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# The Cross-Cultural Adjustment of Taiwanese Postgraduate Students in England

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# ***ABSTRACT***

This thesis critically reviews, evaluates and synthesizes theories of cross-cultural adjustment and international students' sojourn activities, and develops a multi-layered and dynamic framework of cross-cultural adjustment. Empirical evidence, collected from the experience of Taiwanese postgraduate students in the UK, is used to build a grounded theory of cross-cultural adjustment.

The process of cross-cultural adjustment is examined in terms of four key dimensions -- self-identity, academic pursuit, affection and sojourn life-experience – each of which is broken down into more specific components (categories and sub-categories) according to the interview responses of the student sample. The result is an in-depth appreciation of the wide range of factors that contribute to the experience and challenge of cross-cultural adjustment for Taiwanese postgraduate students. For each of the four dimensions, certain core conditions are shown to give rise to specific adjustment phenomena which are shaped by certain contextual factors, and these phenomena give rise to a characteristic strategic response by the students, which then yields a specific consequence. The study shows that cross-cultural adjustment is a continuous process in which international students establish emotional alignment through social interaction and the articulation of their self-identity.

The study provides a conceptual framework for future research into cross-cultural adjustment within different host countries, and also serves as a basis to help universities anticipate and manage effectively the adjustment problems faced by international students.

# *Declaration*

This thesis is presented in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). The work described is entirely original and my own, unless otherwise indicated. None of the material contained hereafter has been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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The four years I spent in the Continuing Education Department at the University of Warwick studying for my Ph.D. were not merely an intellectual challenge, but also represented a lengthy procedure of mental development. The process of completing this thesis was by no means smooth, in particular before and during the fieldwork. I have a number of people to thank for enabling me to bring my journey to an end.

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## *Abbreviations*

CCA	Cross-cultural adjustment
TPSs	Taiwanese postgraduate Students
WEG	World education group

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Research Rationale

This study explores the phenomenon of the cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) of Taiwanese postgraduate students in the setting of the English higher education system at end of the twentieth century. It focuses on the nature, scope and components of those student's adjustment behaviour.

In the contemporary world individuals are increasingly expected to interact with other individuals from different cultures as they work together in a multicultural and multilingual environment. As many researchers (e.g. Maxwell et al., 2000; Forster, 2000) have noted, this trend is related to a number of factors, including developments in the global marketplace, the expansion of international tourism, the implementation of affirmative action policies, innovations in school curricula in response to demands for cultural sensitivity, changes in immigration policies, and the geographical mobility of international students.

From the perspective of formal higher education, this trend is of particular significance because universities are becoming increasingly internationalised. For example, the expansion of the education of international students at the postgraduate level has become a major trend in the USA and the UK (Wan et al, 1992; Xu, 1991; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Maxwell et al, 2000). At the same time, however, there is a growing concern about the ability of US and UK universities to address effectively the cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) problems that these students experience once they arrive on campus. At the University of Warwick in England, more than half of the students belonging to the Graduate School come from outside the UK,

representing a total of about 100 countries (University of Warwick website: <http://www.warwick.ac.uk>). Furthermore, both old and new universities in the UK have reviewed their programme provision and market positioning to attract overseas students. Many have actively sought to broaden their markets through the internationalisation of higher education, to use the term suggested by the OECD (Maxwell et al, 2000).

International postgraduate students, as adult learners in a culturally different environment, inevitably have to confront an array of stress, challenges, uncertainties and rewards. They also bring to the classroom an informal learning system which is the result of immersion in their own parent cultures, and which comprises specific learning strategies and learning contexts, that is, activities and situations which foster learning (Ninnes, 1995). Accordingly, effective CCA is now of critical importance for international adult students, programme designers, educators and the managers of higher education systems. Indeed, an effective and responsive adult education programme requires a clear understanding of the characteristics, needs and aspirations of programme participants (Fujita-Strack, 1996) and the influence of their own parent cultures.

## **1.2 The Researcher's Personal Motivation**

The motivations of individuals to travel abroad to pursue their postgraduate studies vary enormously. My own initial motivation, as a married woman, was to accompany my husband, since he decided in 1995 that he wanted to study his Ph.D. programme at an English university. To pursue a further degree was his goal since he got his MBA from the USA in 1989. He mentioned that when he was studying abroad in USA, he



found the other Taiwanese who were pursuing their Ph.D. degree seemed very smart and mature. Compared with other Taiwanese he met in the USA, he got quite good a score in his MBA programme. However, it seemed impossible to pursue his Ph.D. degree in 1989, because of the financial budget and his lack of practical working experience. After working for four years, we decided “act on it!” I knew his ambition since the very beginning when I met him. To get a Ph.D. degree, and produce a Dr. in academic field for his family is a significant honor, especially for his father, as his father is a retired high school teacher and some of his colleagues’ sons and daughters have got their Ph.D. degree already.

When I resigned from my teaching post at a primary school in Taipei in 1995, I was aware that for me this was a very significant decision. I felt an enormous sense of uncertainty at the thought of leaving a familiar environment in Taipei to go for the first time to England, which to me was (in every sense) a “foreign country”. The decision was made easier because I did not have any children. However, one practical problem arose because I did not have a university degree, but only a diploma from a college of commerce. On the other hand, I already had ten years work experience, and this enabled me to fulfill the entry requirements and enroll as a postgraduate student at the University of Warwick in continuing education. I decided that it would be best (because of my academic background and also financial constraints) to become a part-time, rather than full-time, student. It seemed to me that it would be much less intense to undertake a two-year MA programme than a one-year programme.

I was excited by the thought of becoming a student again after a gap of ten years.

However, I was worried by my poor level of English-speaking skills, and this anxiety was heightened when I found in England that I did not interact very often with British students or with the local community. As on the part-time M.A. in continuing education, most students are British, to help overcome these difficulties regarding of English language, my tutor on the MA programme suggested that I might like to become a volunteer in a local primary school (the Leamington Toy Library). The working hours were Tuesday afternoon and Friday morning. I worked as a member of a play group. I was charged to help the Leamington Toy Library clean and put the toys away when they were returned. I did wonder whether this job would really to improve my English-speaking ability. I continued to feel that my lack of confidence in my English-speaking ability was one of the most daunting barriers to my own cross-cultural adjustment. Even though I successfully completed my MA degree in 1997 and then proceeded to my PhD studies, I still recognised that I was not adjusting very well to life in England, and I was worried that this would continue to hinder my academic progress.

My own personal experience of CCA problems was confirmed by my discussions with, and observation of, other Taiwanese students. Then, in March 1999, I interviewed several representatives of British universities who were attending the British Educational Exhibition in Taiwan. All these representatives stated that foreign students, especially those from Oriental countries, encountered cross-cultural learning difficulties. The consequent “learning gap” is likely to result in a clash between students’ and teachers’ understandings of the objectives of learning and the means by which these objectives are to be achieved. The educational experiences of most overseas students in Britain are mixed (Niven, 1987). There is evidence of significant

changes in students' attitudes and behaviour after a period of study in Britain. According to the representatives at the exhibition in Taiwan, some Taiwanese postgraduate students (TPSs) have changed their world-view and have become much more self-confident as a result of studying in Britain. When I heard their comments, I inquired of them "did all TPSs make progress in terms of their academic/practical field and/or personal development?"

Since I arrived in England in 1995, I have counselled a number of Taiwanese who plan to apply for university places in England. Some of them were introduced by friends or relations. They e-mailed or telephoned me regarding studying in England. From March to December in 1999, during the field work period for this thesis, I worked as a counsellor at World Education Group (WEG) in Taipei. My job was not only to help English universities to promote their MA/MSc programmes in Taiwan, but also to help TPSs to apply to study abroad in England. I have learned that certain myths need to be dispelled before students actually go abroad to study. I myself found that the things I encountered in England were not always positive, and indeed some were extremely stressful. For example, I always advised students not to walk around alone at night off the campus in England and to exercise extreme caution. Yet I never felt threatened in Taipei. So why was I so cautious when I was abroad in England? Was this just my own personal attitude, or do other TPSs feel the same way?

I also remember that I felt very shocked when I first attended the MA course at Warwick. I noticed that I was the only East Asian student in the whole class. I felt very uncomfortable, especially because I had little confidence in my ability to speak English with any degree of fluency. Eventually, I got used to being an "outsider" in

such situations -- for example, as a member of the play group in the Leamington Toy Library and as a participant in the popmobility course at the university sports centre. Since I could not change these situations, I felt that I had to find a way of dealing with them. For me, it was a matter of trying to empower myself. I became curious as to how other TPSs respond in such circumstances.

In my first term as a postgraduate student, there was a group discussion which also made me feel very uncomfortable and isolated. The issue under consideration was that of how to get teenagers off the street and back to education. In fact, I had no idea about the policy aspects of this issue, as all I had was a handout from the course tutor. Therefore, I was unable to make any significant contribution to the discussion. One classmate asked me: "are you one of my group?" This comment hurt me and I felt offended. I saw myself as a hard-working student who always prepared for classes. After this experience, I made an effort to search for information about British educational and vocational policy on the Internet until I became more familiar with the subject. Looking back, I really appreciated my classmate whose views I had received as an insult. This had forced me to recognise the high standards involved in being a postgraduate student. The result was that I received a good grade for my assignment on UK educational and vocational policy at the end of the first term. My experience made me think about the comparable experience of other TPSs who encounter similar difficulties, and I wondered if my reactions were the same as or different from theirs.

In March 1999 I was able to have further discussions with a number of Taiwanese graduates from English universities. I was especially interested in trying to understand

their attitudes and experience of personal growth. I noticed that each individual had his/her own story to tell. This intrigued me and I thought it would be worthwhile to undertake a more systematic investigation of the cross-cultural adjustment of TPSs in England. However, it also seemed to me that this would be a very difficult and time-consuming task. I was encouraged, however, by the thought that this research would be of practical value in helping English universities and consultants to understand more fully the educational needs of TPSs and to do more to assist TPSs in the process of cross-cultural adjustment.

### **1.3 Existing Research on Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

For TPSs, England represents an unfamiliar cultural environment with major differences in terms of social assumptions and behavioural patterns. This can easily cause stress to TPSs, who often cannot understand the new environment and may find some aspects of it ethically unacceptable. However, over time, TPSs engage in a learning process of CCA. This is the focus of the present research, which seeks to fill the gap in the literature by exploring the interplay between CCA behaviour and the learning process over time with particular reference to the mechanisms that determine the patterns of adjustment in specific circumstances. The overall aim is to provide a holistic framework which can aid our understanding of the nature of cross-cultural learning, taking into account the impact of cultural diversity in the contemporary world, although in some ways, cultures are becoming more similar.

Because of linguistic and cultural barriers, the CCA experience of international students is not easy to assess. Thus far, research on this topic has gained exposure only to a limited extent among the more prominent refereed periodicals (Senyshyn et

al., 2000). Previous studies (for further details see Chapter 2) have suffered from a number of inadequacies. First, they regard adjustment as a kind of process but tend to ignore the dynamic nature of that process in terms of the interactions between the individual learner and the environment. Only a few writers (e.g. Jarvis, 1987; Kolb, 1984; Smith, 1982) have explored this latter perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to describe and analyse, from a holistic perspective, the fundamental features of cross-cultural adjustment and link those features (involving stimulation, reaction and action over time) to determine particular patterns of adjustment. According to my own personal experience, it is far from easy to identify distinctive “patterns”, “modes” or “stages” in the process of CCA. The process is exceedingly dynamic and variable.

Secondly, previous studies have been extremely narrow in scope because they have restricted themselves to the formal academic learning process. They should be extended to the broader process of “sojourn learning” (Elenwo, 1988). As Findsen (1987) observes, adjustment entails learning as a process and as a function as individuals seek to understand what is happening to them in a new environment and to find ways of solving day-to-day problems. An integrated study is thus needed to address the multifarious characteristics of cross-cultural adjustment. Again, from my personal experience, it seems to me that personal growth is cultivated through a series of everyday experiences and responses. For example, I came to appreciate the importance of being non-selfish through my observation of a local charity shop and the behaviour of volunteers in the Leamington Toy Library, where I worked as a volunteer between 1995 and 1997. I noticed the charity shops in England in 1995 when for the first time I found Oxfam by chance. There was no charity shop in Taiwan at that time. As a foreigner with a limited budget who did not bring a lot of

stuff from Taiwan, to buy some second-hand clothes from a charity shop seemed a good idea. I did not tell other Taiwanese students I brought some clothes and some kitchenware from the local charity shops until I appreciated the spirit of charity. Afterward, I found some other TPSs started to go shopping in the local charity shops. These kinds of experiences helped me to change my attitudes and behaviour. I started to consider the value of life and my own role within the family and the larger society. By getting to know volunteers in the Leamington toy library, I started to appreciate the importance of respecting all human beings, irrespective of their age and their social class. I had never asked myself, did I have not this respect in Taiwan? However, it is absolutely true that the benefit to me in coming to England is to value things with different perspective.

Thirdly, most previous research has focused on the Western experience of adjustment and has ignored the non-Western dimension. That is, there has been relatively little attention to the interplay between non-Western culture as a parent culture and Western culture as a host culture. For example, researcher such as Jackson (1995) has explored the “European dimension” of cross-cultural learning. As Ninnes (1995) explains, when international students enter a classroom, they come into contact with a culture which demands the application of a formal learning system, but, in the case of students from non-Western cultures, this system differs markedly from the system they are used to. Since non-Western countries head the list of countries sending students to UK institutions of higher education (Wright, 1997), there is an urgent need to consider the issue of cross-cultural learning from a non-Western perspective. Some of my friends did feel that other international students who come from countries in Europe or North America found it much easier to participate in social activities in

England. By contrast, Taiwanese students were more reluctant to participate in such activities on or off campus.

Finally, previous studies have emphasised the North American context. Altbach et al. (1985: 23) estimate that “perhaps 70% of the research uses North American data and is by scholars in North America”. Thus, although there is a growing literature on international students’ adjustment, the experience of foreign postgraduate students in a non-North American context such as Britain remains largely unexplored. According to information provided by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education (MOE, 2001), the UK has been the second most popular country of destination from 1999. This gives added weight to the need to undertake research into Taiwanese students’ CCA in the England.

To sum up, the issue of cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) is a vitally important aspect of cross-cultural adult learning, and there is presently little understanding of non-Western dimensions of this issue. This includes a neglect of the mechanisms that facilitate adjustment, which is the main focus of the present study.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to enhance our understanding of the experience of Taiwanese postgraduate students in England. The study seeks to describe and explore, from a holistic perspective, the nature and fundamental features of CCA. Underlying this aim is the conviction that as the internationalisation of Western universities increases (e.g. UK, USA, Canada, and Australia), it will become increasingly important for programme designers and educators to understand the



nature and impact of cultural diversity. It is hoped, therefore, that this study will contribute both to the theoretical analysis of cross-cultural adult learning and also the improved management of the internationalisation process in universities.

The basic argument of the study is that the processes of CCA vary according to the student's personal perceptions and the particular context in which learning takes place. It is thus vitally important to identify and understand the specific mechanisms that drive those processes of CCA. The study seeks to formulate an analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of CCA.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions are addressed:

- (1) What are the main dimensions and their categories of cross-cultural adjustment?
- (2) What is the nature of cross-cultural adjustment?
- (3) Why do different foreign students exhibit different processes and patterns of cross-cultural adjustment (in this case, Taiwan)?
- (4) How does the dynamic view of cross-cultural adjustment look like?

### **1.5 Methodological Orientation: The Grounded Theory Approach**

This study attempts to identify and characterise the nature and scope of Taiwanese postgraduate students' CCA in England universities. Therefore, it draws on previous research not only about TPSs' lives, stories and behaviour, but also about the interactive relationships between cultures. At the same time, I draw heavily upon my own personal experience as a TPS in England and my own theoretical knowledge (I worked as a counsellor at WEG, had experience of on-the-job training and learnt from the literature) to interpret the data gathered from informants. I also recognise the need

to “step back and critically analyse situations, to recognise and avoid bias, to obtain valid and reliable data, and to think abstractly”, to use the words of Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 18).

The present literature provides insufficient knowledge to construct a theory, and no constructs can be measured objectively by using a questionnaire or another instrument. After much careful thought I decided that a qualitative methodology and a grounded theory approach should be adopted in this study. The reasons why I define this study as a qualitative are as follows:

1. In a qualitative study, reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study. The nature of this study is interpretive and reality is quite subjective.
2. In a qualitative study, the researcher interacts with those being researched. In this study, I cannot remain distant. Thus, in interviews, I would interact with informants to acquire in-depth qualitative data. Furthermore, my values are involved in interpreting data, writing reports, and using my personal language.

There are no variables and hypotheses chosen before the study begins. The intent of this study is to explore patterns to contribute to theory and enable us to better predict, explain and understand phenomena. What specific methods should be used in seeking to understand the nature of CCA? According to Eisenhardt (1989), a grounded theory approach is an appropriate method for developing theoretical insights, as this study aims to understand how CCA occurs across individuals and across time from an TPSs' perspective.

In this study, the methodological benefit of the grounded theory approach is that it allows the development of theory with from specific kinds of data, lines of research, and theoretical interests. For the purpose of this thesis, I am a researcher but I am also a TPS with experience comparable to that of other informants. I also worked in Taiwan from March to December 1999 for an agency (WEG) which facilitates Taiwanese students' international programmes. This study, therefore, incorporates my own personal, reflexive "adaptations of methodology (technology), a composite of situational context, a personal biography, astuteness, theoretical and social sensitivity, a bit of luck -- and courage" (Strauss, 1987: xiii).

My experience as a student and counsellor -- and the contacts that this produced -- helped me to access a wide range of relevant resources, and this helped in turn to enhance my confidence as a researcher. In particular, I was able to benefit from valuable opportunities to participate in the activities of the British Council in Taiwan in 1999. Furthermore, by using the main principles of the grounded theory approach, such as theoretical sampling, and important methodological guidelines (e.g. keeping written memos, making constant comparisons, and employing a coding paradigm), I was able more easily to ensure the conceptual development of the. I stopped collecting the data when no new discoveries emerged.

The research data were gathered from interviews, fieldnotes, the literature and other documents (e.g. e-mail letters). I remained aware throughout the research of the importance of being immediately sensitive to new data as they arose in terms of developing new coding and achieving conceptual densification and integration. I am especially indebted to the counsellors of the WEG, who helped me to obtain a wide

range of resources that enabled me to complete the first stage of data collection and to determine an appropriate second-stage approach. In particular, they facilitated my contact with a number of willing informants. The WEG worked in 1999 as an international office in Taiwan for six English universities (Birmingham, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leicester, Oxford Brookes and Warwick).

This study employed a two-stage research design. First, a post hoc research design was used to develop a suitable set of ideas and an appropriate framework. From June 1999 to August 1999, 16 informants were interviewed in Taiwan. The results of this first stage were then used to guide the second stage, which consisted of a longitudinal research design. From March 1999 to September 2000, 19 informants were interviewed periodically either in England or via e-mail and on-line ICQ chatting.

### **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

The study seeks to make a significant contribution to current thinking about cross-cultural adult learning. First, it explores the core concepts that apply to the analysis of such adjustment. Secondly, it identifies the different contexts in which those core concepts are situated and the sequences of actions/interactions pertaining to each core concept. Thirdly, it identifies the mechanisms driving the change of core concepts. Finally, it proposes a dynamic framework for cross-cultural adjustment. All these contributions will extend the scope of current thinking on cross-cultural adult learning. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous section, the effort to bridge our understanding of the nature of cross-cultural adjustment is intended to:

- (1) facilitate the more effective management of the internationalisation of universities,
- (2) enhance the work of programme designers and educators, and

(3) enable the international students to study abroad more smoothly.

By employing the grounded theory approach, the study endeavours to develop theory on a foundation of convincing argumentation and explicit views of human nature and real-world practice. According to Whetten (1989), theory construction should be of contemporary interest to scholars and should help to revitalise old discussions and stimulate new ones. Most importantly, the present study adds a non-Western dimension to our understanding of CCA, thereby moving beyond the limitations of the present Western (and especially North American) focus in the literature.

