

Original Paper

Chinese Students' Use of Digital Resources for Their Learning in UK Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper explores Chinese students' use of digital resources during their postgraduate studies in the UK. The study is important in contemporary Higher Education (HE) context where internet-based technologies, resources, online platforms and digital devices play a significant role in providing access to learning resources. A significant portion of students in HE also come from diverse cultures with arguably varying orientations to learning and using technologies. Based on qualitative data collected from focus group interviews with Chinese postgraduate students at Leicester, we explore some of the challenges that they face during their transition from learning in China (Nguyen et al., 2006; Leedham, 2015) to the UK HE learning environment. We identify the strategies that these students use, including a variety of digital tools and resources that they use to help in their formal studies during and beyond this transition stage. We also highlight their development of digital literacy skills and the responsibility that the UK HEIs have in this regard.

Keywords

international students, Chinese postgraduate students, learning cultures, digital literacy skills, social media, transition to HE

1. Introduction

Our focus in this paper is the students coming from The People's Republic of China (or China) to undertake taught post-graduate degrees in the UK. The UK currently benefits to the tune of more than £14 billion from international student recruitment per annum (British Council, n.d.). The number of Chinese international students' enrolment in the UK HE reached 120,000 in the academic year 2018/19, far exceeding any other non-European Union countries (Universities UK, n.d.). As the data from the

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2017) shows, China has been at the top in the list of top 10 sending countries to the UK for a number of years. Despite the challenging circumstances brought about to the UK HE sector by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21, the Study International (2020), an information gateway for international students reports that “More Chinese students accept places at British universities despite pandemic”.

This research emerges out of our teaching practice at postgraduate level with an increasingly diverse internationalised cohort of students. As part of an internally funded teaching grant, we explored students’ digital literacy skills and how digital tools/platforms could potentially help students to learn (Simmons, Edirisingha, & Jiang, 2017). This small-scale study involved a survey and focus groups, and allowed us to obtain a broad picture of what digital tools students were using (and not using) as part of their formal and informal learning. This initial study showed that the majority of participants were international students (English as a second language) and predominantly from China. Therefore, the cultural context had to be explored in more detail which in our case involve the need to understand the differing pedagogic contexts and informational spaces that they are familiar with before arriving in the UK. This prompted us to explore more deeply this cultural context and in doing so recognise that models of digital literacy, as this paper highlights, need to take into account the cultural context in which they are being applied. Furthermore, we hope to make some suggestions for academics, professional staff and respond to Jin and Cortazzi’s (2017) call for a greater understanding of different learning cultures in an internationalised HE environment.

2. Review of the Relevant Literature

2.1 Chinese International Students Learning in UK HE

Our starting point is that not all learning and teaching can be detached from the wider social and cultural context in which they take place. Therefore, an understanding of how culture influences the Chinese students’ attitudes and approaches to learning can help UK tutors to develop more culturally sensitive pedagogies (Kennedy, 2002). It is argued that Chinese students’ learning beliefs are often underpinned by “Confucian values” (Leedham, 2015) that put emphasis on harmony and social order through underscoring individual obligation. In addition, according to scholars such as Huang, Bedford & Zhang ((2017) Chinese societies also favour collectivism. Turner (2006) commented that Chinese learners are often depicted as showing dispositions for conformity, passivity and respecting authority. This widely held, but debatable (e.g., Wu, 2015) perception of Chinese learner’s characteristics often contrasts those desired in Western education, such as critical thinking and capability for self-directed learning (Ramsden, 2003).

