or why not?
3-6. What other extra-curriculum activities did you attend during the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What have you learned from these activities? ▪ If no, please explain why you did not attend any extra-curriculum activity and what could have done to help you with attending more activities.
3-7. Please comment on your accommodation during the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could you deal with the staff working there easily? ▪ Did you meet with any difficulties and how did you solve the problems?
3-8. What were your impressions about China?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was it your first time being in China? ▪ If yes, what were your first impressions about China, Chinese people and Chinese society? Please give examples according your own experience. ▪ If no, what were your impressions about China, Chinese people and Chinese society in your previous experiences in China? Did you perceive anything that had changed or had maintained?
3-9. Have you encountered with any cultural shock or cultural phenomenon that you found difficult to understand/accept during your stay in China?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the possible explanations for these phenomena you encountered with? ▪ How do these phenomena compare with your own culture or other cultures?
3-10. What are your opinions and attitudes to Chinese culture and the cultural differences between Chinese culture and your own culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have these opinions or attitudes exerted any influence on how you treat or interact with Chinese native speakers? ▪ Have these opinions or attitudes exerted any influence on your motivations for learning Chinese language and culture?
3-11. Have you heard about any other students' comments on their experience in China?	

Topic 4: Learning outcomes

Questions	Possible sub-questions
4-1. What are the greatest improvements that you made through this program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Have you achieved the goals that you wanted to achieve through this program?▪ If yes, how?▪ If no, please explain what have hindered you from achieving these goals and what could have done to help you with achieving these goals.
4-2. Are you still learning Chinese now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Where are you learning Chinese?▪ How does the program facilitate your current study?▪ If no, why?▪ Do you plan to learn Chinese in the future?

Topic 5: Further comments

- 5-1. Do you have other comments on your experience?
5-2. Do you have other suggestions for future programs?

Appendix F: Email interview questionnaire

Pseudonym:

Please answer the following questions and provide as many details as possible.

Topic 1: Background information

- 1-1. What was your level of class in the program?
- 1-2. What is your nationality and mother tongue/first language?
- 1-3. What is your heritage background?
- 1-4. What were your previous experiences of learning Chinese?
- 1-5. What were your previous experiences of visiting China?
- 1-6. How did you prepare for the program? Did you meet with any difficulties?

Topic 2: In-class interaction and learning processes

- 2-1. Please comment on the advantages of your Chinese classes during the program.
- 2-2. Please comment on the limitations of your Chinese classes during the program.
- 2-3. What were the biggest advantages of having Chinese classes during the program compared to having regular Chinese classes at the home university?
- 2-4. Please comment on your interaction with teachers and other students during Chinese classes. Did you feel encouraged to speak out or ask questions in class? Why?
- 2-5. What were the most impressive/memorable/interesting moments in the classes? Please provide details such as a specific lesson or activity.
- 2-6. Please comment on the cultural learning aspects in your Chinese classes. How was culture learning integrated in your class?
- 2-7. Have you heard about any other students' comments on their experience in class?

Topic 3: Out-of-class interaction and learning processes

- 3-1. What were the most impressive/memorable/interesting moments in the classes? Please provide details such as a day, a trip, an activity, or even a conversation.
- 3-2. Please comment on the language partner arrangement in this program.

- 3-3. Apart from with your language partner, in what circumstances did you interact with Chinese people? Please give specific examples.
- 3-4. Please comment on your experience of using WeChat during the program. Did you learn Chinese language and culture through WeChat? How?
- 3-5. Please comment on the cultural excursions organised by the program. Did you learn Chinese language and culture through these experiences? How?
- 3-6. What other extra-curriculum activities did you attend during the program? Did you learn Chinese language and culture through these experiences? How?
- 3-7. Please comment on your accommodation during the program. Did you meet with any difficulties and how did you solve them? Can you interact with the staff working there easily?
- 3-8. What were your impressions about China? Have these impressions changed or maintained through the ICS experience?
- 3-9. Have you encountered with any cultural shock or cultural phenomenon that you found difficult to understand/accept during your stay in China? Please compare these phenomena with other cultures.
- 3-10. What are your opinions and attitudes to Chinese culture and the cultural differences between Chinese culture and your own culture? How these opinions and attitudes influenced your Chinese learning?
- 3-11. Have you heard about any other students' comments on their experience in China?