### 1.7 Outline of the Thesis

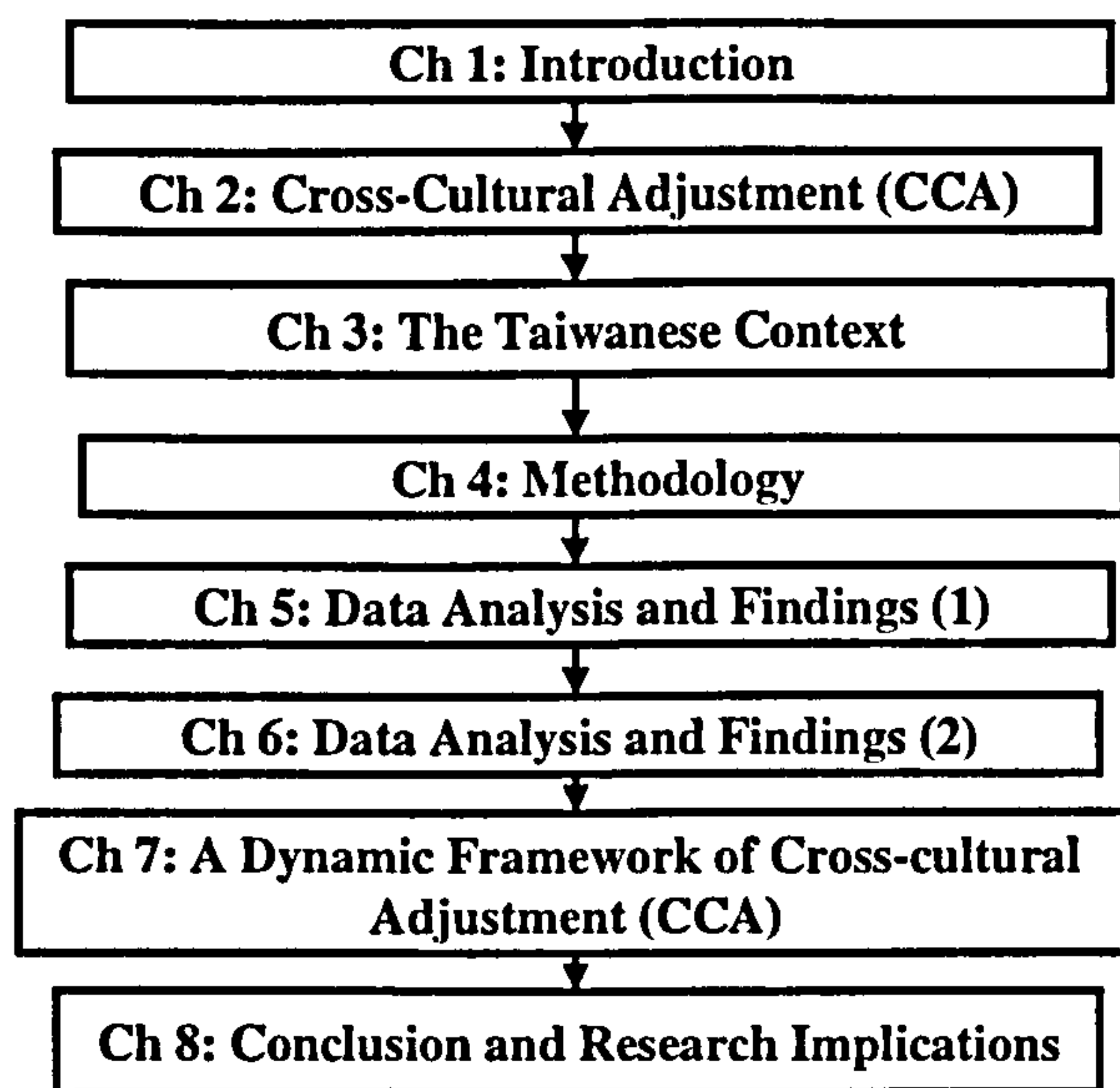


Figure 1.1: Outline of the Thesis

As Figure 1.1 shows, the structure of this thesis reflects the requirements of a grounded theory approach to the research investigation. The basic theme of grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:2). Chapter 1 presents an overview of the main research problem. The motivation and purpose of the research are introduced, and the

theoretical rationale of the research is outlined. The method, research scope, and significance of the research are discussed.

Although 'pure' grounded theory starts from data, some researchers (e.g., Glaser, 1978; 1992) recommend the need for prior background reading. After all, the grounded theory approaches require the comparisons of literatures with each other and with new data in the process of theory to emerge in the same ways as data are compared. There are core process of the grounded theory. Accordingly, Chapter 2 reviews the general literature on cross-cultural adjustment during a period of study abroad. It focuses specifically on international students' cross-cultural adjustment and briefly discusses the key variables of importance to that adjustment. The concept of adjustment and the models and frameworks proposed by previous researchers are discussed. Arguments about whether "adjustment" is a unitary or multi-faceted construct are examined. The research framework employed in this study is explained.

In order to avoid the danger that theory and empirical world would mismatch, Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the Taiwanese context. It focuses on the key components of Taiwanese culture and the characteristics of the country's postgraduate students in the England.

Chapter 4 describes the plan, structure and strategy of the research. It first discusses the selection of a suitable paradigm to guide the current study. Following this, there is a discussion of the sources of data and the sampling design, the research procedure, and the limitations of the research method.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus mainly on exploring and reporting the core concepts of cross-cultural adjustment used in this study. By employing the main principles of grounded theory (namely, constant comparative analysis, development of theoretical concepts and using theoretical sampling, as well as by means of the usual supporting techniques of coding and memoing), the research findings explore Taiwanese postgraduate students' experience of cross-cultural adjustment in England universities. Four specific dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment – relating to students' self-identity, academic pursuit, affection and sojourn life-experience are explored.

Chapter 7 proposes the rationale and process for the development of a multi-layered dynamic framework of cross-cultural adjustment. It also examines two specific issues: the shifting curve and the different paths of adjustment. First, the shifting curve of adjustment helps us to understand how the differences among individuals' perceptions of cultural diversity. Secondly, four different paths of Taiwanese postgraduate students' cross-cultural adjustment are identified. The chapter then provides a holistic picture of the proposed framework and its capacity to reveal the dynamic nature of the cross-cultural adjustment process.

Chapter 8 (the conclusion) presents a summary of the research, its key findings, and the contributions and practical implications of the study. The limitations of the research are acknowledged and suggestions for further research are offered.

## Chapter Two: Cross-Cultural Adjustment (CCA)

### 2.1 Introduction

Glaser (1978) and Strauss & Corbin (1990:42-53) suggest that background reading should help researchers to get the “theoretical sensitivities” from data. The literature, both technical and nontechnical, plays such an important and varied role in grounded theory. According to Strauss & Corbin (1990:48-53), the technical literature: (1) can be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity, (2) can be used as secondary sources of data, (3) can stimulate questions, (4) can direct theoretical sampling, and (5) can be used as supplementary validation. Thus, in this study, a grounded theory approach need not ignore existing literature and researchers’ personal experiences (Sarker et al., 2001). It does not require me to suspend or ignore all pre-existing theoretical knowledge, but, instead, encourages the development/enriching of grounded theories by drawing upon (not driven by) broad theoretical approaches that are not in the same substantive area (Glaser, 1978). Furthermore, comparing literature to the emerging theory in the same way as comparing data to the emerging theory is a core process of grounded theory. This chapter therefore reviews the general literature on the process of cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) during a period of study abroad and allows me to refer as relevant to some of my own experiences and observations.

The first section focuses specifically on the literature concerning international students’ CCA and briefly discusses the key variables involved in that process. Then, the concept of adjustment is looked at in more detail with particular reference to the models and frameworks proposed by previous researchers. More specifically, the debate on whether adjustment is a unitary or multi-faceted construct is examined. Finally, four particular dimensions of CCA are identified for subsequent application in



this study of the CCA of Taiwanese postgraduate students: self-identity, academic pursuit, affection and sojourn life experience.

## **2.2 International Students' Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

Despite the extensive literature on international students' adjustment (e.g. Tomich et al., 2000; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Volet and Ang, 1998; Choi, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Xiang et al, 1997; Suen, 1998), the notion of foreign postgraduate students as adult learners remains unexplored. Especially, the expansion of the education of international students at postgraduate level has become a major trend in the USA and the UK (Wan et al., 1992; Xu, 1991; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Maxwell et al., 2000). However, prior research has revealed several variables of importance to adjustment: for example, English language proficiency, length of stay, country of origin, marital status, previous international experience, status accorded to the home country. However, the ways in which such factors interact and impinge upon the individual experience is not well understood. Previous researchers have tended to conduct either survey studies or in-depth interviews to determine which of the factors listed above impede or facilitate the adjustment to foreign higher educational life.

More recently, researchers (e.g. Tomich et al., 2000; Senyshyn et al, 2000; Volet and Ang, 1998; Choi, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Xiang et al, 1997; Suen, 1998) have begun to shed further light the complex process of international students' adjustment. Numerous variables, both internal and external to the student, emerge as salient factors of adjustment, including gender, age, personality, cultural similarity/dissimilarity, language, social connections, length of

residence, preparation for study abroad, and specific problems encountered. Successful adjustment, it is argued, depends on these factors. I will discuss each of them in turn.

- *Gender*

On the gender issue, researchers (e.g. Kim, 1988; Hutley, 1993; Senyshyn et al., 2000) have found that women encounter more adjustment problems than their male counterparts, since it appears that males tend to be more satisfied and confident in a new culture and thus experience fewer problems of adjustment. However, Ying and Liese (1994) argue that educated women may no longer have a more difficult transition than their male counterparts. In Ying and Liese's (1994) study, no significant gender differences were found in terms of TPS study abroad in USA. However, as Church (1982) points out, there remains a need for more in-depth studies of gender difference when evaluating adjustment. Nonetheless, the existing literature still points to a slight gender bias favouring men in the adjustment process (Tomich et al., 2000).

- *Age*

Hutley (1993) identified age as the factor presenting the greatest barrier to adjustment. In Ying and Liese's (1994) study, younger respondents were found to do better than older participants. Given that interaction between individual and host country is a strong determinant of adjustment, it can be inferred that the younger the sojourner is, the quicker and easier the adjustment process will be (Tomich et al., 2000). The students in these studies came from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Austria, Europe and the USA. Furthermore, according to some researchers (Jalili-Grenier and Chase,

1997; Philips and Hartley, 1990; Smith, 1999), the language proficiency of international students is related to age.

TPSs are usually mature men and women. Some of them have already had their career. I myself have 10 years of work experience. A significant relationship existed between the ages of the East Asia (Chinese) students in Lou's (1989) study and their adjustment problems. I found Chinese students over forty years old reported having the highest number of problems, while students in the age group 21-25 reported having the highest number of financial, housing and foods problems (p. 155).

In addition, the older TPSs might also have financial responsibility for their family. Clearly, we can assume that age is a significant factor relevant to the "tasks" or "responsibility" needed to be accomplished. The reason why many older international students have less interaction with their host country is probably that they have to take care of a lot of things. They are more likely to experience health problems (not only for themselves but also the members of their family), and problems with spouses' adjustment and child care.

- *Personality*

Previous investigations have shown sojourner adjustment to be positively correlated with open-mindedness, flexibility, cultural sensitivity, extroversion and modernity (Morden, 1999; Ying and Liese, 1994; Churuch, 1982; Selmer, 2001; Kim, 1988; Tomich et al., 2000). In addition, self-actualisation, a sense of personal attainment, and a realisation of potential (Gough, 1987) are also seen to be conducive to

successful adjustment. Nevertheless, as Ward and Kennedy (1993) observe, such personality traits are very susceptible to culture-specific influences. Thus, a trait that aids the adaptation process in one culture may actually hinder it in another. (Some examples will be given below in the discussion of cultural similarity/dissimilarity.)

From my observation, most thoughtful TPSs seemed to encounter huge “culture shock” when they had more interaction with England. The TPSs with more positive perspectives and more active attitudes towards England seemed to more enjoy their life in England than the TPSs with more negative perspective and more passive attitudes.

- *Cultural Similarity/Dissimilarity*

The cultural background of international students also represents a significant factor in the adjustment experience. As several researchers show (e.g. Hutley, 1993; Surdam and Collins, 1984; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Sodowsky and Plake, 1992), cultural similarity (e.g. in terms of beliefs, habits, social system and regional location) facilitates international students’ adjustment to life in the host country. Conversely, cultural distance can make adjustment more difficult. Thus, Ward and Kennedy (1993) found that Chinese students relocating to New Zealand had greater adaptation difficulties than Chinese students relocating to Singapore. Sodowsky and Plake (1992) found that Europeans were better acculturated to life in the United States than their Asian, African and South American counterparts. Furnham and Bochner (1982) categorised cultural factors as either similar, intermediate or dissimilar to British society in a survey of students from 29 foreign countries. They found that this categorisation was a strong predictor of the social difficulty faced by the students.

Other researchers (e.g. Babiker et al., 1980; Sodowsky and Plake, 1992; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Ward and Kennedy, 1993) have shown that Europeans share many traits, beliefs and values with American and British society. Hence, in these cases adjustment is easier.

The major motivation of some international students for studying abroad is their desire to live in a society different from their own and to experience another culture (Senyshyn et al., 2000). For most TPSs, England represents an unfamiliar cultural environment with major differences in terms of social assumptions and behavioural patterns. This indicates a possible central role for cultural variables in the adjustment experience. Usually, individuals who study for postgraduate degrees are highly motivated. However, “culture” does play a major role during the period of study abroad. This view is supported by Hofstede’s (1984) analysis of the difference between the roles of collectivism and individualism in national cultures. Whereas East Asian cultures tend to be more family- and group-oriented (i.e. collectivistic), the US, Canada and many European countries tend to be more individual-oriented (individualistic). This distinction is helpful in understanding aspects of cultural diversity.

- *Language*

Several studies have focused on the issue of perceptions of language ability and their effects on adjustment to higher education. For example, Dillon and Swann (1997) found that one of the major areas of East Asian students’ insecurity was “lack of confidence in their English skills” (p. 18). Other researchers (e.g. Hutley, 1993; Stafford et al., 1978; Tompson and Tompson, 1996) also conclude that international

students' lack of confidence in language skills is one of the most daunting barriers to positive adjustment. That is, the greater one's command of the host country's language, the easier and more stable the adjustment process is and the more meaningful and profound is the contact with the host country's people (Tomich et al., 2000; Suen, 1998; Cui and Awa, 1992). Misunderstandings with local people often arise in the first few weeks (even months) of sojourn in the host country because of language barriers. This is confirmed by Wisker's (1999) case study, which found that "there were both linguistic and cultural difficulties which prevented us (the author and a student from Cyprus) from understanding each other and the project (p. 98)."

Philips and Hartley (1990) divide language proficiency into two major components: linguistic and communicative competence. In addition, according to these authors and also Smith (1999), linguistic and communicative competence is directly related to the length of students' stay in the host country. Thus, Jalili-Grenier & Chase (1997) suggest that the main difficulties of these students are in the areas of reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Furthermore, prior knowledge and cultural background greatly influence the comprehension process (Altarriba and Forsythe, 1993). In my case, the level of language ability was a crucial issue. I had a background knowledge relevant to my studies which I had learnt in Chinese. However, I didn't know how to express this in English. Therefore, I had to translate it. I found it was quite difficult, especially during the group discussions. I still find that I can go deeper into the subject in my own language than in English. Nevertheless, it will be expected that "postgraduate students are enabled to write and articulate their ideas at the level at which they are

working and thinking, and working in another language clearly hinders this” (Wisker, 2000:43).

Furthermore, some researchers (e.g. Vrij and Winkel, 1994; Walker, 1988; Water, 1988) also stress the influence of differences in accent, speech style, and spoken fluency on individuals’ impression formation. Nor can we exclude the influence of skin colour and accent on the unequal treatment of ethnic minorities in a cross-cultural context. However, as Vrij and Winkel (1994) state, it makes sense to divide the interaction processes that lead to such treatment into two phases: selective interaction and communicative interaction with people from other countries.

- *Social Connections*

The social dimension of international students’ adjustment to foreign higher education has received a lot of attention in the research literature. Thus, Zimmerman (1995), Surdam and Collins (1984), Boyer and Sedlacek (1986) and Bunz (1997) found that the majority of international students arrive in the host country without their families and have left their friends and natural support systems behind. They argue that the lack of interaction between the host country and international students can be attributed to the host country’s tendency toward ethnocentrism, i.e. the habitual disposition to judge people from other cultures by the standards and practices of one’s own culture or ethnic group. Thus, international students who try positively to interact with students from the host country adjust better than those who rely on contacts within their own national/ethnic groups (see Surdam and Collins, 1984).

There is evidence of the loneliness experienced by international students (Jalili-Grenier and Chase, 1997; Brown, 1987; Marshall, 1989; Alten et al., 1988; Burris, 1987). If the host institution can assist students in overcoming this problem, their adjustment to, and progress in, academic programmes will be greatly facilitated.

I accompanied my husband to England. Without him, studying abroad would never have been possible. The level of the spouse's adjustment to the new culture in such circumstances is an important consideration. In Lou's (1989) study, single Chinese students seem to have more and /or more serious problems than those who were married when they studied abroad in the USA (p. 156). The social connection probably provides sources to comfort international students.

- *Length of Residence*

Length of residence depends mainly on the reason why an individual finds himself/herself in a new country. The longer an individual remains in the host country, the better is his/her adaptation to it (Sodowsky and Plake, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward and Searle, 1991; Tomich et al., 2000). Furthermore, research shows (Jalili-Grenier and Chase, 1997; Philips and Hartley, 1990; Smith, 1990) that international students' language proficiency is related to the length of time spent in the host country. The longer they stay in the host country, the fewer problems they have with language skills (Lou, 1989: 156-157). However, a question emerges about whether this does really improve their English skills, or is it the case that they are just getting used to the problems encountered"? International students may tend to keep a



tourist's perspective rather than becoming assimilated into the culture of the host country. The issue probably depends on his/her efforts and/or abilities.

- *Preparation*

Students can do much to prepare for their stay abroad. Those who are well prepared, perhaps as a result of acquiring information about the host culture and academic setting or establishing future support networks prior to departure, will find it easier to adjust than those who are less well prepared (Ying and Liese, 1994, 1991; Church, 1982).

- *Problems Encountered*

Overseas students are vulnerable to many problems, e.g. homesickness, finance, housing, discrimination, family separation, loneliness, etc. In general, the more problems that are encountered, the more likely it is that adjustment will be difficult (Stafford et al., 1978; Surdam and Collins, 1984; Ying and Liese, 1994). As Suen (1998) states, all foreign students must undergo some degree of physical and emotional adjustment to the new environment. Soon after international students arrive in their host country, they are faced with the need for cultural, physical and psychological adaptation.

International students often find that their academic experiences are extremely stressful (Kurman and Sriram, 1997). Academic demands are heavy, instructor-student interaction often has time pressures, and the academic and social support mechanisms available to foreign students are often not relevant or not available (Wan et al., 1992). It cannot be assumed that all international students will find the same cross-cultural educational experience to be equally stressful. However, as Table 2.1

shows, there is considerable agreement that certain problems and difficulties are perceived by foreign students as especially worrying.