Murphy (1987) suggested that Chinese students’ (seemingly) passive behaviour in the classroom can be attributed to the Confucian value of filial piety, and the rigidity of discipline. Chinese students are educated to respect seniors and teachers, and keeping up a harmonious relationship between oneself and peers is encouraged according to the Confucian view of ethics as a social construct (Bond, 1996;

Legge, 2017). Together with the notion of “face (mian zi)”—an important characteristic of Chinese etiquette, taking class time to express a personal view (which might be seen as undesirable thus making students “lose face” themselves) or challenging teachers which may cause teachers to lose status is often considered as a disgraceful action (Bond, 1996; Chang & Holt, 1994). Additionally, Chinese learning strategy is seen as showing little tolerance for the approximation of knowledge and aims at mastery of knowledge (Hu, 2002). Leedham’s (2015) review of recent literature that sets the context for her study on Chinese students’ writing in English also shows the differences in attitudes and approaches to learning displayed by Chinese students that can be linked to the cultural of context of learning in China. Within a Western learning context, Chinese students’ expectations and learning strategies, developed through their education in China together with their unfamiliarity with UK learning context, may not match the approach to learning embedded in British HE (Gill, 2007).

However, a number of other studies (e.g., Biggs, 1996; Ryan & Louie, 2007; Chan & Rao, 2009; Ryan 2010; McMahon, 2011), have challenged misconceptions attributed to Chinese learners studying in “Western contexts” in particular arguing against the homogenising of Confucius heritage culture in relation to Chinese learners. Instead, we might consider, as we do in this paper, the way in which Chinese learners self-report their own diverse experiences as learners having come from China to the UK. We also note the importance of recognising the diversity of “Chinese learners” and their learning experiences. China is one of the largest countries in the world by area with a population of about 1.4 billion, and “we should consider the variety of their national, regional, economic, class and cultural backgrounds as well as age, religion and gender” (Shu in Leedham, 2015, p. 19). For example, students coming from Hong-Kong tend to be more familiar with “Western” pedagogy (specifically British culture). Hong Kong students in particular had experience of “160 years” of British colonial culture (Sun & Richardson, 2012). They also have familiarity with western social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

In addition, there is recognition as the paper identifies, that Confucius heritage culture is not static and is contestable. As Stephens (1997) argues in her study with 12 visiting Chinese Scholars in a British university, that any “gaps” or differences of communication can be down to language proficiency rather than generalisable cultural differences which in themselves are contestable. In a similar vein, Wu (2015) comparing British and Chinese postgraduate students across three British universities observes that though some cultural “norms” are in evidence, Chinese learners’ ability to adapt to UK study was multifaceted and complex. In addition, one important point made in Wu’s study was the role social media and online learning, virtual systems could play in cushioning the “hard academic landing” for Chinese students. This is something our research highlights but we would also add that digital resources need also to be culturally contextualised in terms of students’ familiarity and digital literacy.

2.2 Cultural Script

Any form of learning activity that takes place during the encounter of two distinct cultures involves interfacing different “cultural scripts” of learning (Welikala & Watkins, 2008). A script, as Schank & Abelson (1975, p. 151) interpreted, is “a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that define a well-known situation”. According to Welikala & Watkins (2008), in a learning context, the idea of “scripts” allows us to understand the role of “human memory” and how knowledge is structured; they argue “human memories are not merely decontextualized information” but are attached to meaningful “stories”. Welikala & Watkins (2008) study shows that such scripts can shape the way learners see the role of the teacher-learner relationship. They also illuminate ways students approach the process of gaining knowledge, through reading, peer interaction and talking in class. Our study takes a wider perspective of “cultural scripts” to understand how students from one culture learn in a new cultural setting (Azuma, 2001). We also want to develop the concept of cultural scripts to include the role of digital platforms and how the use of such tools as part of informal and formal learning are shaped but also can disrupt such “cultural scripts”. Therefore, we wanted to bring together perspectives on “cultural scripts” and digital literacy in order to examine the practice and learning experience of Chinese students in UK HE.

2.3 The Use of Digital Resources for Academic Learning

Researchers (e.g., Anderson, 2007; Ullrich et al., 2008; Carter & Nugent, 2011) have been examining how learning and teaching are being redefined alongside the development of Web-based technologies. For example, Twitter has long been of particular interest to HE as a tool to facilitate students to participate in professional communities (Jacquemin et al., 2014). Wikipedia has also been seen as a useful tool to create user generated content and for collaborative editing (Alexander & Levine, 2008). However, a gap has long existed between the affordances of technology and the reality of how students use them for learning (Henderson et al., 2015).