Topic 4: Learning outcomes

- 4-1. What are the greatest improvements that you made through this program?
- 4-2. Are you still learning Chinese now? If yes, please specify your current study and explain how the ICS influence your current study. If no, please explain why and whether you plan to learn Chinese in the future.

Topic 5: Further comments

- 5-1. Do you have other comments on your experience?
- 5-2. Do you have other suggestions for future programs?

Appendix G: Examples of Level 3 coding categories for thematic analysis

The following table presents tentative Level 3 coding categories which were created based on initial deductive coding techniques found in the literature. These coding categories were constantly being revised and renamed in the later process of inductive coding and interpretation.

Theoretical code (Level 4)	Category code (Level 3)
Interaction	teacher-student interaction
	in-class peer interaction
	out-of-class interaction
	interaction with native speakers
	interaction with the environment and tools
Language learning	promoted L2 language use
	authenticity
	creative L2 language use
Culture learning	cultural participation
	cultural description
	cultural interpretation
	cultural response
Identity enactment	nationality
	heritage background
	L2 identity
	Others

Appendix H: Transcription conventions

(.)	A full stop inside brackets denotes a micro pause, a notable pause but of no significant length.
(2.0)	A number inside brackets denotes a timed pause. This is a pause long enough to time and subsequently show in transcription.
[Square brackets denote a point where overlapping speech occurs.
> <	Arrows surrounding talk like these show that the pace of the speech has quickened
< >	Arrows surrounding talk like these show that the pace of the speech has slowed down
(())	Where double brackets appear with a description inserted denotes some contextual information where no symbol of representation was available.
<u>Underline</u>	When a word or part of a word is underlines it denotes a raise in volume or emphasis
↑	When an upward arrow appears, it means there is a rise in intonation
↓	When a downward arrow appears, it means there is a drop-in intonation
→	An arrow like this denotes a particular sentence of interest to the analyst
CAPITALS	where capital letters appear, it denotes that something was said loudly
Hum(h)our	When a bracketed 'h' appears, it means that there was laughter within the talk
=	The equal sign represents latched speech, a continuation of talk
::	Colons appear to represent elongated speech, a stretched sound
(?)	A question mark inside brackets denotes an interrogating sentence.
(!)	An exclamation mark inside brackets denotes an exclamatory sentence.
[...]	Three dots inside square brackets denote some content is omitted

Appendix I: Full version of excerpts and vignettes with Chinese characters

Excerpt 4.1

- 01 T: *lai (.) Xiao Feng*
来, 小峰
Come (and make a sentence), Xiao Feng
- 02 XF: *wo gang xue le hanyu de shihou (.) wo jue de siezi ((inaccurate pronunciation)) tebie nan*
我刚学了汉语的时候, 我觉得写字特别难
When I first learned Chinese, I thought character *writing* ((inaccurate pronunciation)) was especially difficult.
- 03 T: *hao (.) xiezi (.) zhuyi a (.) zhege shi "xie" (1.0) lai (.) Xiao Feng*
好, 写字, 注意啊, 这个是“写”。来, 小峰
okay, character writing. Pay attention. This is “xie”. Come (and read it again) Xiao Feng.
- 04 XF: *xie*
写
write (repeating).
- 05 T: *dui. [...]* >*xiezi tebie nan*<
对。 写字特别难
Correct. Character writing is especially difficult.
- 06 XF: >*xiezi tebie nan*<
写字特别难
(repeating the sentence)
- 07 T: *hao (.) lai (.) Da Wei (.) xie zi nan ma*
好, 来, 大卫, 写字难吗
Good. Da Wei, is character writing difficult?
- 08 DW: *xie zi bu nan*
写字不难
Character writing is not difficult.
- 09 [...]
- 10 T: *Ning Ning (.) Xie hanzi nan ma (?)*
宁宁, 写汉字难吗?
is Chinese character writing difficult?
- 11 NN: *a:: xie hanzi you yidianr nan*
啊...写汉字有一会儿难
Ah... Chinese character writing is a little difficult.
- 12 [...] ((a few more exchanges with other students with the same question))
- 13 T: *hao (.) Xiao Feng (.) "Xie".*
好, 小峰, “写”
Ok, XiaoFeng, “xie”.
- 14 XF: *xie*
写
(repeating)