**Table 2.1 Problems and Sources of Difficulties Perceived by Foreign Students**

Author(s)	Main Problems and Sources of Difficulties
Oberg (1960)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strain</li> <li>● A sense of loss and feelings of deprivation</li> <li>● Being rejected</li> <li>● Confusion</li> <li>● Surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation</li> <li>● Feelings of impotence</li> </ul>
Xu (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Personal problems</li> <li>● Academic problems</li> <li>● Social problems</li> </ul>
Findsen (1987)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Language</li> <li>● Serious task orientation</li> </ul>
Wan, Chapman & Biggs (1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Primary appraisal of stress</li> <li>● Secondary appraisal of stress</li> </ul>
Furnham and Tresize (1983)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Problem of living in a foreign culture</li> <li>● Problems of late-adolescents/young adults asserting their emotional and intellectual independence</li> <li>● Academic problems associated with higher educational study</li> </ul>
Berry (1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical changes may occur</li> <li>● Biological changes may occur</li> <li>● Cultural changes</li> <li>● Psychological changes</li> </ul>
Furnham (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Loss, grief and mourning</li> <li>● Fatalism</li> <li>● Selective migration</li> <li>● Expectations</li> <li>● Negative life-events</li> <li>● Social support networks: reduction in social support</li> <li>● Value differences</li> </ul>
Yin & Liese (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Homesickness problems: missing family, missing spouse or boyfriend/girlfriend, missing friends, missing Taiwan, loneliness.</li> <li>● Relationship problems: friendship formation, "people of host country are cold", "Chinese are cold", and racial discrimination.</li> <li>● Cultural problems: food, unfamiliar environment, value differences, and cultural differences.</li> <li>● Academic problems</li> </ul>
Choi (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Language</li> <li>● Relationships with teachers and peers</li> <li>● Educational conventions</li> </ul>
Cheng (1971)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Personal characteristics</li> <li>● English abilities</li> <li>● Academic performance</li> <li>● Social (support)</li> </ul>

In Chu's (1998) study, the language problem and the social life problem are the two difficult issues for TPSs studying abroad in England. However, from my personal experience and observation of other TPSs, I would argue that there are more problematic issues beyond the language problem and social life problem. There is a

need for factor is a feeling of comfort in the host country - England. Without this, TPSs are likely to feel unhappy while they study abroad.

### **2.3 The Concept of Adjustment**

Every language has a large folk terminology of adaptive strategies in the generalised sense: coping, changing, rectifying, correcting, curing, ameliorating, modifying, manipulating, bringing-up-to-standard, swindling, deceiving (Bennett, 1976: 272). These are all English words that refer to ways of altering one's circumstances. People adjust to physical demands but they also need to adjust to social pressures, that is, demands that arise from living interdependently with other people. Therefore, the concept of "adaptation" has been borrowed by psychologists and renamed "adjustment" (Lazarus, 1976). The two terms are slightly different: "adaptation" emphasises the flexibility to change in order to meet the requirements of the environment; "adjustment" emphasises the use of active skills to improve interaction with the environment. Recent researchers (e.g. Eaton and Bean, 1995; Saenz et al., 1999) following the earlier work of Lazarus, Averill, and Opton (1974) and French, Rodgers and Cobb (1974), view adaptation as the emotional process an individual undergoes in response to environmental stimuli. Adjustment refers to the behavioral responses with which an individual establishes a "good fit" with the environment.

Nevertheless, in this study, the terms "adaptation" and "adjustment" will be used interchangeably, as they have virtually the same dictionary meanings. Furthermore, according to Lazarus (1961), the concept of adjustment originates from the biological term "adaptation". What is more, "adjustment" has been defined as the psychological process of adapting to, coping with, and managing the problems, challenges and

demands of everyday life (Lazarus, 1966, Simons et al., 1994). Therefore, it seems reasonable and practical to use the two terms interchangeably.

Whereas some researchers (e.g. Church, 1982; Brein and David, 1971) define the adjustment of foreign students to their host cultures as “sojourner adjustment”, they concede that other terms (e.g. “cultural adjustment”, “cross-cultural adjustment”, “cultural adaptation”, “cultural assimilation”, “ethnic assimilation”) are ambiguous because they suggest a more permanent assimilation to the host culture. Increasingly, though, the term “cross-cultural adjustment” (CCA) is being used (e.g. Black, 1990), and this convention is adopted in the present study.

#### **2.4 Different Theories of Cross-Cultural Adjustment (CCA)**

A considerable body of research has emerged in recent years investigating cultural differences and similarities in CCA (e.g. Tomich et al., 2000; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Volet and Ang, 1998; Choi, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Xiang et al, 1997; Suen, 1998). Clearly, international students are taking a risk by entering a new culture characterized by unknown and unanticipated customs and rules. The term cross-cultural adjustment, therefore, refers to the process of coping with a new socio-cultural and physical environment and accommodating oneself to its demands. Berry (1988) sees this process as one of acculturation and identifies the major problem to be the potential conflict between the changes of acculturation and the continuity of enculturation, as acculturation will require some psychological adaptation and produce some degree of difficulty.

Worchel and Goethals (1985) state that the complex process of adjustment involves a number of key elements:

- knowing and accepting oneself
- taking control of one's life
- setting personal goals
- interacting with others

After reviewing the literature, Millar et al. (1990) summarise four different views of adjustment:

- Homeostasis: adjustment by balance
- Growth: towards self-actualisation
- Learning: adapting to a changing environment
- Choice: by self-determination

#### *2.4.1 The Pattern and Process of Adjustment*

Table 2.2 presents a summary of how various authors perceive the main components of the pattern and process of adjustment. The approaches presented in Table 2.2 contribute to our understanding of CCA as a series of stages or phases, and suggest a division of observed behaviour into distinctive patterns or modes of CCA. However, the links between the stages (phases) of CCA and the modes of CCA require further analysis. For example, we need to determine how the various factors involved in CCA actually cause different patterns of behaviour. Furthermore, the stage (phase) models of sojourner adjustment encounter inherent conceptual and methodological difficulties

in classifying individuals (Church, 1982). We need to consider whether the order of stages is invariant, and whether all stages must be passed through or whether somehow be skipped in particular cases. In order to classify individuals, the key indicators of each stage or each pattern are needed. However, as Church (1982) states, indicators may vary with the culture of origin or be indicative of more than one stage, thus reflecting (for example) a superficial adjustment in an early stage but a true “coming-to-terms” with the new culture in a later stage.

What is more, the usual sorting procedure (e.g. phases or stages of CCA) – where subjects are asked to indicate the degree of similarity of feelings by sorting the phases or stages into categories – may also force people to create (or imagine) differences due to their own personal perceptions. In all probability, the stages (phases) will not fit neatly the categories devised by researchers (as seen in Table 2.2). Indeed, those categories may be more indicative of how people semantically categorise terms as objects rather than how they subjectively feel and express affect (Bagozzi et al., 1999). The multidimensional nature of CCA thus needs to be taken into account.

**Table 2.2 The Pattern and Process of Adjustment**

Author(s)	Theory	Pattern/Process of Adjustment
Lysgarrd (1955)	U-curve hypothesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● beginning – easy and successful</li> <li>● crisis period – less well adjusted and lonely</li> <li>● finally – more integrated into the host community and better adjusted</li> </ul>
Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963)	An extension of the U-curve (W-curve theory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● involvement</li> <li>● adjustment</li> <li>● re-involvement</li> <li>● readjustment</li> </ul>
Oberg (1960)	Culture shock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● honeymoon stage</li> <li>● crisis stage</li> <li>● recovery stage</li> <li>● adjustment stage</li> </ul>
Adler (1975)	Five-stage theory of culture-shock development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● contact</li> <li>● disintegration</li> <li>● reintegration</li> <li>● autonomy</li> <li>● independence</li> </ul>
Klein (1977)	Phases of adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the spectator phase</li> <li>● the stress and adaptation phase</li> <li>● the coming to terms phase</li> <li>● the decision-making phase</li> </ul>
Klein (1979)	Patterns of adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● instrumental adaptation</li> <li>● identification</li> <li>● withdrawal</li> <li>● resistance</li> </ul>
Brislin (1981)	Processes in short-term adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● instrumental adaptation</li> <li>● social orientation</li> <li>● ambassador for one's country</li> <li>● withdrawal</li> <li>● coping</li> </ul>
Brislin (1981)	Processes in long-term adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cultural adjustment</li> <li>● identification</li> <li>● cultural competence</li> <li>● role acculturation</li> </ul>
Fernandez (1988)	Minority identity development model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● conformity</li> <li>● dissonance</li> <li>● resistance and immersion</li> <li>● introspection and synergetic articulation</li> <li>● awareness</li> </ul>
Mohamed (1997)	Role identity and integrative maturity model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● orientation and autonomy</li> <li>● transitions of self-worth</li> <li>● consolidation of role identity</li> <li>● competence and integrative maturity</li> </ul>
Berry (1988)	Phases of acculturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● pre-contact phase</li> <li>● contact phase</li> <li>● conflict phase</li> <li>● crisis phase</li> <li>● adaptation phase</li> </ul>
Berry (1980; 1988)	Modes of acculturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● assimilation</li> <li>● integration</li> <li>● separation (rejection)</li> <li>● deculturation</li> </ul>

## 2.4.2 Overcoming Cross-Cultural Learning Difficulties

Several methods to overcome CCA learning difficulties have been suggested. These are summarised in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3 Methods of Overcoming CCA Learning Difficulties**

Author(s)	Methods
Furnham (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information giving</li> <li>● Cultural sensitisation</li> <li>● Isomorphic attributions</li> <li>● Learning by doing</li> <li>● Intercultural (social) skills training</li> </ul>
Macrae (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identifying the language needs of international students</li> <li>● The induction of international students to study facilities</li> <li>● Supervision of international students</li> </ul>
LaFromboise et al. (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assimilation</li> <li>● Acculturation</li> <li>● Alternation</li> <li>● Multiculturalism, integration or pluralism</li> <li>● Fusion</li> </ul>
Coleman (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assimilation or monoculturation</li> <li>● Acculturation</li> <li>● Alternation</li> <li>● Integration</li> <li>● Separation</li> <li>● Fusion</li> </ul>
Brislin (1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Psychological adjustment</li> <li>● Interaction effectiveness</li> <li>● Task effectiveness</li> </ul>

Coping with cultural diversity is one of the major challenges facing individuals who encounter CCA. The strategy (or strategies) an individual develops to cope with cultural diversity can be seen in terms of behavioural episode schemas (Brislin, 1981; Furnham, 1997). Variations in the use of strategies may be the result of the type of reinforcement the individual receives within different social contexts for using a particular strategy (Coleman, 1995). CCA refers to the process of second-culture acquisition and the process of learning behavioural episode schemas that are appropriate for a new cultural context. That is, the student will need to develop a behavioural episode schema to manage the experience of having two cultural frameworks within which he or she must function. Accordingly, Coleman (1995) states that if the individual can develop a behavioural episode schema that facilitates a



positive or congruent relationship between his or her culture of origin and the new context, there can be a transforming effect on the individual's repertoire of stable and recurring behavioural episode schemas. Soon after international students arrive in their host country, they are faced with the need for cultural, physical and psychological adaptation. Therefore, they need to utilise the resources within themselves (internal) and from the environment in which they live and study (external) to enhance their adjustment (Suen, 1998)

### *2.4.3 Communication for Learning Across Cultures*

Cortazzi and Jin (1997) point out that international students have to develop advanced language skills, often linked to study skills and issues related to learning in an academic context (e.g. seminar skills, IT skills, assessment procedures). However, a third element – beyond communication and learning – is often underestimated. This is the element of culture. Culture involves expectations and interpretations which are often taken for granted and therefore overlooked. Accordingly, Cortazzi and Jin (1997) propose a classification of cultures as follows: academic cultures, cultures of communication and cultures of learning.

Furthermore, due to students' lack of language skills and the impact of cultural difference, researchers (e.g. Bradley and Bradley, 1984; Channell, 1990) indicate that international students from a more hierarchical society will have particular difficulty in approaching their teachers for help. The structure of communication also varies from culture to culture. Thus, Bagozzi et al (1999), Hansen (1995, 1992) and Oatley (1992) stress that culture can explain the seemingly counter-intuitive differences between people in independence-based (Western) and interdependence-based

(Eastern) cultures. For example, in a study of the relationship between positive and negative affect (Bagozzi et al., 1999), it was found that Americans exhibited the classic bipolar pattern of feelings towards same things, but Chinese and, to a lesser extent Koreans, exhibited a more dialectical pattern between a wide range of positive and negative measures of emotion. Probably, the difference between Americans (seen as Western) and Chinese and Koreans (seen as Eastern) is the difference between individualism and collectivism. These surprising differences can be explained by the fundamental dissimilarities in conceptualisation and experience across different cultures.

## **2.5 Understanding Adult Learning and the Need for a Study of CCA**

Adult learning is frequently seen by educators as if it is a discretely separate domain, having little connection to learning in childhood or adolescence. Some researchers (e.g., Brookfield, 1995; Jarvis, 1987) critically examine this claim by exploring four major research areas: self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning and learning to learn. Each of these is seen to represent a unique and exclusive adult learning process. However, a number of important questions remain regarding our understanding of these four areas as a basis for defining the concept of adult learning. For example, the cross-cultural dimension of the concept has been almost completely ignored. That is, adult learning needs to be understood much more as a socially embedded and socially constructed phenomenon (Jarvis, 1987). Currently research on adult learning draws almost exclusively on psychological sources. However, learning is a collective process involving the cultural formation and reproduction of symbols and meanings. Thus, the “self” in a self-directed learning effort is a socially formed

self, and the goals of adults' self-directed learning can therefore be analysed as culturally framed goals.

Furthermore, through the learning process adults come to recognise the hegemonic aspect of dominant cultural values and understand how self-evident renderings of the "natural" state of the world actually bolster the power and self-interest of unrepresentative minorities (Brookfield, 1995). Mezirow's (1991) early work focused on the idea of perspective transformation, which he understood as the learning process by which adults come to recognise and re-frame their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships. The author proposed a theory of transformative learning to explain how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying meanings, and the way the structures of meaning themselves undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional (Mezirow, 1991, p. xii). Here, the process of transformation (from the dysfunctional to the functional) can be seen as a process of adjustment. More research is urgently needed to establish the nature, scope and dynamics of this process.

In addition, the belief that adult teaching should be grounded in adults' experiences, and that these experiences represent a valuable resource, is currently cited as crucial by adult educators of every conceivable ideological hue (Brookfield, 1995). Of all the models of experiential learning that have been developed, Kolb's (1984) model has been the most influential in prompting theoretical work among researchers in the field of adult learning (Jarvis, 1987). However, Brookfield (1995) argues that an exclusive reliance on accumulated experiences as the defining characteristic of adult learning

contains two discernible pitfalls. First, experience should not be thought of as an objectively neutral phenomenon. Rather, our experience is culturally framed and shaped. How we experience and make readings of events is problematic; that is, it changes according to the language and categories of analysis we use and according to the cultural, moral and ideological vantage points from which they are viewed. In a very important sense we construct our experience: how we sense and interpret what happens to us and to the world around us is a function of the structures of understanding and perceptual filters that are so culturally embedded that we are scarcely aware of their existence. Secondly, the quantity (length) of experience is not necessarily connected to its richness or intensity. Probably because of the habitual ways we draw meaning from our experiences, these experiences can become evidence for the self-fulfilling prophecies that stand in the way of critical insight. Accordingly, I may argue that experiences are neither innocent nor free from the cultural contradictions that inform them.

Finally, the development of the ability of adults to learn how to learn, to become skilled at learning in a range of different situations and through a range of different styles, has often been proposed as the overarching purpose for those educators who work with adults. However, I would argue that the notion of learning how to learn suffers from the lack of a commonly agreed definition, functioning more as an umbrella term for any attempts by adults to develop insight into their own habitual ways of learning. Furthermore, research on learning to learn does not give sufficient attention to how this process manifests itself in the diverse context of adult life. Therefore, a study of cross-cultural learning is essential for understanding adults' skill

development, knowledge acquisition, and emotional learning (the development of emotional intelligence).

## **2.6 The Research Framework**

The international student may experience psychological stress or “culture shock” (Furnham, 1988; Oberg, 1960; Cross, 1995). Immersion in a new culture often challenges one’s beliefs, values, self-view and world-view. The newcomer is confronted by new information and patterns of behaviour and must learn different ways of thinking and behaving. As a result of these and other consequences of cultural change (e.g. language difficulties, loss of academic friends and family, and the need to learn appropriate new social skills and academic behaviours), international students have to adjust their sojourn life.

The following paragraphs summarise observed, measurable dimensions employed in previous studies of adjustment (Tomich et al., 2000; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Volet and Ang, 1998; Choi, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Xiang et al., 1997; Biggs, 1992; Suen, 1999; Lazarus, 1976, 1981; Spaulding and Flack, 1976; Baker and Siryk, 1984, 1989; Wan et al., 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Church, 1982; Altbach et al., 1985). They are the main foci of my work.

- **Self-identity**

Self-identity includes personal development, role competencies, and cultural identity. To study abroad provides individuals with an opportunity to confront different cultures. Once given shape from culture, an individual’s self-system organises experience, directs behaviour, and provides meaning and coherence to the person’s

life (Cross, 1995). Consequently, the “self” plays an important role in psychological well-being as an individual adjusts to a new culture. One aspect of culture that influences the self is the relative importance of individualism or collectivism (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Cross, 1995). Accordingly, CCA can be seen as learning a new self (Jacobson, 1996), showing that identity is inseparable from both learning and culture (e.g., Bochner, 1994; Hofstede, 1986).

- **Academic Pursuit**

Academic pursuit involves academic adjustment, attainment, stress and required standards of achievement. An overwhelmingly majority of the international students believe that their educational experiences abroad are worthwhile and rewarding. Previous studies emphasise formal academic learning. The academic demands are heavy, and TPSs face many difficulties in their adjustment to higher education in England.

- **Affection**

Affection is influenced by attachment (personal emotional adjustment), family separation, and psychological adjustment due to cultural distance. Making contact with others is necessary for most human beings. For the international students, forming friendships and having a fulfilling social life are very important. CCA involves sojourners developing a sense of comfort in the host society.

- **Sojourn Life-Experience**

The sojourn life-experience includes social adjustment (adaptation), social support networks, accommodation matters, and life changes. Meeting a different way of life

than in their own country, TPSs have to perform in an unfamiliar life context. While living abroad in England, TPSs would discover the processes of CCA that are not just the matters of applying the theoretical knowledge obtained through orientation, books, films or conversations.

- **Other Dimensions**

Other dimensions are mainly related to personal characteristics and personality.

Existing research is contradictory and inconclusive with regard to determining who adjusts well to a new culture. Certain factors, such as gender, age, marital status, housing arrangements, financial support, language ability, and previous experience in other cultures, have been used to predict international student adjustment (e.g. Church, 1982; Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Furnham (1988) stresses the impact of two particular factors: relationships with others from one's home country, and friendships with host country nationals.