Arguably, an internationally diverse student body in HE can extend these challenges as international students’ experience and skills may be different from UK tutors’ expectations. An understanding of this diversity is particularly vital in the contemporary context where learning becomes increasingly facilitated by online technologies (Hughes, 2013). China’s Internet landscape presents a different picture compared to that of the West (The Economist, 2013), with many social networking sites that serve as close equivalents of those in the West (Guo et al., 2014). For example, Sina Weibo (similar to Twitter) provides users with micro-blogging using multimedia. Apps such as WeChat (an instant messaging and social media tool) are popular among Chinese students (CIC, 2015). Evidence-based understanding of Chinese students’ experiences of using internet-based tools and resources would be useful for HE institutions to improve their teaching and learning approaches.

Students’ use of digital technologies is becoming ubiquitous, and digital technologies currently serve as an integral aspect of student lived experience in and out of university (Henderson et al., 2015). Due to this reason, rather than viewing digital literacy simply as a set of discrete skills that need to be mastered,

our study takes account of Chinese international students' digital literacy practices and the development of their digital literacy skills to be integral to their whole learning experience. In the context of this study, examining digital literacy draws on the work of a UK Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) project (Hampton-Reeve et al., 2009) and Chaka (2009), as involving behaviours, habits and attitudes acquired, developed and presented by learners in relation to digital media over a period their study. This constitutes diverse knowledge and skills required by extended practices and refinement according to different contexts (Littlejohn et al., 2013), which when applied to international students, are the development of digital literacy skills through interacting with different social and cultural practices during their transition to UK HE.

3. Research Objectives and the Methodology

This paper examines Chinese students' uses of digital resources, their prior experience and digital literacy skills in adapting to the UK Post Graduate (PG) studies. It attempts to direct our research on how their digital literacy skills and the use of web tools are informed by the cultural contexts in which they are embedded (Gu, 2011) and reports some of the challenges that Chinese postgraduate students face during their transition from a Confucian heritage learning culture (Nguyen et al., 2006; Leedham, 2015) to the UK HE learning environment.

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach involving focus group interviews with Master's level student at the University of Leicester. Focus group typically consisted of between 2-4 students depending on the choice of students. Ethics approval was received from the University of Leicester Ethics Committee for each round of data collection (annually) from the academic year 2011-12 until the year 2018-19 which was the last round of data collection (each year, 1-5 focus groups). The majority of students who took part in these interviews were from mainland China. They were either in the last stage of their one-year Master's degree or those who had completed it few months prior to data collection. The students who took part in our study were from a range of departments in the field of social sciences. Taking part in these interviews was voluntary. Prior to data collection, students were sent a participant information sheet that contained information about the research, the nature of the interviews and the voluntary approach to taking part in the research. Students completed a consent form before taking part in interviews. The interviews lasted 40-90 minutes. The aim of these focus groups was to gain a deeper insight into their use of digital tools and web resources for their learning. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed in full. Data were analysed to identify emerging themes to offer an insight into their practices of using these resources for learning. Initially we were interested in how our interview participants perceived and used these resources for learning before and after arriving in the UK for PG studies. We drew particular attention to students' digital practices when they have carried out assessed pieces of work (e.g., presentations, essays, dissertations) as part of their formal course requirements. The initial set of data highlighted a number of interesting issues concerned with their approaches to learning, such as

academic writing and the kinds of digital tools and platforms they used. This prompted us in later interviews (from 2014) to ask students more about their approaches to teaching and learning in China in order to get a deeper sense of how this may have shaped their approaches to studying at PG level in the UK. In addition to the above set of data, this paper also draws on a set of quantitative data collected by Jiang (2018) (the 3rd author of this paper) from 30 Chinese PG students at Leicester to illustrate the Chinese students' familiarity with technologies.