- 15 T: *xie hanzi*
写汉字
- 16 XF: *xie hanzi*
(repeating)
- 17 T: *dui (.) suoyi ni juede xie hanzi nan (.) Shi ma (?)*
对。所以你觉得写汉字难，是吗？
Correct! So you think writing Chinese character is difficult, right?
- 18 XF: *shi (.) xie ((with better pronunciation)) hanzi nan*
是，写 汉字难。
Yes. writing Chinese character is difficult.

Excerpt 5.1

- 01 S1: *ninhao (.) qingwen wo zuo nage xian neng dao Tiananmen (?)*
你好，请问我坐哪个线能到天安门？
Excuse me, may I ask which line goes to the Tiananmen?
- 02 S2: (Playing the role of a random passenger) *duibuqi (.) wo bu zhidao (.) qu wen shoupiayuan ba*
对不起，我不知道，去问售票员吧。
(Playing the role of a random passenger) Sorry, I don't know. You may ask the ticket seller.
- 03 S1: *ninhao (.) qing wen wo zenme neng dao Tiananmen (?)*
你好，请问我怎么能到天安门？
Excuse me, may I ask how can I get to the Tiananmen?
- 04 S2: (Playing the role of the ticket seller) *o (.) nihao (1.0) ni xian zuo di wu xian (.) ranhou dao Wudaokou zhuan di yi xian*
你好。你先坐第五线，然后到五道口转第一线。
(Playing the role of the ticket seller) Oh, hi! You firstly take the fifth line, and then transfer to the first line at Wudaokou.
- 05 *e ranhou (.) dao di liu zhan jiu dao le*
呃，然后，到第六站就到了。
Well and then... you arrive at the sixth stop.
- 06 S1: *e (.) yi zhang piao duoshao qian (?)*
呃，一张票多少钱？
Well... how much is a ticket?
- 07 S2: *um shi (.) liang kuai*
嗯是两块。
Um, it's... 2 Kuai (Chinese dollar).
- 08 S1: *zhe shi liang kuai qian (.) xiexie*
这是两块钱，谢谢
Here's 2 Kuai, thanks.
- 09 ((After this presentation, the teacher made two comments. She first corrected the misuse of "di wu xian" (fifth line) and "di yi xian" (first line) in Line 04 noting that they need to use "wu hao xian" (No.5 line) and "yi hao xian" (No.1 line) for subway lines.

→ 10 Then she commented that the Beijing subway used to cost 2 dollars wherever you go, but now, the price depends on the distance you travel.)

Excerpt 5.2

01 T: *women xiuxi yixia*
 我们休息一下
 Let's take a break.
02 S: What are we doing now?
→ 03 T: *<xiuxi>* (pointing to her watch)
 To take a break.
04 S: *xiuxi:::* is it break (?)
05 T: *dui. xiuxi*
 对, 休息
 Yes, break.