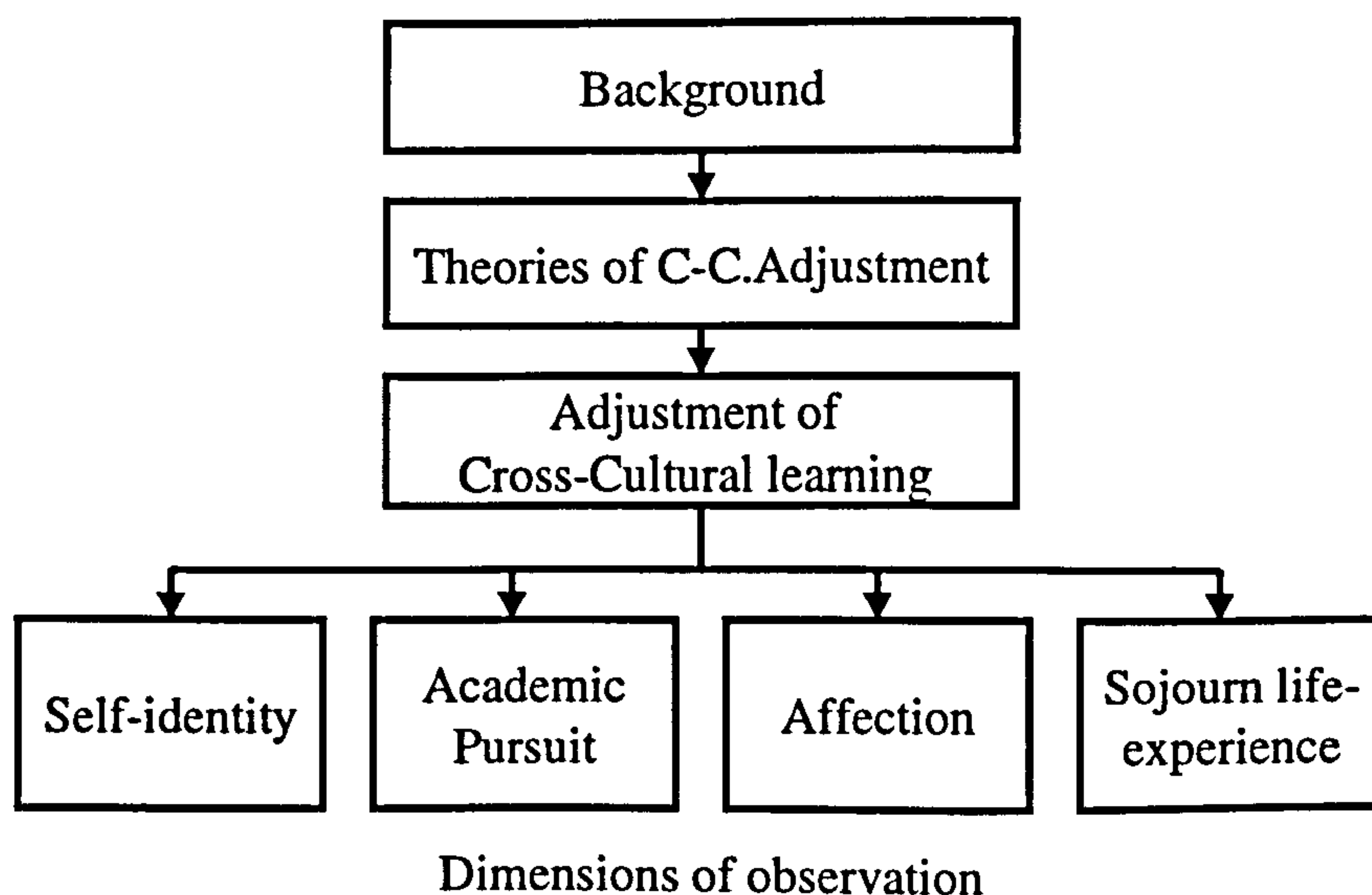
## **2.7 Conclusion**

In a grounded theory approach, the function of literature can be referred to as an emergent study. Glaser (1978) notes that the prior background reading which provides the models to help make sense of the data. Furthermore, constant comparison remains as a core process of data analysis, comparing literature to the emerging theory in the same way that data is compared to the emerging theory. In this study, what must be emphasised is the importance of heightening cultural awareness (e.g. Hutley, 1993; Surdam and Collins, 1984; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Sodowsky and Plake, 1992) in order to understand cultural differences (Tomich and King, 2000; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Volet and Ang, 1998; Choi, 1997; Smith et al.,

1998; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Xiang et al., 1997; Suen, 1998). As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, the concept of adjustment is especially crucial.

This study focuses on the example of Taiwanese postgraduate students' cross-cultural learning in England. The research framework is based on the findings from the literature review, my personal experience of study in England and the observation of other TPSs. It examines responses according to four dimensions of analysis: self-identity, academic pursuit, affection and sojourn life-experience. This framework is presented in Figure 2.1.

The research interviews employed open questions on each of these four dimensions. The aim is to develop a study of how adults feel their way through distinct learning episodes, using their own words, interpretations and constructs, thereby enriching our understanding of the significance of learning for adults themselves. In the next chapter, I provide a brief discussion of the Taiwanese context of students' experience.



**Figure 2.1: The Research Framework**



## **Chapter Three: The Taiwanese Context**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Taiwan was granted the glorious name “Formosa” - literally, “the beautiful island” - by a Portuguese sailor who discovered the island in the 1590s. Four hundred years ago, Taiwan was viewed by the Ch’ing government as remote and “barbarian”, a place where its own subjects were either exiled criminals or pirates (Hsu, 1991:19). However, nowadays, Taiwan has made remarkable economic and technological advances (Ogbu, 1992). In order to understand the cross-cultural adjustment of Taiwanese postgraduate students in England, it is important to examine the key features of these students’ Taiwanese background. According to Strauss & Corbin (1990: 48-56), biographies, diaries, documents, manuscripts, records, reports, catalogues, and other materials can be used as primary data or to supplement interviews and field observations in grounded theory studies. Accordingly, this chapter presents a discussion of Taiwan’s cultural identity (Section 3.2). Then, in Section 3.3, the focus shifts to the situation of Taiwanese postgraduates studying abroad. A conclusion follows in Section 3.4.

### **3.2 Taiwan’s Cultural Identity**

A working definition of culture is provided by Hofstede (cited in Rogers, 1998: 275), who sees culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another”. This definition can be applied to national cultures and also to the cultures of specific groups within a nation. In this section we will focus on Taiwan’s cultural identity. This will involve looking at the core cultural values of Taiwan and also seeking to distinguish Taiwanese culture from Chinese culture.

### *3.2.1 Cultural Values*

There is general agreement among researchers (e.g. Hofstede, 1980, 1984a, 1984b, 1991; Terpstra and David, 1985) that culture consists of the values, beliefs, behaviours, customs and attitudes that distinguish a particular society. Cultural values shape people's beliefs and attitudes and guide their behaviour. They establish the norms or standards by which everything in a society is judged. However, as Hofstede (1984a) states, not all members of a cultural group will hold exactly the same values. Researchers have attempted to develop a composite picture of culture by studying differences among cultural values. According to Fan's (2000) categorisation, this is done in two ways. One approach is to examine the cultural dimensions that reflect similarities and differences among cultures (e.g. Hofstede, 1980). Alternatively, these findings can be used to group countries into clusters of nations with similar cultures. The purpose of this section is not to review these studies in detail but to look at alternative ways of classifying Taiwan's cultural values.

### *3.2.2 Taiwanese Culture or Chinese Culture?*

Little is known about Taiwan's culture. In particular, there is little understanding of the cultural distinctions between Taiwan and Mainland China. Some researchers (e.g. Grahn and Swenson, 2000; Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996) conclude that China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are all part of a Chinese Economic Area. But this is to ignore the differences between the different parts of that area, not to mention the various overseas Chinese communities. At the same time, there are certain core values that are held in common by the Chinese people (Fan, 2000), even if these values are interpreted in different ways. As Fan (2000) states, the reasons for these differences can be traced back to differences in political and economic systems, and also,

historically, to the varying impact of Western influences. In what follows, we shall seek to identify the key influences that have shaped Taiwan's culture.

The contemporary Chinese culture in Taiwan consists of three major elements: traditional culture, communist ideology and, more recently, Western values. I shall consider each of these in turn.

- **Traditional Culture**

Taiwan's culture, for the most part of Chinese origins, was brought to Taiwan by Chinese immigrants from Fukien and Kwangtung provinces. It reflects both regional cultures as well as the national culture in China (Copper, 1999; Yang, 1997; Hughes, 1997). The traditional Chinese culture encompasses diverse and sometimes competing schools of thought (e.g. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism) and a host of regional cultures. Confucianism is undisputedly the most influential source and forms the foundation of the Chinese cultural tradition. It still provides the basis for the norms of Chinese interpersonal behaviour (Fan, 2000; Weller, 1999).

Confucianism has been a predominant ideology of Taiwan for years and it still has a fundamental influence on the Taiwanese mentality. As a belief system, Confucianism has provided the Taiwanese with great stability and resilience (Selmer, 2001; Redding, 1990:48; Tan, 1986). Taking the family as a model for society at large, Confucianism is basically authoritarian and stresses hierarchical principles and status differences. It guides the correct and best way of handling interpersonal relationships and is accepted at all level of society (Bond, 1991; Yang, 1986).

- Communist Ideology

Although Chinese in origin, the people of Taiwan were under Dutch colonial rule (in the mid-seventeenth century) and later (for fifty years from the late nineteenth century) under Japanese colonial rule. Even though migration from the Chinese mainland still has an important influence on the cultural identity of the people of Taiwan, the Taiwanese ethos represents a mixture of traditional Chinese culture and modern cultural traits fostered by the particular nature of Taiwanese society and the changes it has experienced in the past. For example, the oldest generation in Taiwan were born and raised in a Japanese colony (1895-1945) and were thus greatly influenced by Japanese culture. Even now, some older people still speak Japanese, watch Japanese soap operas on the television, and sing Japanese songs. During five decades of colonization, the Japanese brought to Taiwan fundamental changes, not only to the island's economy, but in politics and other social institutions as well (Hsu, 1991:19).

Taiwan's economic growth since 1960 has been impressive. There is no need to go into detail here about Taiwan's economic development; instead, a few examples will suffice to illustrate what has been described as an "economic miracle". In the past two decades, Taiwan has retained its high rate of economic growth, and as a consequence has won the title of one of "Asia's Four Dragons". Furthermore, along with rapid economic growth, Taiwan has also created a more distribution of income, a goal that most countries with rapid economic growth have attempted but found difficult to achieve (Hsu, 1991:21).

In Taiwan, there is a basic distinction between the so-called “Taiwanese” (*pen-sheng jen*), including Minnan and Hakka, and the “mainlanders” (*wai-sheng jen*) (March, 2000). Taiwan’s population is made up of four major ethnic groups: the Aborigines, two groups of Taiwanese Chinese, and Mainland Chinese (Copper, 1999; Knapp, 1980). Today the proportionate sizes of these groups are: Mainlanders, about 14 per cent; Taiwanese, slightly more than 84 per cent (with the Hakkas accounting for 10 to 15 per cent of this group); and Aborigines, slightly less than 2 per cent (MOE, 2001).

### *Aborigines*

The Aborigines are the island’s original inhabitants. They are generally considered to have migrated from Southeast Asia or South China several millennia ago, though some tribes in the northern part of the island might have come from north China and/or Japan. They are divided into nine major tribes. The languages of the Aborigines resemble Bahasa (the language spoken in Indonesia and Malaysia) in structure and vocabulary. Aboriginal culture for the most part originated in Southeast Asia. Most of the Aborigines are mountain Aborigines.

Although the Aboriginal population is now said to be “acculturated”, i.e. they know the national language and both Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese customs, and living under national laws and political control -- most still reside in the less-populated areas, especially the mountains. Many also keep their tribal ways. There are many similarities, in fact, between Taiwan’s Aborigines and the American Indians (Cooper, 1999).

### *Taiwanese*

Early Chinese migrants to Taiwan hailed mainly from Fukien and Kwangtung (Canton) provinces. These early arrivals are now called “Taiwanese” or sometimes “native Taiwanese”. However, there are two distinct groups of Taiwanese: *seom Hakkas* and *Ke Chia Jen* (literally, “guests” in Taiwan from the time before the first Fukienese arrived).

The early Chinese who emigrated to Taiwan did so mostly to escape poverty and the difficult conditions at home and because of the prospects for a better life in Taiwan. Most emigrated for the same reasons that Europeans left for America at the same time, except that few, if any, went to Taiwan because of religious persecution. Like the Europeans who flocked to the New World, most Chinese who settled in Taiwan severed their ties with their homeland.

### *Mainland Chinese*

In 1949, when the Communists defeated Nationalist Chinese armies on the Mainland and assumed political control of China, another wave of more than 1.5 million Chinese immigrants arrived in Taiwan (Cooper, 1999, Hughes, 1997). Because they hailed from various parts of China, they were known simply as Mainlanders or *Wai Seng Jen* (“out-side-province people”). Most, however, came from China’s coastal provinces, and more came from the south than the north.

Unlike the Taiwanese, with their ties to their homeland, the Mainland Chinese who fled Taiwan in 1949 hoped that the Nationalist Chinese military could regroup and counterattack, and that Mainland China could be liberated from the Communists after

which they would return home. But over time their attitude changed, and most Mainlanders began to call Taiwan their home and give up any serious hope of returning to China permanently. This resignation was at first more evident among younger and more successful Mainlanders, but years of separation and Taiwan's economic success meant that by the 1970s and 1980s this was true of almost all Mainlanders (Yang, 1997). Furthermore, by the mid-1980s more than half of the Mainland Chinese population of Taiwan was born on the island, and of the total population of the Republic of China, less than 6 per cent were born in China. As a result, it seemed that, at least as reflected in Taiwan's demographics, ties between Taiwan and China were weakening. Beginning in the 1980s, however, this trend changed as people from Taiwan began visiting China in large numbers and economic links blossomed. Many Chinese residents of Taiwan, both Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese, began to think differently about Taiwan's links with China (March, 2000).

- Western Values

While sharing much of the traditional historical culture of the Chinese, both Chinese and Taiwanese have experienced increasing exposure to Western culture and practices. After World War II, the KMT "government" took over Taiwan (Weller, 1999) and at the same time Taiwan received the support of the United States. The education system in Taiwan is based on the American model. Most graduates want to go to the USA to pursue their higher degrees because they are very familiar with American culture (see Table 3.1). Furthermore, in Taiwan students learn English from the age of 12. As the content of English courses comes mainly from the USA, the English that is understood and spoken in Taiwan is American English. Therefore, the Taiwanese have developed very differently from their counterparts in China,

having uprooted themselves from Chinese soil and having directly absorbed Western culture.

However, in an East Asian context, collective and interdependent behaviour is valued in Taiwan. The emphasis is on being in harmony with nature, developing close social relationships, on cooperation rather than competition and interdependence (see Merriam and Mohamad, 2000). A number of writers have compared Western and East Asian cultural values (see Fan, 2000). In the case of Taiwan, the challenge is to understand the combined influence of both sets of values. As Weller (1999) observes, the local and relatively amorphous collections of social capital do not simply reproduce Western civil values; their roots lie elsewhere. Yet these values can still provide a strong impetus toward democratisation, as the case of Taiwan shows. The legacy of these factors is ambiguous, since although Taiwan has demonstrated the possibility of Chinese democracy, the crucial role of the state has not been forgotten.

### *3.2.3 Summary*

Culture is not static but dynamic. Cultural values are changing all the time, and they go hand in hand with economic and social changes. Nevertheless, periods of rapid expansion in the so-called “tiger economies” of the Pacific Rim, including Taiwan, have encouraged comparisons of Western educational systems with those found in East Asia (Rogers, 1998). Such a comparison can help us to understand more clearly the impact on Taiwan of rapid industrialisation during the 1970s and 1980s, and the consequent spread of Western life-styles, particularly among the college-educated middle class and among students who decide to study abroad.



### 3.3 Taiwanese Students Abroad

Most governments believe that higher education increases labour productivity and leads to higher long-term economic growth, and it does so because graduates possess the values and capabilities that are needed by increasingly knowledge-based economies (King, 1995). Studying overseas has a long history in Taiwan (e.g. Fong and Peskin, 1969; Kang, 1972). Driven by limited academic opportunities in Taiwan itself and attracted by the possibility of access to foreign universities, undergraduates and (increasingly) postgraduates have gone abroad in search of academic excellence, because the majority of Taiwanese students believe that graduates enjoy longer and better-paid employment.

Most international students from Taiwan study in a small number of host countries (Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996; Zikopoulos, 1994; Unesco, 1992). Table 3.1 lists the top ten countries for Taiwanese students studying abroad from 1996 to 2000. It shows that the UK was the second most popular country of destination from 1999. This gives added weight to the need to undertake research into Taiwanese students' cross-cultural adjustment in the UK, as most previous research has been conducted among Taiwanese students in the USA (e.g. Ying and Liese, 1994, 1991; Klein et al., 1980).

**TABLE 3.1: Taiwanese Students Studying Abroad: The Top 10 Countries of Destination (1996-2000)**

		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
1	USA	32,702	30,487	30,855	31,043	29,234
2	AUSTRALIA	9,684	7,497	6,411	5,885	5,996
3	UK	5,095	6,414	6,173	6,553	8,576
4	JAPAN	5,766	5,500	5,171	5,067	5,647
5	GERMANY	1,368	1,372	1,442	1,443	1,530
6	CANADA	5,718	580	647	733	877
7	SOUTH AFRICA	408	514	633	500	520
8	FRANCE	571	NA	590	1,500	1,500
9	PHILIPPINES	460	500	550	500	500
10	NEW ZEALAND	NA	632	498	459	NA

Source: Ministry of Education, R.O.C., website ([www.edu.tw](http://www.edu.tw))

### *3.3.1 Studying Abroad in the UK*

Universities in the UK are facing huge changes in their environment, especially in terms of the supply of funding and the level of demand for their courses (Naudé and Ivy, 1999; Shattock et al., 1989). Furthermore, overseas students are having a significant impact upon the economies of higher education institutions. For example, in the UK, in terms of the benefit to institutions themselves, on average 5.1 per cent of the income of “old” universities and 2.2 per cent of the income of “new” universities depends on international students (McNamara and Harris, 1997; DTI, 1995). There are other benefits arising from international student provision, such as the promotion of the English language and culture, and fostering understanding between races. Accordingly, it is hardly surprising that the UK government is keen to promote the export of educational services as a means of enhancing economic growth.

An increasing number of Taiwanese students study in the UK (MOE, 2001). The present research found that Taiwanese postgraduate students gave several reasons for studying in the UK, including the prestige conferred by a foreign degree, the desire to know more about a foreign culture and sponsorship or scholarship from the Taiwan government for higher education.

The UK is one of the top three host countries for international education (Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996; Zikopoulos, 1994). It has a more even distribution of source countries of international students, but Malaysia and Hong Kong represent the top two sources. Recently, the UK has become a popular country where more and more Taiwanese students choose to learn “formal English”, with an elegant and beautiful accent, according to WEG counselors.

### *3.3.2 The Characteristics of Taiwanese Students*

Ho (1991) concludes that China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea are referred to as “Confucian-heritage” cultures (CHC). Biggs (1996) states: “Typically, CHC classes are large, in excess of 40 and over, and appear to Western observers as highly authoritarian: teaching methods are mostly expository, sharply focused on preparation for external examinations” (p.46) Furthermore, others (Murphy, 1987; Samuelowicz, 1987) frequently complain that Asian students are prone to use rote-based, low-level, cognitive strategies, both in their own culture and overseas (e.g., in Australisan tertiary institutions). The characteristics of Taiwanese students are not necessarily unique to those students; they may apply to students from other East Asian countries, including China (Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996). However, certain core characteristics of Taiwanese students have been identified:

- **A Preference for Rote Learning**

There is still a strong belief among academics in America, the UK and Australia that East Asian (including Taiwanese) students are more prone to rely on rote learning than are their Western peers (Ballard and Clanchy, 1984; Biggs, 1989, 1990; Samuelowicz, 1987; Watkins, Reghi and Astilla, 1991), as confirmed by the apparently successful performance of Asian students. That is, it is claimed that Asian students utilise a surface approach to learning characterised by attempting to memorise enough isolated facts and fragments of arguments to pass examinations (Samuelowicz, 1987). The impression is given that Asian students in general learn by reproducing and are less able to apply their knowledge to practical situations (Watkins, Reghi and Astilla, 1991).

All of these descriptions of East Asian students may be little better than anecdotal, and we should certainly question the validity of the “Asian learner” stereotype. According to some studies (e.g. Kember and Gow, 1989), there is little difference between Asian students and students from Australia and Hong Kong. Furthermore, Hong Kong students exhibit aspects of both the deep and surface approach. Therefore, such students can be characterised by the sequence “understand-memorise-understand-memorise”. Similar opinions are expressed by Biggs (1989, 1990), whose investigations show no support for the usual Asian stereotype. He points out that much of the research evidence comes from Hong Kong and Singapore, both thriving highly modernised cities with a legacy of British educational systems and traditional Chinese values.

According to Analects II.15 (Quote from Lee, 1996:34):

“Confucius himself saw learning as deep: ‘Seeing knowledge without thinking is labour lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous’...”

As education in the Confucian tradition is considered important for its intrinsic value, I may argue that the learning would incline towards the deep approach rather than the surface approach or rote learning. At the postgraduate level, it is required that postgraduate students think independently rather than learn by rote learn. Nevertheless, as Marton et al. (1996) state “While rote learning is regarded as being characterised by mechanical memorisation in the West, such a notion was found not to describe learning practices associated with the repetition in the Chinese culture adequately” (p.82).