4. Results and Analysis

The analysis of data is organised based on two themes: 1) Learning in HE in China compared to that in the UK HE; and 2) The role of online tools and resources in academic learning and the digital literacy skills that they developed during their one-year master's studies in the UK.

4.1 Teaching and Learning in UK and Chinese HE

In our most recent focus group interviews students told us about their experience of studying in the two academic contexts. Hearing students' accounts of these experiences was a useful starting point for our analysis. As Jin and Cortazzi (1998) pointed out an investigation into learning in particular contexts needs to consider the broader cultural contexts in which learning is developed. Students reflected on their teaching and learning (lectures, seminars, tutorials, e-learning platforms and tools), types of assessment, and their interactions with the academic staff. Having to do "many assignments" and "coursework" were highlighted as key aspects of their learning in the UK. In China, their main mode of assessment were examinations. Students also commented that they felt that the duration of modules (a module is a unit of study in UK HE programmes) in UK PG courses was short (12 weeks) compared to their experience in China and that they found it hard to "understand everything". Most found it hard to ask questions in the class and unlike in China, they are required to make appointments for tutorials to discuss various aspects of learning. Some tutors only met them during a scheduled tutorial or drop-in session hours. Emailing the personal tutor to arrange tutorials was something new for them. One student pointed out that: "in China, you can ask questions any time you want. You just go to the [lecturer's] office; the tutor will invite you in and you can ask questions". This student further added that "Chinese students can be quite shy, and their English is not good. They might be embarrassed to ask questions during the class". In China, students are not allowed to ask questions without teacher's permission "because it is not respectful". These students found it hard to "interrupt" their classes and ask questions even if that is what their tutors at Masters level classes encouraged them to do (a focus group in 2015). These experiences in Chinese HE context could have some implications for the way in which they would engage in UK HE classes.

Some students pointed out that the large class sizes during their undergraduate (UG) studies in China was one of the reasons for some of the above issues: "... there isn't enough time for teacher to ask us to discuss anything. ... [and] the class time is very short, and the teacher wanted to teach us as much as they can". In the UK, their PG classes were small with more room for discussions. These discussions

have helped this student to: "... get different opinions from people from different backgrounds or different countries. So then I can enrich the knowledge about the topic". Students said that they learned by "sharing ideas with different people" although they didn't like discussion-oriented class sessions at first.

Students also felt that in China, the course material that they had covered in the lectures were adequate for them to study and pass examinations successfully, therefore, additional reading was not required of them. Most of the material studied were based on textbooks that were key part of the course material, and they weren't required to access extra reading material. However, in the UK studies they were required to read widely.

When we asked students about their understanding of the academic writing conventions in the UK, students reported that this is something that they have struggled with. This is partly because, in most disciplines, their assessment in UG studies were based on examinations. They have had limited experience of writing long essays. One student explained that:

During the four years of my undergraduate study, I only have done one dissertation. The rest of the assessment were exams. Essays, to me, is really a new concept. Especially academic writing. (A focus group, 2016).

At the time of the interview, this student had written four 4,000-word essays, and four 10-minutes long presentations. She was completing a 20,000-word dissertation. She has learned about writing long essays and academic writing through a pre-sessional English language course that she had completed before starting her master's degree. She also pointed out that avoiding plagiarism, accurate use of quotations and following referencing styles were all new to her. She pointed out that:

As Chinese students, we have a totally different culture of learning. We do not see copying others' work as plagiarism. We just show our respect to others' opinion if we quote someone's words in our essays...

The above section shows some of the differences that our interview participants have experienced in their two learning contexts. Hu's (2002) perspectives of strategies often practised in Chinese education provides us a useful framework to make sense of teaching and learning at UG level in China. Part of Hu (2002)'s framework consists of 4Rs (Reception, Repetition, Review and Reproduction). Reception indicates that students learn through retaining knowledge transmitted by tutors and textbooks often without preconceptions, and learning often takes a repetitive approach to deepen understanding (Hu, 2002). Constant reviewing is important to proceed with learning and students are supposed to reproduce imparted knowledge required by teachers or tests (Rao, 1996).