Excerpt 5.3

01 T: *hao (.) women de ke jiu shang dao zheli le (.) xianzai women xiuxi*
 好, 我们的课就上到这里了。现在我们休息。
 Alright, our class is over. Now let's take a break.
→ 02 S: *xiuxi xiuxi*
 休息休息。
 Take a break for a while.
03 T: *dui (!) xiuxi xiuxi (h)*
 对! 休息休息!
 Correct! Take a break for a while! (Laugh)

Excerpt 5.4

01 T: *Women shenme shihou xiake (?)*
 我们什么时候下课?
 When is our class over?
→ 02 S1: *Ting ni de (!)*
 听你的!
 Up to you!
03 T+Ss: (hh)
04 T: *Hao (.) Women shi'er dian xiake.*
 好, 我们十二点下课。
 OK, we will end our class at twelve.
→ 05 *Women jintian yaozuo duoshao zuoye? (h)*
 我们今天要做多少作业?
 How much homework do we have today? (h)
06 Ss: (2.0)
→ 07 S2: *Ting nide ↑*
 听你的?

- Up to you?
- 08 Ss: [(hh)]
- 09 T: (hh)] *S2 shuo le women dajia yao zuo duoshao zuoye tingwode*
S2 说了我们大家要做多少作业听我的
 (hh) Student 2 has said that I am the one who decides how much homework you need to do today.
- 10 *suoyi dajia ruguo juede henduo::*
 所以大家如果觉得很多…
 So if you think it is too much …
- 11 Ss: (hh)

Vignette 5.2

“Wo xiangyao yuanli wenming, changshi yuanshiren de shenghuo, ye xiwang zhaoyige buyong anbujiuban pati de gongzuo. Wo xiang dao bama zhangda de difang zhuyizhu, liaojie tamen cengjing de shenghuo. Wo xiangyao xue youyong, yinwei conglai meiyou tihui guo fuzai shuimian shang de ganjue. Wo xiangyao du wan yiben shu, yinwei yiben shu kailitou yihou yongyuan ye du bu wan. Wo xiang ershiyi tian bu baoyuan, suiran zhe hen nan. Wo haixiang yang yizhi ming jiao ‘Xizang’ de tuzi, yinwei Xizang hen leng, er tu mao hen nuan.”

“我想要远离文明，尝试原始人的生活，也希望找一个不用按部就班爬梯的工作。我想到爸妈长大的地方住一住，了解他们曾经的生活。我想要学游泳，因为从来没有体会过浮在水面上的感觉。我想要读完一本书，因为一本书开了头永远也读不完。我想二十一天不抱怨，虽然这很难。我还想养一只名叫‘西藏’的兔子，因为西藏很冷，而兔毛很暖。”

Excerpt 6.1

- 01 T: *Zhege shi shenme yisi (?)*
 这个是什么意思?
 What's the meaning of this (idiom)?
- 02 S: *You Xin Ren:: shibushi huairen de yisi (?)*
 有心人…是不是坏人的意思?
 Does *You Xin Ren* mean “bad person”?
- 03 T: *You Xin Ren shi huairen ma (?)*
 有心人是坏人吗?
 Is *You Xin Ren* bad person?
- 04 *You Xin Ren jiushi (.) ni ziji hen xiang qu zuo yijian shi (.)*
 有心人就是，你自己很想去去做一件事，
You xin ren means if you really want to accomplish something,
- 05 *ranhou ni jiu hui qu jihua (.) qu nuli (.)*
 然后你就会去计划，去努力，
 and you will plan it, work hard for it.

- 06 *zheyang de ren women jiao You Xin Ren.*
 这样的人我们叫“有心人”。
 This kind of person we call *You Xin Ren*.