- **An Excessive Regard for Authority**

Researchers (e.g. Murphy, 1987; Biggs, 1990; Watkins et al., 1991) also comment on what they see as Asian students' excessive regard for the authority of their teachers, and hence their reluctance to question the teachers' opinions and think for themselves (Smith, 1999). In Taiwan, the teacher-student relationship begins with the instructor-learner relationship, which is initially based on academic relations, but then develops to a deeper, sustained teacher-student relationship. In the process of the development of this kind of relationship, teachers in Taiwan gain much respect and are regarded ultimately as consultants, even parents. Thus, different cultural role expectations and attitudes can create misunderstanding in inter-cultural situations. International students may therefore be described as over-demanding and over-dependent on their teachers. This phenomenon can also be found in other East Asian countries, for example, in Korea (Choi, 1997).

Thus some international postgraduate students (e.g., those from East Asia) may come from an environment where they are not allowed to criticise teachers. Some TPSs (Chu, 1998) would be embarrassed if they made a mistake. Therefore, it is not surprising that they find it hard to put forward their own ideas. Obviously, this would clearly pose an issue as engagement with research arguments and debates is an essential part of postgraduate level work (Wisker, 1999:96). In my case, I did try to express my ideas during the period of my MA and Ph.D. study, even though at first I did so passively. Nevertheless, I am getting more comfortable with speaking about my own ideas. I realise that at postgraduate level, students are required to

demonstrate what they have learnt. I have to show what I understand and how my knowledge is constructed.

- **Collectivism (Interdependence)**

Different societies can be characterised by their location on the individualism/collectivism cultural dimension (Hofstede, 1980). It is suggested that Asian culture tends towards collectivism (interdependence). Authors such as Weisz et al (1984) and Cross (1995) state that individuals with an interdependent self-construal, and who prefer close alignment or harmony with others, attempt to adjust to social situations through strategies that focus on changing the self rather than changing the situation. Examples of these indirect strategies include reinterpreting a situation so as to derive meaning from it, accepting the situation and changing one's own expectations or desires, or vicariously experiencing control by closely identifying with a more powerful other (Cross, 1995; Kurman and Sriram, 1997). Asian students have been described by Bullivant (1988) as "exemplary students, quiet, diligent and highly motivated".

I found that "culture" plays a vital role. In Taiwan, in order to avoid conflict situations, I always keep silent no matter how I feel. After I arrived England, I was required to express my ideas with my own voice. Finding my voice was as one of my "culture shocks". I wondered whether I would lose my voice again or not after I returned to Taiwan. However, according to my husband, I had changed in some ways already. I reflected on the learning process of my own experience. I found that I was happy to be myself with my own voice. It was not necessary for me to be so concerned regarding other people's thoughts of me. I like what I am and respect

myself. As I realise my weakness and strength, I have more confidence in myself. While much of the discussion on East Asia culture points to collectivism, however, there is a neglect of “individualism” or “individuality” in the East Asian tradition. I am so glad to find my “self”, as self is usually undermined by myself.

- **The Strategic Use of Effort**

The Taiwanese place a particularly strong emphasis on academic, educational success. The majority of Taiwanese students to believe that they stand a better chance of entering their chosen careers if they obtain a degree. Unlike students from the USA and UK, who place a greater emphasis on ability as a cause of academic attainment, Asian students see effort as equally important to both success and failure (Hau and Salili, 1996; Rogers, 1998; Salili, 1995; Yan and Gaier, 1994). According to the research evidence (Rogers, 1998; Triandis, 1995; Salili, 1995), Western students may assume that without a given level of ability no amount of effort will be sufficient. The collectivist East Asian students, however, are more likely to believe that adding sufficient effort will ultimately bring rewards. Consequently, it seems that the Taiwanese are more oriented to learning goals and are less concerned with ability or ego goals (Ames, 1992).

Confucian philosophy advocates effort, hard work and endurance (Robertson, 2000; Yeung & Tung, 1996; Yang, 1986). The significance of education stands out in the Confucian tradition, which Taiwan. With achievement motivations, the majority of Taiwanese students are willing to spend most of their free time in the pursuit of study: for the Confucian, education and learning are always associated with effort.

However, my personal experience and observation suggest that TPSs will use any strategy, be it rote memorising lots of facts or understanding basic principles, that they perceive with would maximise their chances of academic success. I always wish I would “study smart” rather than “study hard”. However, I found that I always “study hard”, as “study hard” might make me “smart”.

- **Other Factors**

Nowadays, in Taiwan, educated women may no longer have a more difficult cultural transition than their male counterparts (Ying, 1990, 1992; Ying and Liese, 1994). However, the gender issue can not be avoided in this study. Even though I thought that to pursue a further degree was about seeking personal development, whether you were male or female, it is very clear now that I was too naïve. Without my husband’s continuous support and encouragement, it would have been impossible for me to pursue my career without inviting some degree of animosity. Although the Taiwanese regard education as beneficial for everybody, however, in this case, it was not necessary for a married woman, a daughter in law. For women, pursuing a further degree has been described as a feminist experience and a “struggle” for autonomy and self-determination (Chiang, 1999). Do other married female TPSs face the same situation? Of course, married men may also experience high pressure while they study abroad.

In terms of financial consideration, universities and other higher education institutions in England charge fees to “overseas” students at a higher rate than those for “home” (meaning UK and EU) students (DfEE, 2000). Even though it is unclear whether the majority of overseas Taiwanese students come from middle- or upper-middle-class



backgrounds, the present researcher's own experience as a consultant at WEG (World Education Group) suggests that most students are financially well prepared before they come to the UK.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The research literature (e.g. Rogers, 1998; Ying and Liese, 1994) suggests that there are some common issues of cross-cultural adjustment. The literature review (Chapter 2) identifies a number of adjustment patterns, phases and styles. The problems encountered by sojourners are similar (e.g. culture shock) irrespective of the countries of origin and destination. However, there are also noteworthy differences. That is, different cultures emerge from different regions. Taiwan is a country located in East Asia and belongs to the Confucian Heritage cultures (Ho, 1991; Biggs, 1996). This chapter has provided a brief introduction to the Taiwanese context and the background of Taiwanese students. Clearly, the Taiwanese cannot be divided from the Chinese. Like Hong Kong and Singapore, Taiwan is rooted in Chinese culture. Unavoidably, Taiwanese society is built to a large extent on traditional Chinese beliefs. However, due its unique economic conditions, political status and other factors that distinguish it from both China and Western countries, Taiwan has developed its own identity.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology, the specific research methods, and coding processes employed in this study. Methodology is a way of thinking about and studying social reality. Research methods are a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analysing data. Coding refers to the analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualised and integrated to form theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It is to be hoped that this study will help to bridge the gap between conceptual research and cross-cultural adjustment (CCA). In this sense, the current chapter provides a means of constructing a dialogue between theory and practice. Accordingly, this chapter illustrates how the grounded theory methodology, suitably modified, can be used to develop theory about the nature of TPSs CCA in the follows.

The nature of the research questions, the type of data necessary for generating answers to the main research objectives, and the wider practical considerations of feasibility, time and resources were the main issues which influenced the design of the research (Blaikie, 2000; Blaxter et al., 1996). The paucity of prior theoretical and empirical research on this topic necessitated entering the field to observe overseas students' own efforts as a means of advancing our understanding of the adjustment of cross-cultural learning (Volet and Ang, 1998; Choi, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Ying and Liese, 1994; Ogbu, 1992). Accordingly, the general approach of this study is interpretative in character, with qualitative research methods being employed to explore and explain the central research questions. The study employs many of principles of the grounded theory approach for studying cross-cultural adjustment and developing theoretical insights. Taiwan has been selected as

a representative parent culture in order to add an East Asia (Taiwan) dimension to the understanding of cross-cultural learning.

#### **4.2 Justification of the Research Paradigms and Methods**

The research design incorporates my philosophy regarding the conduct of research. This section first focuses on the selection of research paradigms and methods for the study to ensure that it is “doing the right thing”. A paradigm is a general perspective or way of thinking that reflects fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the nature of research issues. Different paradigms are grounded in fundamentally different assumptions and produce markedly different ways of approaching the building of theory (Dansereau et al., 1999; Fry and Smith, 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989; Pentland, 1999; Gioia and Pitre, 1990). As Creswell (1994: 1) explains:

*“Paradigms in the human and social sciences help us understand phenomena: They advance assumptions about the social world, how science should be conducted, and what constitutes legitimate problems, solutions, and criteria of proof. As such, paradigms encompass both theories and methods.”*

The selection of an appropriate paradigm depends on the various fundamental assumptions which arise from different philosophical views concerning, for example, the nature of the researched phenomena (ontology), the nature of knowledge about those phenomena (epistemology), and the nature of ways of studying those phenomena (methodology) (Blaikie, 2000; Gioia and Pitre, 1990). Burrell and Morgan (1979) organise these viewpoints along the subjective-objective and regulation-radical change dimensions, which yields a matrix comprising four different research paradigms: the radical humanist, radical structuralist, interpretivist and functionalist. At the same time, a significant proportion of social-science research is

based on the distinction between qualitative and quantitative paradigms. A study must therefore choose a quantitative paradigm, a qualitative paradigm, or a mixed paradigm as the first step in conducting research.

#### *4.2.1 Qualitative versus Quantitative Research*

A qualitative study, as Creswell (1994:1-2) notes, is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting the detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. A quantitative study is an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalisation of the theory holds true. Triangulation is the combination of qualitative and quantitative paradigms in the study of the same phenomenon (Blaikie, 2000; Denzin, 1978).

Epistemology and methodology are the most frequently cited criteria in the selection of paradigms. In simple terms, epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge, or of how we come to know. Methodology is also concerned with how we come to know, but is much more practical in nature. Methodology is focused on the specific ways -- the methods -- that we can use to try to understand our world. Epistemology and methodology are intimately related: the former involves the philosophy of how we come to know the world and the latter involves the practice (Blaikie, 2000). Creswell (1994) presents the assumptions of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, based on ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological

approaches (see Table 4.1). The right-hand column of Table 4.1 shows the orientation of the present study in terms of these assumptions.

**Table 4.1: The Assumptions of Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigms**

Assumption	Question	Quantitative	Qualitative	• The Present Study
<i>Ontological assumption</i>	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is objective and singular, set apart from the researcher	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study	• The current study seeks to explore the adjustment process of cross-cultural learning. Previous studies cannot provide constructs which can be used to measure objectively and form the design of questionnaires or another instrument. Accordingly, the nature of the study is interpretive and reality is quite subjective.
<i>Epistemological assumption</i>	What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?	Researcher is independent of that being researched	Researcher interacts with that being researched	• The researcher cannot remain distant and independent of that being researched. Thus, in interviews, the researcher will unavoidably interact with informants to acquire in-depth qualitative data.
<i>Axiological assumption</i>	What is the role of values?	Value-free and unbiased	Value-laden and biased	• In this study, the researcher's values are involved in interpreting data, writing reports, and using personal language.
<i>Rhetorical assumption</i>	What is the language of research?	- Formal - Based on set definitions - Impersonal voice - Use of accepted quantitative words	- Informal - Evolving decisions - Personal voice - Accepted qualitative words	• Even if concepts are based on accepted definitions, the language will be personal and informal. We have to pay attention to examining the different concepts in different contexts.
<i>Methodological assumption</i>	What is the process of research?	- Deductive process - Cause and effect - Static design; categories isolated before study - Context-free - Generalisations leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding - Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability	- Inductive process - Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors - Emerging design; categories identified during research process - Context-bound - Patterns, theories developed for understanding - Accurate and reliable through verification	• No variables and hypotheses are chosen before the study begins. An inductive form of logic wherein categories are identified. The intent of the study is to explore patterns to enhance our understanding of the researched phenomena rather than to develop generalisations that contribute to theory and enable one to better predict, explain and understand phenomena.

Source: Adapted from Creswell (1994: 5)

The current study is an example of what Evered and Lewis (1981) describe as an “inquiry from the insight”. It aims to answer not only “what” questions but also the “why” and “how” questions concerning social phenomena. Accordingly, the study adopts a qualitative research perspective (Blaikie, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Gummesson, 1991). These characteristics belong to the phenomenological tradition, which requires me to enter the field of study with an open mind to explore, interpret and understand the nature of CCA as these are described and explained by other researchers. Qualitative analysis is now recognised as the most appropriate approach in many studies (e.g. Bryman and Burgess, 1999; West and Pines, 1985). Because of the explorative and interpretive nature of this study, the qualitative paradigm is seen to fit the research situation. The application of the qualitative paradigm to student learning has already revolutionised our understanding of the learning process.

#### *4.2.2 Research Methods*

Having decided on the use of a qualitative paradigm, a decision had to be made about what specific methods should be used in seeking to understand the cross-cultural learning. In fact, there are many distinct methods that support the qualitative paradigm. For example, Tesch (1990) presents 28 approaches and classifies them according to the central interest of the investigation. In the present case, the selection of research methods for the qualitative inquiry was not an easy job, especially because of the time constraints during the research. Creswell (1998) helps by suggesting five particular traditions which are frequently used: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. As shown in Table 4.2, Creswell (1998) presents several dimensions of the distinction between the five traditions.

In fact, many authors call for a combination of research methods in order to improve the quality of research. The present researcher was determined to avoid the practice of what is considered as methodological monism, i.e. the insistence on using a single research method. This is not due to an inability to judge the advantages and disadvantages offered by different methodologies. Rather, all methods are valuable if applied appropriately. After much careful thought, I decided that a grounded theory approach should be adopted in the present research. Since it is currently unclear how adjustment occurs across individuals and across time, a grounded theory approach is an appropriate method for developing theoretical insights (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The cross-cultural learning domain presents a rich source of behavioural issues, which have not yet been understood (e.g. Shaw, 1990; Adler, 1983). In order to overcome this barrier, subjective interpretation and intervention are necessary. The distinctive strength of a grounded approach is its ability to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation. The approach itself seeks to build from data that are kept deliberately raw, thus allowing real opportunities to gain insights before the filters of existing theories obscure the clues.

**Table 4.2: Dimensions for Comparing Five Research Traditions in Qualitative Research**

Dimension	Biography	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Focus	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing and interpreting a cultural and social group	Developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases
Discipline origin	- Anthropology - Literature - History - Psychology - Sociology	- Philosophy - Sociology - Psychology	Sociology	- Cultural anthropology - Sociology	Political science Sociology Urban studies Other social sciences
Data collection	Primarily interviews and documents	Long interviews with up to 10 people	Interviews with 20-30 individuals to saturate categories and detail a theory	Primarily observations and interviews with artifacts during extended time in the field (e.g. six months to a year)	Multiple sources -- documents, archival records, interviews, observation, physical artifacts
Data analysis	- Stories - Epiphanies - Historical content	- Statements - Meanings - Meaning themes - General description of experience	Open coding Axial coding Selective coding Conditional matrix	- Description - Analysis - Interpretation	- Description - Themes - Assertions
Narrative form	Detailed picture of an individual's life	Description of the essence of the experience	Theory or theoretical model	Description of the cultural behaviour of a group or an individual	In-depth study of case or cases

Source: Creswell (1998: 65)

Of the different methodologies available for inductive theory, summarised in Table 4.2, the grounded theory methodology was chosen for the following reasons:

- It emphasises the need for me to be immersed in the data, and the need to consciously guard against imposing a theory in a related substantive area that does not actually match the patterns in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
- It does not require me to suspend or ignore all pre-existing theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, it encourages the development and enriching of grounded theories by drawing upon broad theoretical approaches (Glaser, 1978)
- It uses qualitative and unstructured data that represent my subjective understanding of the nature of TPSs' CCA (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).



- It provides systematic coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) designed to build theory from data.

Even though grounded theory primarily involves inductive (ground up) theory building, it also promotes a deductive testing of emerging codes and relationships through the use of the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). By means of the grounded theory approach, I can produce “conceptually dense” theories that consist of relationships among concepts representing “patterns of action and interaction between and among various types of social units” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278).

Another issue that emerges is the role of theoretical sensitivity. Strauss and Corbin (1990:46) define theoretical sensitivity as “the ability to recognise what is important in data and to give it meaning” by drawing on the literature and personal experience, and by interacting with the data. Grounded theory does not view inductive theory building as implying that researchers need to flush out their pre-existing theoretical conceptions or knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation. In fact, in this study, the background that I bring to the interactions with data often leads to creative and important insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:43-44). However, as Sarker et al. (2001) argue, and I agree, as a grounded theory researcher, I am required to be self reflective so as to be wary of potential biases resulting from my backgrounds, and rigorously validate categories and hypotheses emerging as a result of my theoretical sensitivity.

### 4.3 Research Site Selection

A critical decision at this stage of the research was the choice of the most suitable context for investigation. Choosing an appropriate site to study and forge a relationship with its participants is a key issue for all qualitative inquiries. “Taiwanese students (from a parent culture) studying in the UK (in a host culture)” was selected as the focal context for conducting fieldwork for the following reasons:

(1) As discussed in Chapter 1, the major focus of this study is on a non-Western (in this case, East Asia-Taiwan) dimension in contrast to a Western dimension of cross-cultural learning. Embedded in the qualitative paradigm, the research methodology chosen here is based on particular view about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. Thus, in interviews, the researcher sought to interact with informants to acquire in-depth qualitative data. It was felt that the use of my native languages (both Taiwanese and Chinese) would be practical and would help to maintain the research quality. According to some researchers (e.g. Senyshyn, Warford and Zhan, 2000), due to language and cultural barriers, the adjustment experience of international students may be difficult to assess. By choosing Taiwanese postgraduate students as key informants, I hoped to acquire more meaningful results. Moreover, this choice would have practical advantages, since the researcher also comes from Taiwan.

(2) As also discussed in Chapter 1, Altbach et al. (1985: 23) estimate that “perhaps 70% of the research uses North American data and is by scholars in North America”. What is more, only a few studies have focused on the transition experiences of Taiwanese postgraduate students in Britain or aspects of their adjustment, even

though the number of postgraduate students from Taiwan in the UK has been steadily increasing. Therefore, despite the extensive literature on international students' adjustment, the notion of the foreign graduate student in Britain as an adult learner remains unexplored.

(3) The British Government is aiming to encourage more international students to study in the UK. In 1999 the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, launched an initiative to achieve this specific objective (Blair, 1999). Thus, it is of great contemporary interest to study the CCA of Taiwanese postgraduate students in England (for further details see Chapter 3).

(4) I had informal interviews with several representatives and members of staff from British universities in the period between March and December 1999. The results revealed some striking differences between students from Western educational cultures and non-English speaking students from Taiwan cultures. These prior interviews ensured that the key research issue was sensible and researchable.

#### **4.4 Procedures and Theoretical Constructure**

Grounded theory served as both the theoretical structure and the basis of the research design (see Harchar and Hyle, 1996; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, when the research commenced, I was faced with a number of crucial questions: "How can I make sense out of this material?" "How can I make sure that my data and interpretation are valid and reliable?" "How should I do the analysis of the situation?" "How do I pull all of my analysis together to create? do I break through the inevitable biases, prejudices and stereotypical perspectives that I

bring a concise theoretical formulation of the area under study?” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 7).

Researchers (Strauss and Corbin; 1990; Glaser, 1978) state that sources of theoretical sensitivity may arise from professional experience, personal experience, the idea of the literature review and finding from analytic process. I am a Taiwanese postgraduate student in England and have gained working experience as a consultant. In addition, as explained in Chapter 2, I gained an understanding of the theories of CCA proposed by other researchers. These experiences and sources helped me to maintain an attitude of skepticism. That is, my values, feelings and concerns became resources providing insights into my research findings. However, it was true that ideas (or “quick flashes of intuition”) did not come to me all the time, until I interacted with the data, thereby increasing my insight and understanding about a phenomenon.

In terms of data analysis, I followed the procedures for building grounded theories outlined by Glaser and Strauss(1967) and subsequently refined by them and by other scholars (Abramson and Mizrahi, 1994; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Martin and Turner, 1986; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Turner, 1981). Loose-structured, open-ended interviews served as the primary data collection strategy. At the heart of the grounded theory, there are three coding procedures that Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Following the transcription of the interviews, I subjected the data to three coding procedures: open, axial and selective.