The other aspects of HU (2002)'s framework that offers a view of education in China consists of 4Ms: Meticulousness, Memorisation, Mental Activeness, Mastery. Meticulousness means that Chinese students are inclined to pay attention to specific details of knowledge (Hu, 2002; Biggs, 1996). Memorisation is a commonly practised strategy among Chinese students; however, it should be distinguished from rote learning, a stereotyped misconception of learning strategy by Western commentators (Biggs, 1996). It

is very important to highlight Jin and Cortazzi's (2006) argument that Chinese students' memorisation needs to be considered as an activity carried out with understanding, during which students attend to mental activeness more than verbal activeness.

4.2 The Use of Online Resources and the Implications for Developing Digital Literacy Skills

Our participants had undergone a number of transitions during their Masters level studies: from Undergraduate level to Postgraduate levels of study; from large classrooms to mostly smaller size lectures and seminar-type face-to-face teaching sessions with classroom discussions; from predominantly examination-oriented assessed work to long essay/written text-based work, and presentations in front of the whole classroom; and predominantly from teacher-directed learning context to interactions with tutors/lecturers as those who guide or advise them. As revealed in our focus group interviews students understood their HE teachers' role as those who would point them to relevant books and other resources; and "you need to study by yourself. [So] you need to work harder [than you did during UG studies]". Students thought that they needed to "read a lot of books and study by yourself. Not just go to the class. ... [Now] you study for acquiring the knowledge" (A focus group in 2015).

These conditions in the UK learning environment meant that students had to take more responsibility for their learning. Many students found this challenging, but as the following student highlighted they were aware of this responsibility, too. As they wrote more and longer essays at PG level (in contrast to their assessments in UG level) they found referencing a challenging task:

"... here, everything needs references; for everything we write, we need to find whether someone else has said it before. So we take it very carefully. So we need a lot of time to do that. (A focus group, 2015).

Our interviews carried out since 2011-12 showed that students use a range of digital tools and online resources which have been helpful for them to navigate in the teaching learning environment successfully. A more recent set of data collected by Jiang (2018) from 30 PG students at Leicester (Figures 1 and 2) show the fuller range of technologies that Chinese students have used during their UG studies in China and what they have started to use PG students in the UK.



Figure 1. Frequently Used Digital Tools for Accessing Information during UG Studies in China and PG Studies in the UK (n=30)

Source: Jiang, 2018, p. 148.