Excerpt 6.2

- 01 T: *Zhe liangge ci doushi yuqi fuci*
 这两个词都是语气副词。
 Both these two words are modal adverbs.
- 02 S1 *yuqi fuci::*
 语气副词…
 Modal adverbs…
- 03 T: *dui (.) jiushi jiaqiang zhege yuqi de (.)*
 对，就是加强这个语气的。
 Right. So they're used to strengthen the tone.
- 04 *Biru shuo zhege wumai (.) shangge xingqi meiyou hongse yujing (.) meiyou tingke.*
 比如说这个雾霾，上个星期没有红色预警，没有停课。
 For example, the smog. Last week there was no red warning for the smog and the class was not cancelled.
- 05 *mingming yijing yanzhong wuran le (.) weishenme hai bu tingke (!) jianzhi tai bu yinggai le (h)*
 明明已经严重污染了，为什么还不停课？简直太不应该了！
 Obviously, the pollution was very serious, why wasn't the class cancelled? It just shouldn't be like that! (h)
- 06 Ss: (hh)
- 07 T: *zhezong de shihou doushi hen qifen de (.) hen shengqi de (.) jiaqiang yuqi de*
 这种的时候都是很气愤的，很生气的，加强语气的。
 In this kind of situation (the speaker) is very furious, very angry. So strengthen the tone.
- 08 (The teacher asked students to make up their sentences)
- 09 […]
- 10 S2: *mingming zhidao wuran yijing zheyang lihai (.) weishenm haiyao mai zheme duo de sijia che ↑*
 明明知道污染已经这样厉害，为什么还要买这么多的私家车？
 Obviously, people know the pollution is already very serious, why do they buy so many private cars?
- 11 *mai yiliang bugou, yao mai liangliang (.) jianzhi shi tai zisi le (!)*
 买一辆不够，要买两辆，简直太自私了！
 One car is not enough and they buy two cars. It's just so selfish!
- 12 T: *en. henhao (.) ting S2 de yuqi dajia jiu zhidao shenme jiao mingming le (.)*
 嗯，很好。听 S2 的语气，大家就知道什么叫“明明”了。
 Good. Pay attention to S2's tone, and you will know what *mingming* means.
- 13 […]
- 14 (more examples from other students)

- 15 T: *gangcai ne (.) dajia zhege zuo de bucuo (.)*
 刚才呢，大家这个做得不错。
 Just now, you all did the practice very well.
- 16 *erqie ne (.) guanjian shi nimen de sixiang (.) haiyou neirong (.) feichang hao.*
 而且呢，关键是你们的思想，还有内容，非常好。
 Critically, your thoughts and contents were very good.
- 17 *meiyou neirong de hua (.) na zhege jiushi ganbaba de (.) duiba (!)*
 没有内容的话，那这个（语言）就是“干巴巴”的，对吧！
 If there was no content, then the (language) would be “dry”, right?
- 18 *dajia kaolü de wenti ye dou feichang you yiyi*
 大家考虑的问题也都非常有意义。
 The issues you were considering were also very meaningful.

Excerpt 6.3

- 01 T: *Ni nengbuneng fenxiang yixia shang zhoumo nimen zai Beijing wan de jingli (?)*
 你能不能分享一下上周末你们在北京玩的经历？
 Can you share with us your experiences of entertainment activities in Beijing last weekend?
- 02 S1: *Women shang zhoumo::: Women zhou liu wanshang qu tiaowu(.) ranhou tamen liangge he de hen zui =*
 我们上周末… 我们周六晚上去跳舞，
 Last weekend we... We went dancing last Saturday night, and two of them were very drunk...
- 03 Ss + T: *= O(hh)H!*
- 04 S1 *Ranhou S2 tiaowu tiao de hen feng de (h) [...]*
 然后 S2 跳舞跳得很疯的。
 And S2 danced like crazy...
- 05 Ss: ((cheers and applauses))
- 06 T: *Na zhege zhoumo you shenme dasuan ma (?)*
 那这个周末有什么打算吗？
 Do you have any plans this weekend then?
- 07 S2: *Xiang qu chifan he chang Kala OK (.)*
 想去吃饭和唱卡拉 OK。
 We want to eat out and go karaoke.
- 08 T: *Wa (!) nimen yijing he tongxuemeng yue le ma (?)*
 哇！你们已经和同学们约了吗？
 Wow! have you already made an appointment with other students?
- 09 S2: *You yixie ren [yue le]*
 有一些人约了…
 Yes, some of them.
- 10 S3: *LAOSHIJ (!) NI QU WOMEN JIU QU (!)*
 老师！你去我们就去！
 Teacher! you go we go (we will go only if you go too)!
- 11 Ss: [((Cheers and laughs))]

- 12 T: ((Laugh))]
 → 13 ((Later on, the class and the teacher scheduled a time for karaoke that weekend.))