- **Open Coding**

Open coding involves “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:61) in terms of properties and dimensions.

At the very beginning, it seemed hard to name categories. I had to be steeped in the data. Then I found some questions and answers were raised and sought as I conceptualised and compared the data. I found I developed my ability to aptly name categories and also to make my mind create free associations that seemed necessary for generating stimulating questions, and to come up with comparisons that led to discovery the natural of TPSs’ CCA.

Through open coding, three main categories emerged for the four dimensions from the data analysis. Open coding was used to reduce the data. The information was labeled, classified and named, and categories were developed in terms of their properties and dimensions, simultaneously and, at times, randomly. For example, in the early disorder labeled (S2) for the self-identity dimension, I classified the properties of the informants. I categorised their gender as “male” or “female”; their experience in the professional field as “just graduated” or “with working experience”; and their status as “single” or “married”. I then explored the different situations the students encountered while they were abroad. I tried to label phenomena, discover categories, name categories, develop categories in terms of their properties and dimensions, and then, finally, write the code notes. Memos and diagrams were used to keep track of the products of the analysis, and these grew in depth and degree of abstractness as I moved through the coding process. Some labeled categories were borrowed from the literature if the phenomena were similar; but some were labeled with new terms provided by the informants.

- **Axial Coding**

Axial coding refers to the analytic activity for “making connections between a category and its sub-categories” developed during open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 67). That is, reassembling fractured data by utilising “a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 96). During the process of axial coding, the relational and variational sampling technique is used, where data are sought depending on their ability to suggest relationships among a category and its sub-categories, or its ability to support or falsify a plausible relationship of a category with its subcategories (Sarker et al., 2001).

- **Selective Coding**

Selective coding involves the identification of the “core category” and linking the different categories to the core category using the paradigm model (consisting of conditions, context, strategies, and consequences). In creating a framework of CCA, I , according to Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) note, “.....must show the evolving nature of events by noting why and how action/interaction in the form of events, doing or happenings will change, stay the same, or regress; why there is progression of events or what enables continuity of a line of action/interaction, in the face of changing conditions, and with what consequences (p.144).”

Selective coding, the last analytic process, resulted in the development of a story line, the gist of the phenomenon under study. On the basis of these related concepts, a theory was developed which described the nature of cross-cultural adjustment. For example, when students study abroad, the increase of distance lost between host

country (England) and parent country (Taiwan) through their affection adjustment becomes a causal condition which ultimately leads to the subjective phenomena as reported by informants: unconscious anxiety and stress. In response to this situation, a strategy, sensitivity alert, is developed. This strategy is influenced by a particular contextual marker related to the causal condition – *distance lost* -- and the resulting phenomena. This contextual marker is *social support*. Finally, the strategy used by informants has one consequence: *emotional overload* (for details see Chapter 6, Section 6.3). The theoretical sampling strategy of discriminate sampling is used to select appropriate data. The weak connections between the categories can be inductively strengthened. Furthermore, the relationships that have already emerged can be deductively tested. In attempting to achieve the goals of axial and selective coding, I was forced to sort the codes, think of possible relationships among them, and refine the codes as well as the relationships among them.

- **Grounded Theory Approach Modifications**

Chapter 7 shows how change and movement can be incorporated in the theory of CCA. This study presents a framework for understanding how the perception of cultural diversity and the process of adjustment can tightly integrate conditions and consequences into the theory by linking them to a phenomenon: the nature and dynamics of CCA. However, there are still some remaining questions concerning the use of grounded theory. First, scholars have different viewpoints on the use of existing theory to guide the research. For example, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) approach to grounded theory allows the use of pre-existing ideas or a pre-existing framework to guide the research. This is also the view of Glaser (1992).

Secondly, the major concern here is whether to use a post hoc or a longitudinal research design. By using a post hoc research design, informants would be requested to recall the experience that occurred during the period of their study abroad if this was possible. The limits of memory recall mean that the information provided by informants might be distorted. Furthermore, only significant information flows could be recorded. The memories may be distorted to fit the view that makes a person most comfortable in the present. In longitudinal studies, respondents are questioned at different points in time, thus allowing the analysis of changes over that time period. On balance, a longitudinal research design is likely to produce more reliable data. For a junior researcher, as in the present case, this was a sensible starting point for developing the motivation required to tackle the generally unfamiliar and admittedly often difficult problems presented by longitudinal research.

Balancing the pros and cons of these approaches, and considering the pre-existing ideas or framework questions of this study, I decided that a two-stage research design was appropriate. At the first stage, a post hoc research design was employed to develop an idea or framework. The results of the first stage were then used to guide the second stage (longitudinal research design). From another perspective, the second stage can be deemed as a validation and elucidation of the procedure for the first stage. Increased rigour can be achieved by incorporating the advantages of both research designs. However, one technical problem must be mentioned here: the sampling problem. Based on the grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), the sampling procedure is named “theoretical sampling” and defined as:

“Data gathering driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on the concept of making comparison, whose



purpose is go to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to identify categories in terms of the properties and dimensions.” (p. 201)

Thus, sampling and analysis must occur sequentially with the ongoing analysis guiding data, and the number of informants un-decided at the beginning of the data collection. The focus of sampling changes according to the type of coding one is doing (open, axial or selective), and sampling continues until all categories are saturated, i.e. until no new or significant data emerge and categories are well developed in terms of properties and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 215). For a longitudinal research design with a time span of over one year, theoretical sampling may be unavailable. Since the second stage aims to validate and elucidate the findings in the first stage, the sampling problem is not a major issue. However, the selection of informants at the second stage should be done with extreme care. A sufficient number and breadth of informants are essential to ensure the quality of the research findings. As Pettigrew (1988) notes, given the limited number of cases which can usually be studied, it makes sense to choose cases such as extreme situations and polar types in which the process of interest is “transparently observable”. Thus, the goal of theoretical sampling in the second stage is to choose informants who are likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory from the first stage.

Figure 4.1 shows the research design of the current study.

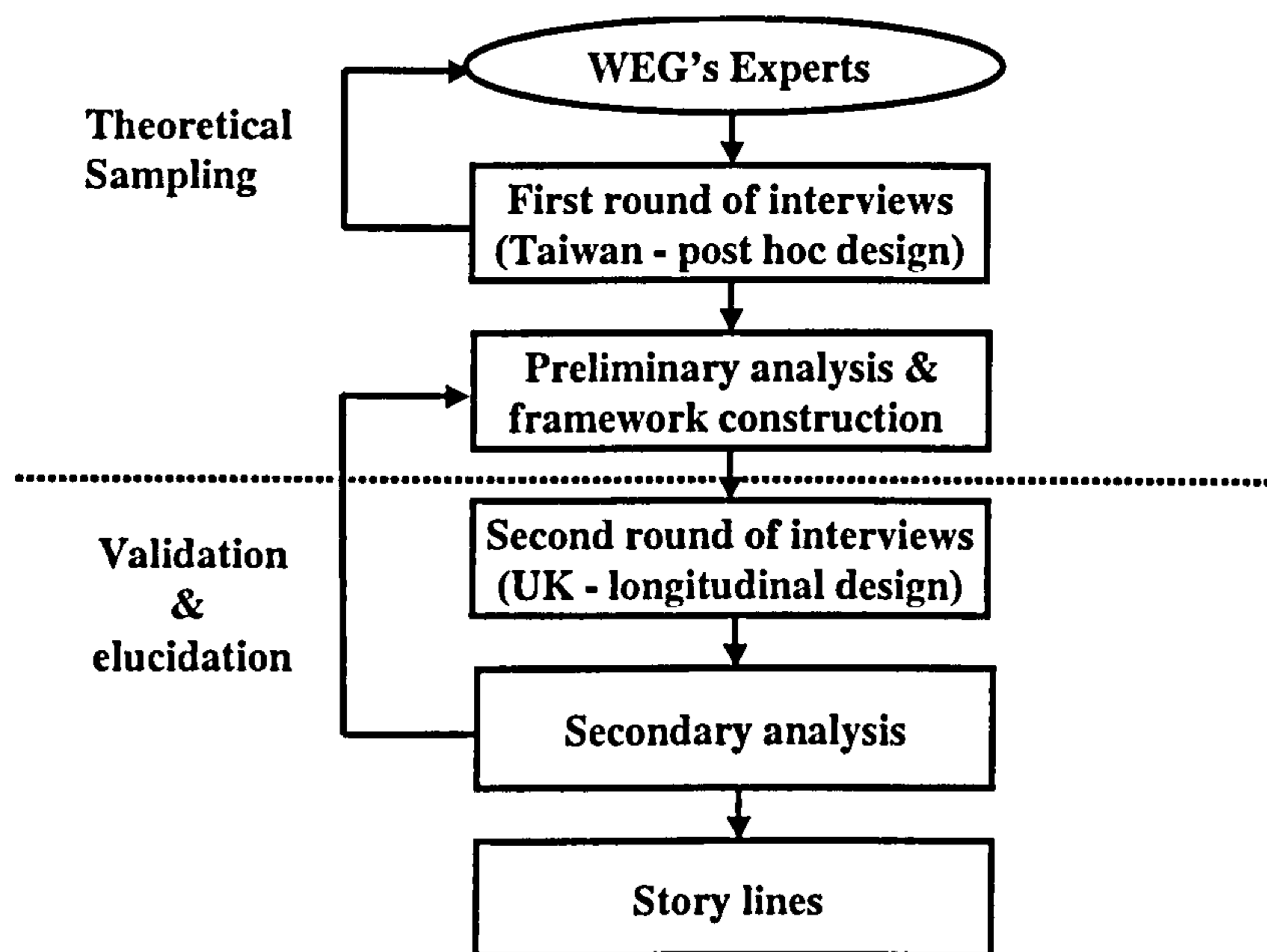


Figure 4.1: Research Design of the Current Study

- **Phase 1: Post Hoc Research Design**

In this phase, the research deliberately seeks to avoid imposing a theoretical framework of meanings and definitions, and entails exploration to understand the adjustment of Taiwanese postgraduate students in England. By means of theoretical sampling, I interviewed 16 informants who had already completed their MA or MSc programmes in England in one year. In this stage, data collection was undertaken by means of a retrospective interviewing approach. I investigated the students' self-reports on their learning processes after they had completed their studies. As already mentioned, the disadvantage of this method is that actual behaviour is not accessed, but instead only the students' ideas about their learning are taken into account. The reliability of retrospection depends on the memory of each informant. The data collected from the first round interviews underwent primary analysis with the aim of constructing a pre-idea. From June 1999 to September 1999, 16 informants (coded as A1 to A16) were interviewed in Taiwan. Their personal details are presented in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 The First-stage Informants: Personal Details**

Informant	Gender	Status	Age	English Score	MA/MSc Programme/University
A1	Male	Single	27	TOEFL 527	EBM, Warwick
A2	Female	Single	26	TOEFL 550	Science Education, York
A3	Female	Single	32	IELTS 6.5	TESOL+THRD, Warwick
A4	Female	Single	38	IELTS 5.5	Education Studies, Warwick
A5	Female	Single	25	IELTS 6.5	TESOL, Birmingham
A6	Female	Single	25	WELT BBB	THRD+Translation Studies, Warwick
A7	Male	Single	27	IELTS 6.0	EBM, Warwick + Management Learning, Lancaster
A8	Male	Married	40	TOEFL 593	TESOL, Warwick
A9	Male	Single	27	TOEFL 570	EBM+THRD, Warwick
A10	Male	Married	32	TOEFL 547	EBM, Warwick
A11	Female	Married	33	WELT ACB	EBM, Warwick
A12	Male	Married	36	TOEFL 547	EBM, Warwick
A13	Male	Single	31	TOEFL 577	EBM, Warwick
A14	Female	Single	28	IELTS 6.0	Communication Studies, Leeds
A15	Male	Married	33	IELTS 6.5	EBM, Warwick
A16	Female	Married	32	IELTS 5.5	Educational Studies, Warwick

In the first stage interview, following theoretical sampling, I carried out the first interview of an informant (male). Formal data analysis started after the data collection had been completed. I found that some questions emerged. Then, I interviewed the second informant (female) and made comparison with the first informant' data analysis. Then, the third interview followed. In the eighth interview, I interviewed a married informant in order to make comparison with the single informants. When I finished the twelfth interview, I found there were no new ideas emerging. However, at that time, I thought I should continue interviewing to confirm that saturation had been reached. I did not stop collecting data until the sixteenth interview.

- **Phase 2: Longitudinal Research Design**

The design of the data collection on a longitudinal basis enabled me to explore the relationships between the chosen phenomena in relation to the past, the present and the emerging future. That is, the study collected data from the same interviewees at different times during their periods of study. I contacted the 19 informants in March

1999 at the British Culture and Education exhibition in Taiwan. At this time, I was working as a counsellor at WEG. This job facilitated the interaction between the informants and the researcher. From August 1999 to September 2000, 19 informants were interviewed periodically in the UK and via e-mail. This period covered almost all the stages of study abroad, including the initiation, start, middle, end and post-study stages. The longitudinal focus allowed me to study the key activities and decisions that occurred during the study period and increased the reliability of the study.

The second phase of data collection focused on the interaction between the students' adaptive behaviour and the learning process, and investigated the influences on the adaptive process of its cultural context. For obvious reasons, it was impossible to observe all the informants during their studies simultaneously. In this case, data collection by means of e-mail and telephone contact also proved to be very convenient and revealing. The data collection continued until the informants finished their formal programmes (in or about August 2000). According to the responses from informants, I played the roles of friend, family-member and counsellor. Furthermore, I developed and maintained good relationships with most of the informants. Some of the informants have kept in touch with me since the research was completed. The data analysis also continued as the data were collected. At this stage, I achieved validation and elucidation of the key aspects of the interpretation of the data and categories. Furthermore, I had further interviews with some of the informants in the second stage, from November 2000 to February 2001, when I returned to Taiwan. This provided a valuable opportunity to re-examine the findings of the research.

The 19 informants in this stage were coded as B1 to B19. Their personal details are presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 The Second-stage Informants: Personal Details**

Informant	Gender	Status	Age	English Score	MA/MSc Programme/University
B1	Female	Married	34	WELT BBB	Mathematics Education, Warwick
B2	Male	Single	30	TOEFL 517	Mathematics & Finance, Warwick
B3	Female	Single	25	TOEFL 600	IPE, Warwick
B4	Female	Single	25	IELTS 6.5	IR, Warwick
B5	Female	Single	30	WELT BBB	THRD, Warwick
B6	Female	Married	35	IELTS 6.0	IR, Keele
B7	Female	Married	32	WELT BCA	Computer Science, Middlesex
B8	Female	Single	27	IELTS 6.0	MBA, Canterbury, Kent
B9	Male	Married	35	ITELS 6.0	EBM, Warwick
B10	Female	Single	30	WELT CCC	International Management, Oxford Brookes
B11	Female	Single	28	TOEFL 587	TESOL, Birmingham
B12	Female	Single	24	IELTS 6.0	Marketing, Birmingham
B13	Female	Single	24	WELT BBA	Translation Studies, Warwick
B14	Male	Single	26	IELTS 7.0	Communication Studies, Leeds
B15	Female	Single	34	IELTS 6.0	TESOL, Nottingham
B16	Male	Single	27	TOEFL 577	Economics & Finance, Warwick
B17	Male	Single	34	WELT BBA	MBA, Birmingham
B18	Male	Single	27	WELT BBA	Economics & Finance, Warwick
B19	Female	Single	35	IELTS 5.5	Marketing, Birmingham

There were 42 potential informants at the beginning of the second-stage data collection. However, during the period of data collection, some of them went missing and some of them did not make a significant difference to make comparisons with other informants. As a result, only 19 informants were interviewed.

### Sampling

As mentioned in previous section, the sampling procedure for grounded theory is referred to as “theoretical sampling”, but for a longitudinal research design with a time span of over one year, theoretical sampling may be unavailable. The research requires good cooperation with informants for at least one year. Accordingly, the expert sampling strategy was chosen for this study in order to select appropriate informants. Counsellors of the World Education Group (WEG) helped to select qualified informants. WEG helps students in Taiwan to apply for admission to

universities in the England. It has three offices in Taiwan for six British universities: Warwick, Birmingham, Leeds, Oxford Brookes, Leicester and Huddersfield. Counsellors provide their professional knowledge to help applicants choose a university and to help them develop their plans. Accordingly, the counsellors were able to suggest students who were suitable and willing to be involved in this research project.

However, this approach is not without its problems, since it inevitably limits the population and sampling range. There is bound to be some degree of bias by counsellors in their nomination of informants. For example, they may choose only those informants with whom they are already familiar. The quality of the list of informants was beyond the control of the researcher.

### **Interview Methodology**

In order to explore and improve the theory building from the very first stage (the Taiwanese postgraduate students' acculturation process in England), in the second stage the study employed observation and interview methods to collect the data. The study followed the interview process suggested by Pareek and Rao (1980). Before each interview, the researcher compiled a list of questions on the informant's educational background, the subject of study abroad in general, and the informant's own personal perceptions.

The interviews were unstructured, with only a standard set of questions that were designed to help initiate and guide the interview process. Some typical questions are as follows:

- When did you start to plan to study abroad?
- What/who influenced your decision to come to the UK?
- What expectations did you have before coming to this country and this University?
- What are the most interesting experiences that you have had since arriving here?
- Have you encountered any difficulties with your professors, your academic programme or your sojourn-life experience?

The subjects discussed invariably stretched beyond these initial inquiries. In this way, some new questions emerged which reached to the interviewees' innermost feelings. Informants were encouraged to express themselves through their own experiences and terminology. All interviews were tape-recorded, and copious notes were taken during the interviews. Additional observations were noted immediately after each interview was completed.

The main fieldwork was conducted in both Taiwan and England, with unstructured interviews conducted with informants. In order to provide a general and holistic perspective, I formally interviewed 16 informants (8 males, 8 females; 10 single, 6 married) in Taiwan in the first stage and 19 informants (7 males, 12 females; 15 single, 4 married) in the UK in the second stage. The range of interviewees covered a variety of ages and postgraduate programmes.

In the second stage, observations of informants' daily lives (via e-mail and telephone) and their interactions with other people (e.g. in cooking, at parties and in activities on campus) were also conducted. As Eisenhardt (1989) states, theory-building researchers typically combine multiple data collection methods. Interviews,

observations and archival sources are particularly common. In this research, the field notes from the observations were used to verify or elaborate the interview data. In addition, I communicated with informants via e-mail. This was very helpful in gaining immediate responses. More than eight telephone interviews and over 15 e-mail interviews per person were conducted to collect and verify data.

Via e-mail and telephone contact, I could not only keep in touch with informants, but also undertake follow-up. For example, I e-mailed these informants regularly, I always ask them “hello! What’s up? How do you do recently?”. Some informants expressed the feeling that this was very nice, as they knew somebody did care about them, especially when they were experiencing high-pressure with their study. Some informants unavoidably asked me to help them to sort out some personal problems, regarding their academic loading and affections. I did try my best to help them to tackle these problematic issues in sympathy with them, as I recognised that these informants trusted me. In some situations, I thought they just wanted to have someone to listen to them and share their feelings with. By means of sharing the feelings of these informants, their feedback contributed to the richness not only in this study but also in my life in England.

The Chinese language was used in all the interviews. E-mail communication used both Chinese and English. Some of the direct quotations used in Chapters 5 and 6 were translated from Chinese. The translations were checked by the respondents themselves via e-mail. Some of the quotations were copied directly from e-mail messages sent to the researcher by these informants.



## **Data Analysis and Theory Building**

The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim and then analysed according to the principles of grounded theory. Grounded theory contends that data ought to dictate analytical categories so that themes and linkages become apparent through their repetition and apparent meaning in observation, rather than through researchers deliberately looking for them (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is, the aim is to allow observation to guide analysis, rather than having observation guided by expected findings. Accordingly, the key characteristic of grounded theory is that the processes of collecting and coding data take place in parallel. In the present research, coding was carried out after each interview and, in parallel with this, a comparative analysis was made. Data were examined line by line to identify the informants' descriptions of thought patterns, feelings and actions related to the key research themes and issues.