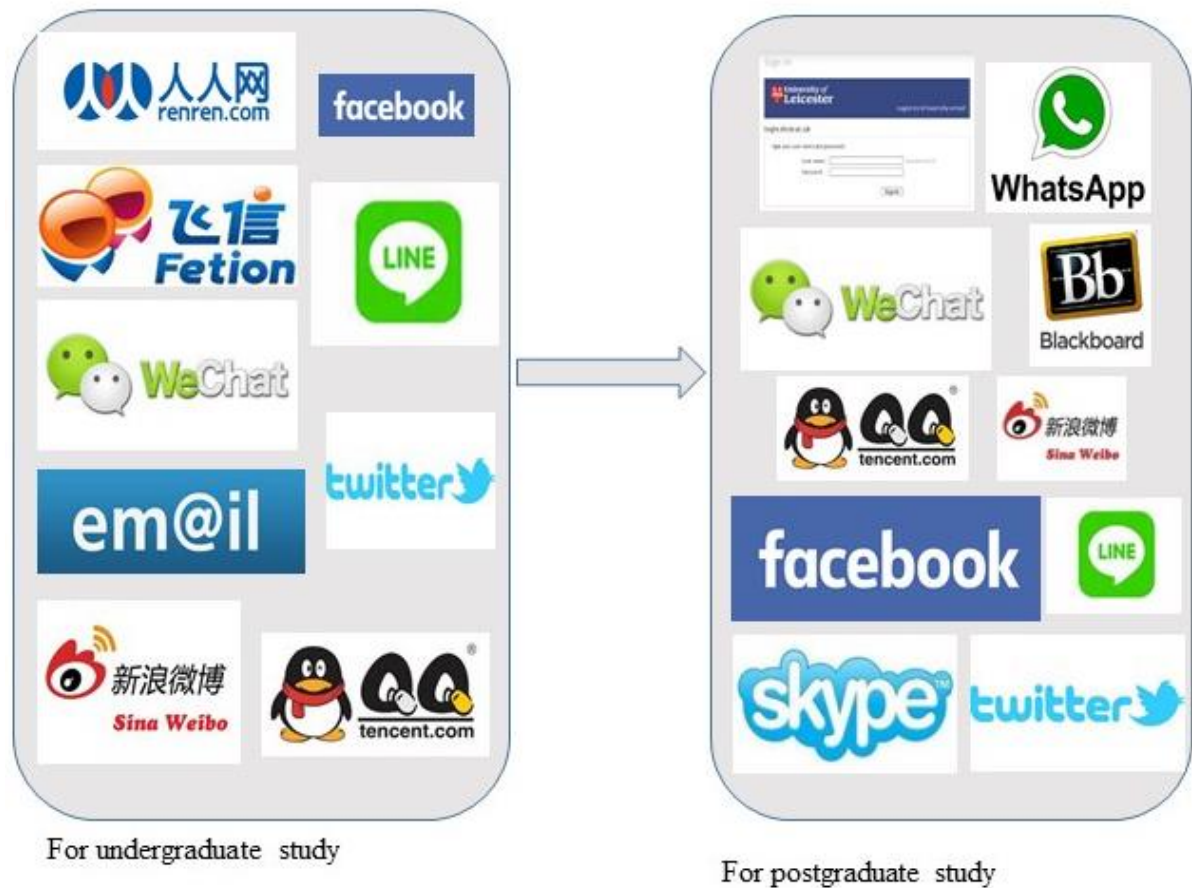


Figure 2. Frequently Used Digital Tools for Communication during UG Studies in China and PG Studies in the UK (n=30)

Source: Jiang, 2018, p. 155.

In our focus groups students talked to us about many strategies that they have adopted in order to engage with the challenging tasks of their learning and study activities at postgraduate level. One student mentioned that the “major difficulty is the academic vocabulary”. This student would use Google and online dictionaries to find meaning of the difficult academic words. They mentioned the use of a Chinese online dictionary called *YouDao* which shows the words with some sample sentences. Other students talked about the challenge of understanding the assignment tasks and planning assignments. Here they relied on not only the resources available from the library database but also from “some Chinese websites”.

... I search for resources using keywords. Then I would quickly read the content and if I think they are useful are useful for my assignment, then I read them more carefully for the important messages (A focus group, 2015).

Students in our earlier focus groups also mentioned a range of websites and internet-based tools that they have used for their formal learning activities at PG level (originally published in Edirisingha and Simmons, 2015). Figure 3 illustrates some of these tools.