Excerpt 6.4

- 01 T: *S1 meici tingxie dou quan dui (.) kending zenmeyang (?)*
 S1 每次听写都全对, 肯定怎么样?
 S1 got all answers correct every time in dictation, she must be what?
- 02 S2: *Congming (?)*
 聪明?
 Brilliant?
- 03 S3: *Kending hen yonggong (?)*
 肯定很用功?
 Must be very hardworking?
- 04 T: *Dui (!) Kending hen yonggong (!) Shibushi, S1 (?)*
 对! 肯定很用功, 是不是, S1?
 Right! Must be very hardworking! Is it so, S1?
- 05 S1: *E:::*
 呃…
 Eh... (hesitating)
- 06 T+Ss: (hh)
- 07 T: *S1 meitian hua duo chang shijian xuexi (.) Fuxi gongke (?)*
 S1 每天花多长时间学习、复习功课?
 how much time do you spend studying every day? And reviewing homework?
- 08 S1: *Yi ge zhongtou ↑*
 一个钟头?
 One hour?
- 09 T: *Yi ge zhongtou (.) Suoyi shuo S1 kending hen yonggong(.*
 一个钟头。所以说 S1 肯定很用功,
 One hour. So we can say Student 1 must be very hardworking,
- 10 *hua yi ge zhongtou lai fuxi women de shengci*
 花一个钟头来复习我们的生词。
 spending (as much as) one hour to review our new vocabulary.

Appendix J: Ethics Approval



Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Wednesday, 11 February 2015

Assoc Prof Linda (Tie Hua) Tsung
Chinese Studies; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: linda.tsung@sydney.edu.au

Dear Linda (Tie Hua)

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled "The Effect of the In-country Language Study Program in China: A Case Study".

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2014/895
Approval Date: 28 January 2015
First Annual Report Due: 28 January 2016
Authorised Personnel: Tsung Linda (Tie Hua); Tong Peiru;
Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Type	Document Name
20/01/2015	Interview Questions	INTERVIEW
20/01/2015	Participant Consent Form	PCF_PEIRU_TONG
20/01/2015	Participant Info Statement	PIS_PEIRU_TONG
20/01/2015	Questionnaires/Surveys	POSTQUESTIONNAIRE_PEIRU_TONG
20/01/2015	Questionnaires/Surveys	PREQUESTIONNAIRE_PEIRU_TONG

HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition/s of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

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- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.
- Note that for student research projects, a copy of this letter must be included in the candidate's thesis.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.
2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Signature

Professor Glen Davis
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.

Appendix K: Students' knowledge about Chinese culture

The cultural knowledge can be roughly grouped into Chinese cultural products, cultural practices, and cultural perspectives, although the borders are not clear-cut. For example, when students named some social issues (facts) or behaviours of Chinese people (practices), they may also reflect on the reasons behind them (perspective), but did not make it explicit in the surveys.