To allow codes to develop from the data, coding notes were developed after a large number of interviews had been conducted. Brief analytic memos were also written periodically during the coding process. The initial memos helped me to develop my general style of data analysis. That is, when data were collected, I focused on emerging major categories and their relationships with each of the other categories. I struggled with whether to choose one or more core categories. I engaged in continual internal dialogue. Therefore, the memos did play an essential part of my internal dialogue. The memos made can be referred to as a running record of insights, hypotheses, discussions about the implications of codes, and additional thoughts.

Figure 4.2 gives an overview of the coding structures, using the category of *Awareness of cultural diversity* (seen as in section 5.2.1). At the bottom of the diagram are raw data obtained from interviews, documentation and observation. Open coding is used to label these conceptualised events to produce concepts (i.e. inductive logic). Concepts usually take the form of a textual phrase or title that represents a meaningful idea discovered in the data. Codes are compared to verify their descriptive content and to confirm that they are grounded in the data (i.e. deductive logic). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend, I moved back and forth between the empirical data and possible theoretical conceptualisation. I labelled the raw data, for example, “naively” when informants did not fully understand the situation they confronted. Some informants expressed that they thought life in England probably would be similar to the USA. Accordingly, I labelled this “beyond expectation”. Furthermore, some informants did not collect correct information before they arrived in England. I labelled this “wrong information”.

At the next level, a cross-case analysis of these categories was made and more general ideas and concepts were developed through axial coding. This stage, involved the identification of a phenomenon (early uncertainty and early ambiguity), condition (expectation error), context (unanticipated difficulties), strategy (survival flexibility), and consequence (sensitive scanning). Selective coding links categories that eventually form into a story line that becomes the core category (awareness of cultural diversity). In this way, theoretical insights are developed. The labels, sub-categories and core categories obtained through comparative analysis and resulting story lines developed. Although some equally detailed examples of data analysis processes will

be provided in the following chapters (chapters 5-7), space does not allow for this in every instance.

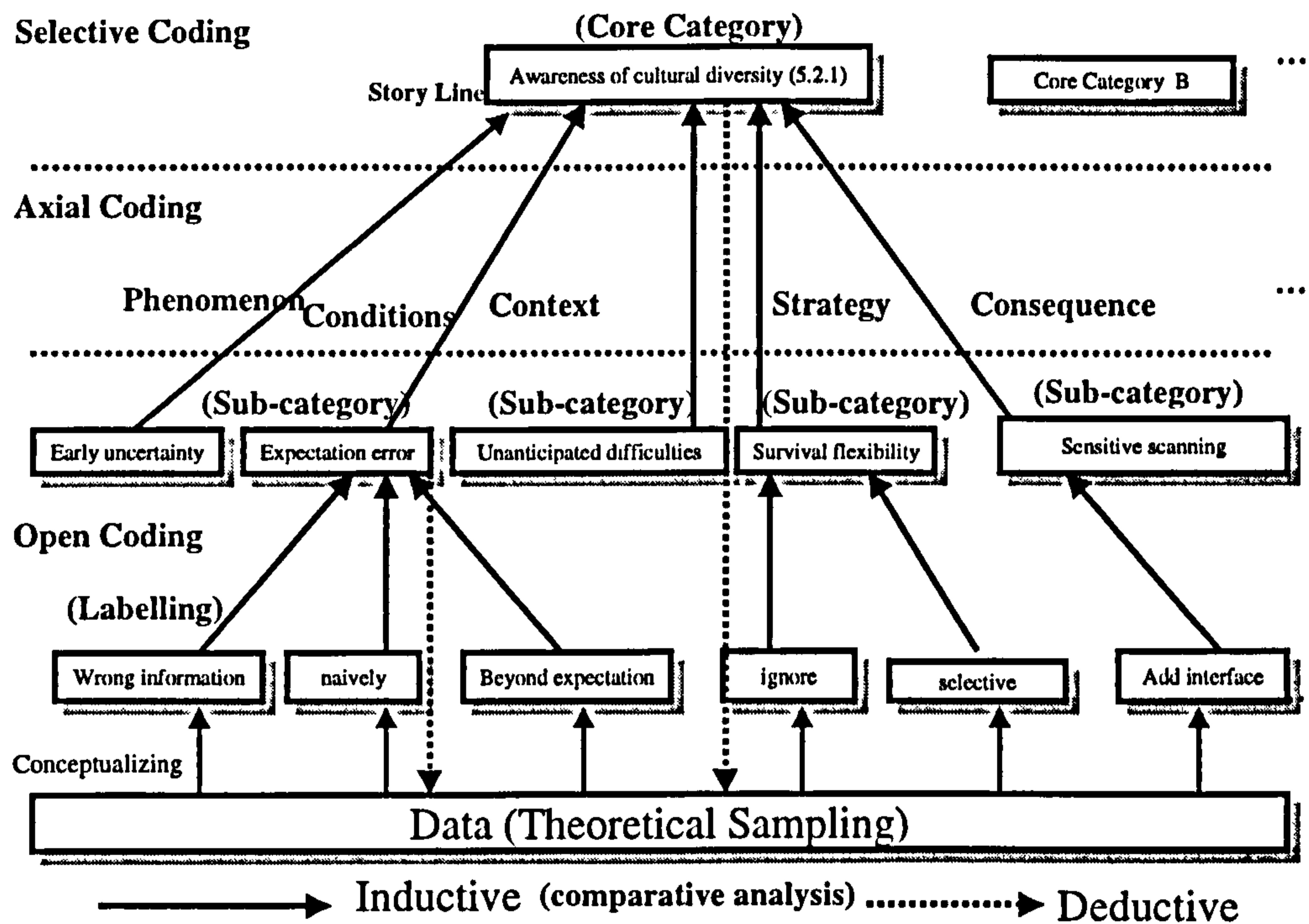


Figure 4.2 The Grounded Theory Methodology

#### 4.5 Summary

A research project is a sequence of many interrelated activities. It requires careful planning and an orderly investigation to ensure quality (Blaikie, 2000; Blaxter et al, 1996). This chapter has explained the procedures adopted in this study. To collect data, a grounded approach method was adopted. The methods used to ensure that reliable data were obtained have been explained.

The study is qualitative. The data-collection techniques employed in the study were: observation, in-depth interviews (both first-stage and second-stage), the content analysis of documents (e-mail), and participant observation (at the second stage of data collection). In terms of data reduction techniques, the data were coded by means of open and axial coding, and this enabled themes to emerge. In terms of data

analysis, open and axial coding were used in accordance with the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; 1990). The following chapters (5 & 6), present the data analysis and findings of the current study.

# **Chapter Five: Data Analysis and Research Findings (1): Self-identity Adjustment and Academic Pursuit Adjustment**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter and the following chapter present the data analysis and findings of the current study. By means of grounded theory, labels, subcategories and core categories have been obtained through comparative analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The detail examples of analysis processes can be seen in section 4.4 (procedures and theoretical constructure) with illustrations (Figure 4.2). The resulting story lines developed depict the theoretical insights into the research issues. The aim is to develop a conceptualisation that reveals the essential qualities of the types of cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) being investigated so that their features can be re-examined in further studies. In this study, four dimensions -- self-identity adjustment, academic pursuit adjustment, affection adjustment, and sojourn life-experience adjustment – are the major foci of the analysis. This chapter discusses the first two of these dimensions and the following chapter (Chapter 6) will discuss the third and fourth dimensions.

This chapter is in four parts. First, in Section 5.1 (the introduction) a summary table of core categories is presented. In Section 5.2, the three categories of self-identity adjustment are discussed. In Section 5.3, the three categories of academic pursuit adjustment are considered. Section 5.4 offers some general conclusions.

Confronted with an adjustment encounter involving social pressures, the significance of what is being communicated socially (knowledge) for personal well-being must be grasped (primary appraisal), as well as the possibilities available for coping

(secondary appraisal), which in turn depend on the goal hierarchies and belief systems acquired during development (Ying and Liese, 1994; Wan, Chapman and Biggs, 1992). Authors (e.g. Lazarus, 1991; Selmer et al, 2000) stress the individual differences in what is acquired as personality. With the assumption of normalcy as a starting point, my analysis suggests three sets of adjustment patterns (categories) in each dimension. These are summarised in Table 5.1. Although not all Taiwanese postgraduate students will fit neatly into particular categories, the patterns occur often enough to justify their use in understanding sojourner adjustment. As we shall see, each of the 35 students (the 16 first-stage informants and the 19 second-stage informants) does exhibit a dominant style. The descriptions will be illustrated by characteristic examples of statements by the students. Nevertheless, this is not the place to do more than touch on the main themes of the psychology of learning as they might apply to the process of adjustment. My account must be general because research attention has not hitherto been directed at the process of appraisal and coping, or at the role of motives and beliefs in adjustment.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Core Categories (Patterns) of Adjustment in Each Dimension**

<b>Dimensions of Adjustment</b>	<b>The Developed Core Categories (Patterns of adjustment in each dimension)</b>	<b>Sections in the Thesis</b>
<b>1. Self-identity</b>	• Awareness of cultural diversity	5.2.1
	• Experienced sense of failure	5.2.2
	• Self-regard	5.2.3
<b>2. Academic pursuit</b>	• Instrumental diversities	5.3.1
	• Enhanced pressure undertaken	5.3.2
	• Logical conflict	5.3.3
<b>3. Affection</b>	• Separation	6.2.1
	• Rootlessness	6.2.2
	• Anxiety	6.2.3
<b>4. Sojourn life-experience</b>	• Behavioural diversity	6.3.1
	• Attitudinal diversity	6.3.2
	• Belief-system diversity	6.3.3

## **5.2 The First Dimension: Self-identity**

The first dimension discussed in the study is self-identity adjustment. This is expressed in the way Taiwanese students recognise who or what they are in the context of the parent culture, but have to adjust this self-identity in the context of the host culture. The adjustment can be seen as “learning a new self” (Jacobson, 1996) and shows that identity is inseparable from both learning and culture (e.g. Bochner, 1994; Hofstede, 1986). Therefore, study abroad adjustment is not just about individuals acquiring specific skills and adjusting to another culture by replacing one set of characteristics, styles or procedures by another. The change initiative is far more demanding than that: different cultural contexts promote the development and implementation of different types of self-concept. Therefore, the adjustment of self-identity is a crucial dimension of cross-cultural adjustment behaviour.

Clearly, the identities of people vary according to their particular situations. Individuals may behave in socially desirable ways or in ways consistent with their public image in order to maintain their reputations. In other situations, people are anonymous. Since they do not have to worry about being identified by others, they may engage in socially undesirable behaviour for purposes of self-gratification. For example, when people feel anonymous and are not subject to evaluation by others, they are said to be de-individuated. Since people are removed from their normal membership and reference groups, and are not under constant pressure to behave according to the norms of those groups. Brislin (1981) states that deindividuation may occur during periods of sojourn abroad. In some cases, people are not completely deindividuated, since people in the host culture can observe them, but they are anonymous with respect to other people back home. For example, Pool (1965) feels that people's rude behaviour during a sojourn can be partly explained using these concepts. This phenomenon is confirmed in the present study:

*I feel free on campus. Basically, on the one hand, as there are a lot of international students, I am a normal person. However, on the other hand, it seems that nobody cares about who I am...( A1, Taiwan).*

*Actually, I intend to be more well-behaved than in Taiwan, as I feel myself to be an image of a "Taiwanese" or "Chinese" because of how I look ...I know it is not necessary...However, I do believe that probably this could affect people's view of Taiwan...(A2, Taiwan).*

*I don't feel threatened when walking down the street, because*



*people basically don't care about what others are doing...(B14, England).*

*Sometimes, I feel they (British people) just ignore me. They do not pay attention to me at all. It seems as if I do not exist in this class. I told myself that when people don't care about me, I just don't need to pay attention to them either...(B16, England).*

“Be nobody” or “be somebody” may present some extent of self-identity and culture-identity. As seen above, informants A1 and B14 had similar attitudes toward their identity in England. Compared to them, informant A2 had a different self-identity, as she thought that she presented as a “Taiwanese” or a “Chinese”. Informant B16 became aware of his position as a person who has been ignored by British people. Then, he developed his attitude in response to his situation. Although the informants had very different attitudes towards themselves, all the cases can be interpreted in terms of students’ self-identity and cultural identity. Cultural identity, in Alder’s (1977) words, is a functioning aspect of individual personality. It is also a fundamental symbol of a person’s existence. While on a sojourn, Taiwanese students might take risks and break out of familiar behaviour patterns. For instance, they might struggle with the host country’s language (e.g. A14, B19) or develop warm friendships with people who happen to have a different skin colour (e.g. A2, A3, B4, B18). They might never behave in these ways at home (e.g. A2 has a close boy friend from Germany; A8 is man with long hair; B1 is a married woman who has male friends; B4 has dyed her hair) because they would appear silly or because societal norms simply make such behaviour unacceptable.

Erikson (1959), who has focused the greater portion of his analytic studies on identity conflicts, has long recognised the anchoring of the ego in a larger cultural context. Identity, he suggests, takes a variety of forms in each individual. Other researchers have also discussed this issue. For example: Alder (1977) states that the concept of identity is meant to imply a coherent sense of self that depends on a stability of value and a sense of wholeness and integration. Furthermore, Lazarus (1991) states that lifelong personal agendas and styles of relating to the world are acquired as characteristics of personality, including goal hierarchies and systems of belief and commitment about one's ego-identity. According to others (e.g. Selmer et al., 2000, Ying & Liese, 1991; 1994), personality characteristics are not merely self-concepts but concepts about the self in the world, including roles, commitments, relationships and a set of niches in which to function in that world. That is, self-identities arise from the biological and social universals in being human, the normative meanings found in the person's culture, the social rules of conduct of the society into which the child is born, and the individual life history.

Table 5.2 presents the coding themes and core categories of self-identity adjustment. On the basis of the Taiwanese students' accounts of their experience of cross-cultural contact, three core categories were developed: awareness of cultural diversity, experienced sense of failure, and self-regard. These categories are not intended to be sequential or mutually exclusive, but they help to show the various aspects of Taiwanese students' deeper cognition and their adjustment of self-identity as a result of cross-cultural experience. For most of the students involved in this research, study abroad is not so much a journey across the ocean as a journey into themselves

(according to A3, A7, B1, B4). A psychodynamic perspective helps us to explore how emotion is a key influence on thinking and behaviour during individuals' daily lives and how personal perception shapes personal self-identity.

**Table 5.2: Coding Themes and Core Categories and Sub-categories for Dimension 1 – Self-Identity**

Coding Scheme (Sub-categories)		Core Categories		
		Awareness of cultural diversity (5.2.1)	Experienced sense of failure (5.2.2)	Self-Regard (5.2.3)
S1.	Expectation error (condition)	✓		
S2.	Early uncertainty (phenomenon)	✓		
S3.	Early ambiguity (phenomenon)	✓		
S4.	Unanticipated difficulties (context)	✓	✓	✓
S5.	Acknowledgement of cultural differences (context)	✓	✓	✓
S6.	Survival flexibility (strategy)	✓		
S7.	Sensitive scanning (consequence)	✓		
S8.	Pre-judgment distortion (condition)		✓	
S9.	Motivation (phenomenon)		✓	
S10.	Control ability (phenomenon)		✓	
S11.	Uncontrollable factors (context)		✓	✓
S12.	Trial and error (strategy)		✓	
S13.	Self-knowledge development (consequence)		✓	
S14.	Social values crisis (condition)			✓
S15.	Reassessment of values(phenomenon)			✓
S16.	Self-conscious development (strategy)			✓
S17.	Openness (consequence)			✓

✓: sub-categories belonging to each dimension

### 5.2.1 Awareness of Cultural Diversity

#### S1. Expectation Error

An expectation error is defined as a distinct divergence of expectations that arises when a student goes abroad to study. International students have high hopes and expectations of success (Senyshyn, et al, 2000). However, expectations are dependent on feedback from the environment. For Taiwanese postgraduate students, feedback can teach them how to survive or flourish, and can thus contribute to the establishment of a self-identity. Clearly, what students actually encounter might not

be what they originally expected. Indeed, most informants stated that there were too many unexpected aspects of their periods of study in the UK. Put another way, their original expectations were not fulfilled:

*It was quite a shock when I arrived in England. England was the first overseas country I had been to. I used to think that England should have modern buildings, very busy city streets, big cars, wide roads, 24-hour shops...(A9, Taiwan).*

Not only informant A9, but also other TPSs expressed that they thought life in England probably would be similar to the USA. Accordingly, I labelled this response as “beyond expectation”. Moreover, in the new environment abroad, some of the situations students encountered made them feel out of control:

*I used to naively believe I would enter the MA programme if I were in England. In fact, unless I gain the standard, I could not have an offer from Universities (A14, Taiwan).*

I labelled the raw data above as “naively”, as informant A14 did not fully understand the situation she confronted. Another case was informant B19’s experience, who did not collect correct information before she arrived in England. I labelled this as “wrong information” received.

*At the beginning, all I heard was that I would adapt easily to England. When I arrived here, all of the staff told us: “don’t worry, everyone will pass the IELTS Test and nobody will go home”. Unfortunately, some students who didn’t pass it, including me. All of us got different results and it was a terrible week. Some of us*

*could study in the same department; others had to change their subjects because they were rejected by their departments. What a pity! All of the teachers had disappeared after the pre-sessional English course. Only a few members of staff were left to help us. By the way, they made me very angry and uncomfortable...(B19, England).*

As most of the Taiwanese students were better acquainted with the USA than England, it is possible that they simply misunderstood British culture (e.g. A1, A9, A13, B9, B10). In addition, the majority of informants (e.g. A2, A5, A7, B2, B3, B4, B5, B9, B12) were likely to obtain good grades because they believed that their efforts would lead to success. Therefore, they made an effort to achieve high grades on their courses. Of course, they believed that a good academic record would show that they had a high level of ability. However, some of the informants seemed quite naive (e.g., A1, A10, A14, B7, B10, B19) about their studies. They (e.g. A10, A14, B2, B4) were over-optimistic in their projections of their academic achievement and seemed to see themselves as failures when they did not meet their academic goals. Accordingly, through this expectation error, these students gained some important self-knowledge as a result of the events they encountered.

## **S2. Early Uncertainty**

The term 'early uncertainty' applies to those informants who doubted that they had the capacity to fit in to a new, totally different environment with an unfamiliar culture and educational system, i.e. when they first arrived in the UK they felt completely lost and uncertain. Other researchers (e.g., Nicholson, 1984; Byrnes, 1966; Hige, 1969; Church, 1982) have used the term "role shock" to describe the role ambiguity and loss

of personal status which takes place. Some (e.g. Gregersen and Black, 1990; Black, 1990; Nicholson, 1984; Elenwo, 1988:1) have suggested that adjustment to the new role and/or situation is fundamental to making an effective domestic or cross-cultural transition and to subsequent retention in that role. In this study, some informants (e.g., A2, A4, B5, B10, B19) said that they were in tears for most of the night in the first two weeks after they arrived in the UK:

*I do think that I can travel the world, but it seems not to be the same thing as studying abroad. When I arrived in England, I found that I needed to face a totally new environment, culture and people. I had to reorganise my recognition in order to face the new things which could be seen as challenges to me. Sometimes, I just wondered if I could adapt to life in England ... (A4, Taiwan)*

Role conflict is another concern. Working experience and prior social status may hinder adaptation to the new role as a foreign student. The degree of role change was more obvious in the case of those informants who had more working experience, since they usually experienced a greater loss of social prestige as well as financial status when they became students than those who were newly graduated from colleges or universities:

*I can't get used to being a student any more because I have been a manager for many years. Of course, I am very happy to get the opportunity to refresh my knowledge and get back to academic life again. However, to be a student again seems to mean that I am nobody on campus. This kind of feeling is just quite odd to me. Furthermore, now I have to learn everything by myself. (B6,*

*England)*

Some informants (A8, A10, A12, A15, and B9) were married men. All of them studied abroad with their families except for informant A8. Undoubtedly, the role of the family was a vital, active comfort element in their adjustment. Most of them expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to come into contact with a different culture with their families. However, at the same time, they also felt that they were too busy to take care of their families, to play with their children at the weekend, and to be drivers for their families if their wives could not drive:

*As a married man, without family accompanied, to be honest I sometimes felt quite happy even though I also felt guilty. I had plenty of time on my own. This led me to feel that I wanted to be a single man again. Easy and simple...( A8, Taiwan)*

Without any children, B9 felt that the relationship between himself and his wife changed:

*In Taiwan, both I and my wife were very busy. We put all of our effort into our work. We were not together very often. Since we have been in England in the pre-sessional English course, we have spent almost 24 hours a day together. On the one hand, I cherish the fact that we can be together and share everything with each other. However, on the other hand, it is inevitable that some problems will occur...(B9, England)*

What is more, these married men had to help their wives adjust to being students or housekeepers, whereas all of them had been career women in Taiwan. Some informants (e.g. A11, A16, B1, B6, and B7) were married women. Informants A11

and A16 pursued their degree studies after their husbands had got their MSc degrees. Therefore, their husbands could take care of the family. However, according to these informants, they felt too tired to play the combined roles of mother, wife and student. Informant A16 decided to withdraw from studying because her husband found a job in the second term.