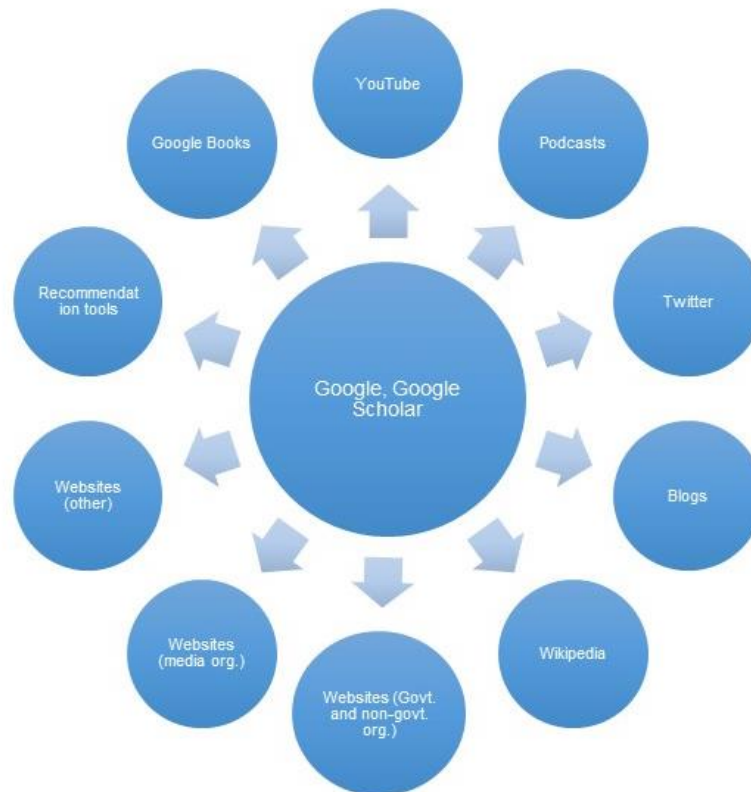


Figure 3. Online Resources Used by Students for Their Academic Learning

Source: Edirisingha and Simmons, 2015.

As the following extract shows, students have been using some of these tools before starting their PG studies in the UK.

[I use a] Chinese website called is Douban. I find [it] a very useful website for me, because if I want to read a book, I search the book in Douban, I will find the book. There is specific webpage for this book and there are some recommendations and comments from other readers about this book. Besides, this website allows people to use tags about books, music or films, so members of this website can just search these tags and they can find relevant resources. And the website will give you recommendations. So, for me, it's a very useful website for learning (A focus group, 2011).

In interviews students also talked about some of the other tools (e.g., YouTube) that they have started to use after they began their PG studies. Their tutors have used videos on YouTube during their classes in the first term, for example “a lecture by Ken Robinson [an educational thinker]”. Following this, students have begun to search for other educational videos on YouTube and have cited those in their essays. A particular example was the videos on how to use SPSS. One student mentioned that videos on SPSS (e.g., how to use Chi Square) on YouTube were helpful “because the university only offered a basic [teaching on SPSS]” and some of the material was not clear. Another example of using videos for learning was from *Youqu*, a YouTube-like video sharing service in China.

If I don't understand the tutor in the classroom, I search for videos that can teach me the theory, the [explanation] is better than the tutor's. ... (A focus group, 2012).

Our focus group interviews provided a range of examples of students' use of web-based tools and resources to access material to help their academic learning. Very often students go beyond the formal channels and sources (tutors, learning material available on the university e-learning system, material accessible from the university's e-library, and the stock of books and other resources available in the library).

The Internet provides students access to plenty of learning resources such as videos, podcasts and simulations that look attractive and engaging, and have been produced to a standard that a university academic might not be able to achieve within the resources (time, expertise) available to them (Edirisingha & Simmons, 2015). Accessing these materials on the internet is easy; the challenge for students is that they need to know how to evaluate their accuracy and relevance. Our sample of students reported the wide range of web-based tools and resources that they have used for their academic learning. Some students were uncertain “whether it is appropriate to use videos” and cite them in their essays. Learning material and research reports in video and other formats (non-text, non-conventional publication types) are still not common in university courses. Students said their tutors used them, for example, at the beginning of a class to introduce the subject and create interest among the students: students found them “fascinating”, but when it came to using these resources in their essays, they were uncertain how to judge their “academic quality”. Therefore, students own digital literacy and awareness of how such resources could be used in their academic work needs to be addressed by tutors. Guidance on how to cite multimedia resources or other online material needs to be given alongside a discussion on what is “academic” or authoritative sources. It also clear that such resources are invaluable to international students, as they find “centralized” or formal digital resources scarce or less engaging.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Our objective in this paper was to bring together a number of perspectives on the use of digital tools and resources for learning and cultural scripts to explore the transition Chinese students make as they undertake a one-year Master's level study in the UK. The questions that guided us were: How are Chinese PG students' use of web tools informed by the cultural contexts in which they are embedded, first in China and then in the UK? What, if any, might be the gap between the tools and resources provided by the university and those that are "owned" by students or that they have become familiar with while they were in China? Furthermore, how might digital resources assist Chinese students in their UK PG studies or perhaps embed them in the "cultural scripts" of learning they may have?