Knowledge about Chinese culture learned in class

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Cultural products (knowing what)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Facts about China and Chinese people.</u> China is very populated and there are lots of shops and food; Chinese people like tea; Information about the great wall; Limited access via internet, such as Google, YouTube; Some/most Chinese people are lactose intolerant; the geography of China. ▪ <u>Traditions and customs.</u> Chinese marriage and relationship culture; Chinese festivals; Chinese zodiacs. ▪ <u>History.</u> Chinese dynasties; Historical derivation of certain things. ▪ <u>Pop culture.</u> The TV show <i>If you are the one</i> (<i>Fei cheng wu rao</i>, 非诚勿扰). ▪ <u>Chinese celebrities.</u> The famous writer <i>Shumin Bi</i> (毕淑敏); The Ancient Chinese politician <i>Cao Cao</i> (曹操); Great philosophical thinkers; etc. ▪ <u>Chinese literacy.</u> <i>Dream of the red chamber</i> (<i>Hong lou meng</i>, 红楼梦). ▪ <u>Social issues.</u> Migrant workers, abortion of girls due to one child policy; The cultural, political and social changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Facts about China and Chinese people.</u> Beijing is a migrant city where so many people actually leave other cities from China to live in Beijing; Names of places and street food; Cuisines from different places of China; Beijing intonations; Beijing dialect; Beijing <i>Hutong</i> (胡同). ▪ <u>Traditions and customs.</u> Culture and customs of Beijing. ▪ <u>History.</u> Meanings behind Chinese characters; Historical origins of certain traditions; Historical places and people; How China united all the small countries; How ancient artifacts were built. ▪ <u>Pop culture.</u> Chinese folk music. ▪ <u>Chinese celebrities.</u> Names or events of some personalities such as calligraphy masters, poets, philosophers. ▪ <u>Chinese literacy.</u> The story of the Chinese idiom <i>Hu jia hu wei</i> (狐假虎威). ▪ <u>Social issues.</u> There is a large smoking culture in Chinese especially in like weddings; The complex relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

	of China after the economic reforms.	
Cultural practices (knowing how)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Different stages of visiting friends and conversations that need to be exchanged at each stage. ▪ Parents give red pocket money to their child's boyfriend/girlfriend if they like them. ▪ Treating each other to meals and its rules. ▪ The ways to bargain and how discounts work in China. ▪ Writing Chinese letters and emails. ▪ Not to trust strangers in China. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How Chinese people call for waiters. ▪ Using phrases to express affection. ▪ Using of formal and informal language.
Cultural perspectives (knowing why)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The differences between respect and addressing elders in Chinese versus English. ▪ Culturally significant ideas. ▪ Views on one child policy and single children culture. ▪ Values of Chinese people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Values underlying classical texts. ▪ Chinese polite culture. ▪ Chinese people do not like to express personal feelings such as love linguistically compared to their western counterparts. ▪ Material aspiration of Chinese people. ▪ Chinese people like simplicity. ▪ Attitudes to dating and marriage. ▪ Cultural differences when it comes to romantic relationship and interactions.

Knowledge about Chinese culture learned out of class

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Cultural products (knowing what)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Facts about China and Chinese people.</u> Vernacular; Slang; Geographical differences; Information about Beijing; Current events in China; Chinese have good night life; The wealth of Chinese people. Chinese political structures. ▪ <u>Traditions and costumes.</u> Unlucky numbers such as 4 and 10. ▪ <u>History.</u> Chinese history; Information about ancient China. ▪ <u>Chinese TV show.</u> <i>If you are the one (Fei cheng wu rao, 非诚勿扰).</i> ▪ <u>Chinese celebrities.</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Facts about China and Chinese people.</u> Beijing is a meeting point of many people coming from other regions; Famous places in Beijing; Knowledge about provinces; Knowledge about Chinese cuisines; Beijing street food; Chinese accents are very difficult to understand. ▪ <u>Traditions and costumes.</u> Chinese people going back to <i>Jiaxiang</i> (家乡, hometown) to <i>Guonian</i> (过年, celebrating the Lunar New Year). ▪ <u>History.</u> The emperor of ancient China would go to Tiantan, Ditan and Yuetan once a year; The history and formation of

	The President <i>Xi</i> .	<p>Summer Palace, Lama Temple and the Forbidden City.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Chinese celebrities.</u> Chinese entertaining stars; <i>Kangxi</i> (康熙, an ancient emperor). ▪ <u>Social issues.</u> The difficulty and challenges that women might face when entering the workforce in China; Lots of trickery within the society.
Cultural practices (knowing how)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some cultural practices to avoid such as giving a clock/watch to someone. ▪ Enquiring into the welfare of family members and your interaction in the conversation. ▪ Respect for elderly. ▪ Asking someone how they are is equivalent to ‘have you eaten?’. ▪ How Chinese people interact with each other. ▪ Chinese people like to eat and their gatherings are always about eating; ▪ Chinese people are very loud compared with Australians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning how to bargain. ▪ Table manners. ▪ Social interactions are less touchy than in Australia. ▪ Chinese people don’t like to make much small talk. ▪ Chinese people are very welcoming and enjoy seeing foreigners converse with them. ▪ Chinese people like to push and shove.
Cultural perspectives (knowing why)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Importance of <i>Mianzi</i> (面子, a Chinese term for “face”) in human interaction. ▪ Values of Chinese people. ▪ Chinese people can be very hospitable to people they know and very unfriendly to those they don’t. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unexpectedly Chinese people are becoming more friendly and polite compared to years ago. ▪ Differences of Chinese culture among different places and different generations. ▪ People in Beijing are not as “appearance-conscious” as those in Shanghai. ▪ Parents’ expectations for children.



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- Developing literature reviews and theoretical frameworks
 - Writing about methodology
- Writing substantive and results chapters
 - Writing discussions
- Developing and concluding an argument in a chapter

Signature

Professor Vanessa Smith
Head of School
School of Literature, Art and Media



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- Revising the introduction and middle chapters
 - Improving argumentation
- Drafting the thesis abstract and front matter
 - Proofreading and editing the thesis

Signature

Professor Gerard Goggin
Head of School
School of Literature, Art and Media

Appendix M: Publication and conference presentations during candidature

Publication:

Tong, P., & Tsung, L. (in press). L2 Chinese students' perceptions of using WeChat for Chinese learning: A case study. *Global Chinese*. doi:10.1515/glochi-2018-0017

Abstract: Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), as a specialisation within mobile learning by smartphones, has many benefits as its emphasis is on the mobility of the learner, spontaneous access to learning resources, and interaction across different learning contexts. However, research on MALL implementation for Chinese learning is comparatively rare. This study aims to investigate Australian university students' perceptions on the use of a mobile APP, WeChat, for Chinese language learning in a Studying Abroad (SA) program. The research approach in this study is mainly qualitative-based. Data were collected from 40 Australian university students in a Study Abroad (SA) program. The students' opinions were collected through interviews and open-ended survey questions and were analysed thematically. Findings indicate in the SA context, the critical issues that emerged were related to learner agency, including language choice and sustained use of the platform for language learning. From an ecological constructivist perspective, a framework for mobile assisted language learning has been proposed. Recommendations are provided for future implementations and research on using WeChat for Chinese learning.

Keywords: mobile assisted language learning, WeChat, Chinese as an additional language, study abroad, ecological constructivism

Conference presentations:

The Fifth International Symposium on Chinese Language and Discourse (5th ISCLD), Sydney, Australia (18-20 June 2018)

Presentation Title: Humour in the "new" classroom discourse during study abroad in China

The 14th International Conference on Chinese Language Pedagogy, Macao SAR, China (16-18 June 2017)

Presentation Title: Learning Chinese on "WeChat": Integrating New Technology into Chinese as L2 Pedagogy

The IAFOR International Conference on Language Learning, Hawaii, USA (8-10 January 2017)

Presentation Title: Impact of Culture Learning on Second Language Acquisition in Study Abroad in China

The Second International Symposium on Chinese Intercultural Communication, Fudan University, Shanghai, China (9-11 December 2016)

Presentation Title: In-Country Study, Cultural Diversity, and Second Language Identity



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