We found that there is often a lacuna between both the pedagogic and digital resources for international students made available by the university and those that are familiar to students themselves. For example, students share online material (TED Talks, YouTube lectures and Mandarin versions of academic books) to assist them in their learning. It is clear that students vary in what they consider authoritative academic material online and some guidance is needed on how they might identify these sources. Furthermore, it is important that international students do not just "stay" with familiar China-based web resources from "home" throughout their studies as there is a risk this could further embed them in cultural scripts. By engaging with western and English language web resources as they study, they can diversify the range of informational sources and immerse themselves more fully in the socio-cultural context of their studies.

Also, our research shows that students employ a range of strategies to make the transition from the "cultural script" they may have brought from their studies in China to the pedagogic environment of western HE. Chinese digital resources play a role in this process, to some extent in cushioning the "hard academic landing" (Wu, 2015) into the UK academic culture. Our research participants who had attended the pre-sessional (or preparatory) English courses at the university reported that these courses introduced them to forms of academic writing, skills (essays, citation) that they were unfamiliar with. Our study further illuminates the need for practitioners in UK HE institutions to engage with the range of learning practices, the cultural scripts in which they may be based in order to ease the transition some Chinese students may face. In doing so it may also avoid the interpretation of such cultural scripts as negative, e.g., Chinese students as "passive" during lectures when in fact this may be active learning and internalisation of knowledge. The portrayal of the image of international students in terms of their approaches to learning can often be unfavourable and unfair within UK HE discourses (Sovic & Blythman, 2013). The general perception of "Western" and "Confucian" labels is that undesirable activities such as plagiarism and non-critical thinking approach are often attributed to "Confucian education". However, the dichotomy between "Western" and "Confucian" approach to learning fails to take account of the complexities among individual learners and it overlooks differences within two educational cultures (Ryan & Louie, 2007). In addition, many of the challenges that students raise in our research maybe attributable to the shift from UG to PG level studies and the relatively short period

a typical master's course takes, rather than wholesale cultural differences.

By continuing this research, we aim to develop further the nuanced context in which Chinese international students develop strategies and use web resources in order to make their transition to the UK HE environment. The long-term aim of our research is to draw out these complexities, and like Littlejohn et al. (2013) and Gourley & Oliver (2014), we highlight the importance of considering a socio-cultural approach to digital literacy. Theorists (e.g., Gee, 1996; Littlejohn et al., 2013) have long proposed that the understanding of digital literacy signifies that digital literacy practices ought to be understood in the contexts of social, cultural and historical practices of which they are a part. It means to embrace the interpretation of digital literacy as situated social practices and as notions of engaging in the process of reflective meaning making and involves social support (Littlejohn et al., 2013; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2011).

We recommend that UK universities should be more aware of the kinds of digital tools and resources international students are using as part of their formal and informal learning. In turn, an awareness and understanding by tutors of non-western digital platforms, resources and tools could also be helpful in the transition Chinese learners make to the HE UK environment. For example, we have introduced as part of the induction activities a session that enabled students to introduce themselves to their peers and share their previous learning experiences and what digital tools they had used and were aware of as part of their studies. This activity also allowed us as tutors to learn about our students' backgrounds and awareness of tools before they came to Leicester but also to make recommendations and guidance on what digital resources might be useful for their studies. As Quan, He & Sloan (2016) argue in their research with Chinese postgraduate students at UK universities, the "arrival" (induction period) stage is crucial for helping students to transition into UK HE. We also, find this induction activity can help us provide further guidance and support throughout their studies right through to the dissertation stage. In addition, the first author of this paper is working with the university's English Language Unit to build linguistic and subject specialist support around a first semester postgraduate module. Overall, we recommend and concur with Jin and Cortazzi's (2017:241) view that in an internationalised HE environment engaging reciprocally with "cultures of learning" has benefits for all of us as teachers and students.

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