Informant B6's husband is a full professor in Taiwan on one-year study leave. She was able to concentrate on her studies as her husband was able to take care of the family. Informants B1 and B7 were alone while studying abroad, indicating that the opportunities for married women to undertake continuing professional development are increasing (Ying, 1990, 1992; Ying, Liese, 1994):

*Of course, I do miss my family and my lovely boys very much. However, what I want is to make my dream come true -- to study abroad. It was a very long way to get here and I spend a lot of time communicating with my husband and his family. Study abroad can be seen as my self-development. I find that I can be myself again after twelve years marriage...(B1, England)*

### **S3. Early Ambiguity**

When Taiwanese postgraduate students study abroad, it is not unusual for them to be asked: "where are you from?" Then there is often a further question about the relationship between Taiwan and China. Some students actually dislike having to think about whether to present their cultural background in terms of a distinction between Chinese and Taiwanese: "Am I Chinese or Taiwanese?" Their political status is a problematic issue for most Taiwanese students. It has been said that foreign study may bring opportunities for self-realisation and the re-evaluation of one's



personal identity, but foreign study may also cause an “identity crisis” related to the individual’s prior self-conception (Yeh, 1976):

*I am in no doubt at all that I am Chinese. The situation between Taiwan and Mainland China is just a political issue...(A6, Taiwan)*

*Study in England is an open door for me to have an opportunity to contact the people from Mainland China. Actually, I have changed my behaviour and attitude towards Mainland China...(B7, England)*

*In others’ eyes, I am Chinese. However, I prefer to say “I am new Taiwanese”...(B16, England)*

Informants A2 and A4 found that they were not as independent as they thought. Informants A14 and B18 wondered why they had chosen to study abroad before they had made a clear picture of their study. Many students experienced this sense of initial ambiguity. With more confidence, some students began to develop a clearer sense of being Taiwanese and a mature individual:

*I decided to give up using my English nickname. I am quite happy to advise my friends and classmates how to pronounce clearly every syllable of my Chinese name. At first, I felt a little embarrassed. But I am proud of my name. (B8, England)*

*I feel confident that I can deal with everything by myself during the period of study abroad. I am sure that I can overcome obstacle even though I have just graduated from University and do not have*

*a lot of work experience...(A5, Taiwan)*

#### **S4. Unanticipated Difficulties**

Anticipating future events and possibilities makes it easier to deal with them when they happen. However, studying abroad is inherently risky because it means entering a culture which may be full of customs that are unknown and unanticipated. Most overseas study programmes do offer extensive pre-departure instructions, but, even so, arrival in another country can be a traumatic and unexpected experience. Becker (1968) uses the term “anticipatory adjustment” to denote a process of selective adoption of attitudes on the basis of their utility in easing the individual’s adjustment to anticipated imminent and drastic change in his/her environment.

Obviously, the extent of the adjustment will vary according to the degree of preparedness before going abroad. Those who report feeling well prepared for their study abroad as a result of acquiring information about the host culture and academic setting, or establishing future support networks prior to departure, will be better adjusted than those who are less well prepared (e.g. Church, 1982; Klineberg, 1980; Ying and Liese, 1994).

In this study, some informants confessed that they had ignored advice or taken it too lightly in their eagerness to leave Taiwan. The majority of the informants reported that they had experienced unanticipated difficulties. In some circumstances, the “old hands” can introduce newcomers to the unique aspects of study and life in the host culture before the period of study abroad begins. However, according to this study, even if informants were as well prepared as they could be, unanticipated phenomena still hit them at some time during their stay overseas. For example, the English accent

caused problems for many students because in Taiwan students learn American pronunciation. In fact, all the students in our sample anticipated improving their English soon after they arrived in the UK and were confident that they would get used to using English. Some students experienced problems as soon as they arrived when they were confronted by an immigration officer (e.g. A3, A8, B11). Furthermore, when they study abroad Taiwanese postgraduate students are in contact not only with local people but also other international students from all over the world. Therefore, they often have to make a big effort to understand what other people say.

This problem was overcome by the well-prepared students (e.g. A15, B16, B18), but the others found it difficult:

*I had been overseas for six months, then one day I woke up and was in the depths of depression wondering just how I was going to make it through another day speaking English. (B2, England)*

Excepting the England accent issue, some typical comments were:

*I don't feel like somebody who can prepare for it in any way. I have to confess that I just deal with it. (A12, Taiwan)*

*When the chips are down, they can deal with it. (A1, Taiwan)*

*I am a self-starter who can hit the ground running and operate in just about any situation that comes my way. (A9, Taiwan)*

Some informants (A1, A9, A12, B1, B2, B4) developed a different perspective to

interpret their situation and make themselves feel more comfortable in dealing with problematic situations, either positively or negatively.

### **S5. Acknowledging Cultural Differences**

It is unavoidable, when Taiwanese postgraduate students study abroad, that they will face a mixture of cultural contacts, i.e. at least two distinct cultures (in this case, the parent and the host cultures) interact with one context. Acknowledging cultural differences is thus an important first step for students. However, this process is not necessarily easy to manage (Briggs, 1999). Like all international students studying abroad, Taiwanese postgraduate students carry their own “cultural baggage” when they arrive in England. Cultural baggage contains the values that are important to individuals and the patterns of behaviour that are customary in their culture.

The extent of cultural difference awareness varies according to the “cultural sensitivity” (Selmer, 2001; Church, 1982, Ying and Liese, 1994) of individuals in terms of their customs, values, standards and expectations. Here TPSs are dealing not with the fact that the two societies *represent* different cultures and nationalities, but with the direct effects of these differences themselves -- in other words with the way in which these differences affect the course of contact and interaction (Volet and Ang, 1998; Selmer, 2001; Mishler, 1965).

Moving to a new culture is a complex experience. The majority of informants retained Taiwanese values despite the extensive international experience that many of them already had. The more informants know about their personal values and how they are derived from their own culture, the better prepared they will be to understand

the cultural differences they will encounter abroad. Put another way, they will be high in cultural sensitivity. However, for those who do not have much time to interact with large numbers of hosts before discovering reasonable generalisations on their own, adjustment is likely to become more difficult as the beliefs and behaviour patterns of the individual become more rigid. In this case, the person who has difficulty coping with difference, change and uncertainty is likely to have the most difficulty with cross-cultural adjustment (Foust et al. 1981). For example, one Taiwanese female student explained that she encountered a cultural shock when she first entered a women's changing room in England:

*It was quite a shock when I entered the women's changing room for the first time. I just could not get used to changing my clothes in public. Therefore, I always took a shower in my accommodation after I had been swimming, even though this was a bit stupid and my thinking was too rigid. (A4, Taiwan)*

It is often not possible to realise all of one's explicit goals in the new culture, and the disappointment or embarrassment can inhibit cultural adjustment. At the same time, the willingness to be satisfied with something less than one's original goals can affect one's ability to adjust to the new culture. Also, individuals have unique characteristics that influence their ability to adjust. Unlike informant A4, other female informants stated that they had developed a different view of their bodies:

*I felt free to use the women's changing room here. In fact, at the very beginning, I did feel a little embarrassed. I never take a shower with other women when I am in Taiwan. I have learnt here that other*

*women know how to treat their bodies with pride no matter how fat or fit they are. (All, Taiwan)*

Only when individuals begin to recognise and accept the deep-seated cultural characteristics they encounter will they find it easier to deal with those characteristics as they manifest themselves in various settings. When confronted with an alternative set of assumptions and values, individuals are usually forced to examine the “cultural baggage” they have brought with them, and to decide, whether consciously or not, how much of their baggage they want to use, how much they want to discard, and how much they want to put into storage for later. This kind of experience can be very trying or very exhilarating. For most of the informants, it was both:

*I had my hair coloured I recalled that when I was high-school girl, I went to school by bus, and I saw a woman with coloured hair. I used to think that woman seemed to be deviating from the normal standard. Now I realise how to treat my own body and how to see the same things from a different perspective. (B4, England)*

Once they are aware of their own culture and the new culture, Taiwanese postgraduate students gradually come to appreciate the assumptions underlying their own values, and they can (but do not necessarily) begin to see that the values of the host country are neither superior nor inferior to their own, but are simply different. Furthermore, when they study in England, the students not only encounter people from England but also staff and classmates who come from other countries. Accordingly, it is a good opportunity to encounter different nationalities and different cultures, and to learn from the experience:

*The truth is that because there are so many international students studying in the UK, diverse nationalities are expected here. There is no serious race discrimination here at all. Of course, it would be hard for us to become part of their society or simply to become a close friend to them. This is nothing to do with racism but is rather natural...(B3, England)*

Clearly, the difficulty of adjustment will increase as the gap between the original culture and the new culture increases. The degree of difference in norms, worldview, and patterns of relationships will affect the ease and quickness of cross-cultural adjustment.

### **S6. Survival Flexibility**

The different situations sojourners have to face can be looked upon as providing opportunities that demand new responses (Saenz et al., 1999; Ying and Liese, 1994; Adler, 1975). Although their prior expectations are invariably erroneous and may lead to initial uncertainty and ambiguity, gradually, Taiwanese postgraduate students seem to use the “unknown” to survive and to establish a new self. Somewhat passively, some informants (A15, A16, B9, B10) tended to adopt an easy and simple life style while they were abroad. More aggressively, other informants (A7, B4, B5) sought to improve their understanding of the host culture. Irrespective of whether they adopted a passive or aggressive attitude, they tended to keep their minds open to confront unpredictable change:

*Interestingly enough, I treated people in ‘Western’ style’ except Taiwanese. I was always very concerned while I interacted with*

*Taiwanese in Taiwan. However, when I was in England I preferred to go straight into any situation I encountered (A15, Taiwan)*

*I found myself just ignoring other situations which were beyond my ability to control. I wanted to put all my effort into passing the assignments and getting the degree. I would like to learn more if I could. (B10, England)*

I use the term “survival flexibility” to describe this strategy. It can be defined as the ability of the individual to adapt to substantial, uncertain and fast-occurring (relative to the required reaction time) environmental changes that have an influence on the sojourn. In fact, the idea of flexibility embraces both adaptation and change. The former emphasises the ability to maintain the status quo despite change. The latter emphasises the ability to instigate change rather than simply to react to it. When Taiwanese postgraduate students study abroad, their goals and intentions may change over the course of their degree programme to reflect more realistic and perhaps more pessimistic attitudes. The informants (A1, A14, B10) who reported optimistic intentions for success could view themselves as survivors (Saenz, et al., 1999; Bennett and Okinaka, 1990, Hood, 1992):

*Actually, I tried to put all of my effort to get into life in England. However, I found it was very difficult to get into it. What I could control was the academic achievement success. (A1, Taiwan)*



The majority of informants seemed to regard academic achievement as their main concern. They tried to do their best to “survive” in their academic life and consequently gave up some of their desires: for quality of life (A10, A12, A14, B9), entertainment (A11, B2, B19) and a social life (A7, B6, B16).

### **S7. Sensitive Scanning**

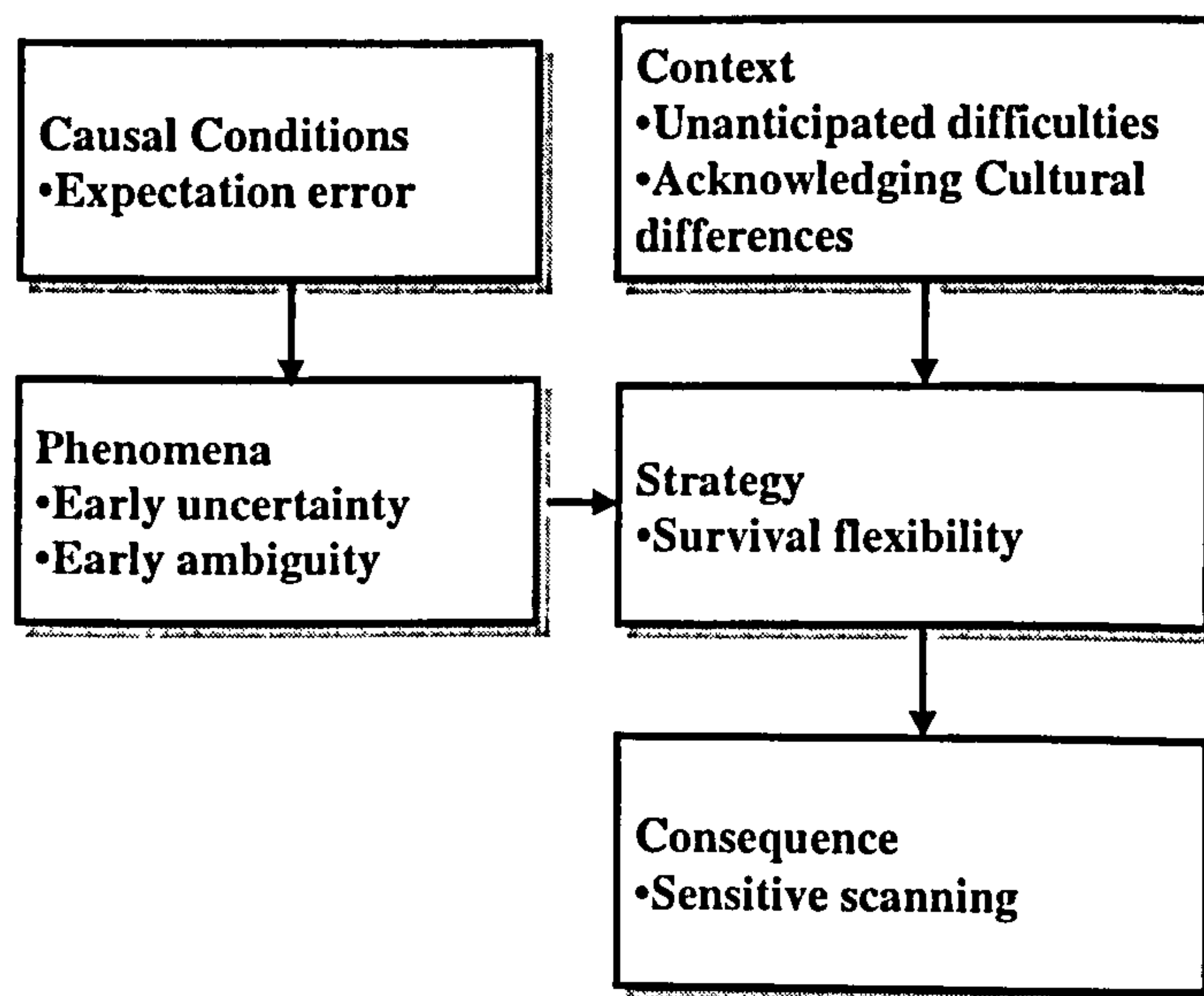
Taiwanese postgraduate students keep scanning the diversities between the host and parent cultures and seek to improve their understanding of the learning environment as a prerequisite for the whole learning process and their sojourn life. Formal planning and environmental scanning systems act to codify the interpretation of issues and to perpetuate students’ initial categorisations. Coping, of course, is necessary no matter what the length of a sojourn. External sensitivity refers to the amount of detection or perceptual awareness of slight, low-intensity stimulations arising from the external environment (Saenz et al, 1999; Lazarus, 1991). The majority of informants were aware of the need to justify themselves to the situations encountered through others friends and/or their spouses. Informants A12 and A15 said that they interacted with the host country through their wives’ attendance at the local community society. Those informants with few friends (A7, B8, B19) said that they were sometimes short of information. Some informants (A1, A5, A9, A13, B1, B7, B10, B18) had developed good friendship networks which had helped them to adjust to their life in England:

*I knew about the British Royal Family from my host family’s introduction. I found it was very interesting. The role of the host family broadened my life while I was in England. (A13, Taiwan)*

*I never thought that I could make friends from China. Not only did I have opportunities to contact them, but also they fulfilled my social life and helped me to sort out the group course discussion. (B7, England)*

**Summary: The Story Line of Awareness of Cultural Diversity**

Summing up the coding categories numbered S1 to S7 (see Table 5.2), I will refer to them collectively as “difference cognition”, which can be seen as one key component of cross-cultural adjustment related to self-identity. As Strauss and Corbin (1990:146) suggest, a central category may evolve out of either the list of existing categories or another more abstract term or phrase, which is a conceptual idea under which all the other categories can be subsumed. In this sense, the term “difference cognition” is abstracted from the existing categories S1 to S7. Therefore, the first grounded theory model for a self-identify dimension developed for the present study is presented in Figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1: The Story Line of Awareness of Cultural Diversity**

As indicated, self-identity arises from the biological and social universals involved in being human, the normative meanings found in the person’s culture, the social rules

of conduct of the society into which the child is born, and the individual life history. When Taiwanese postgraduate students study abroad, the emergence of *expectation error* becomes a form of causal condition which ultimately leads to two subjective phenomena: *early uncertainty* and *early ambiguity*. At the same time, *survival flexibility* is developed in response to *early uncertainty* and *early ambiguity*, and is influenced by particular contextual markers related to both the causal condition - *expectation error* - and the resultant phenomena. These contextual markers include *unanticipated difficulties* and the *acknowledgement of cultural differences*. The strategy used by informants has one key consequence: *sensitive scanning* for external information to increase the amount of detection or perceptual awareness of slight, low-intensity stimulations arising from the external environment.

### 5.2.2 *Experienced Sense of Failure*

The second core category related to self-identity adjustment is termed “experienced sense of failure”. Individuals compare their past history with their current situation: this includes the experience of success and failure, of competition and rivalry, of being valued/undervalued and so on. Accordingly, their prior experience will influence their experience of study abroad even if some of that experience is not consciously accessible.

However, when individuals experience failure, this creates big shock waves. Failure may lead to actual or imagined catastrophes. Failure is visible, and there is a strong tendency for people to assign blame and associate this with anxiety. Here, anxiety is experienced as undesirable and ways are devised to prevent it becoming overwhelming. Overwhelming anxiety is experienced as stress and, as a result, how

individuals manage anxiety is a crucial part of adjustment while they are abroad. According to some informants (A10, A14, B2, B19), anxiety is an emotion that underpins much of an individual's behaviour in this context.

The essential theme here is that, as individuals struggle to fashion their views of themselves and the new environment in which they live, they evolve a self-consistent, integrated system of motives, beliefs and scripts or story lines which are useful in directing their lives and dealing with the conditions of life that are encountered (Lazarus, 1991). When individuals encounter the experience of failure, they may develop motivation and control effort to cope with or improve the situations they have encountered. Accordingly, it is important to view the experience of failure as a normal part of cross-cultural contact and to take it into account. From a reverse perspective, as Brislin (1981) states, "culture shock has positive aspects, including a motivational component which encourages people to learn about their feelings so that frustration is reduced" (p. 138).

After a brief introduction, the following sections discuss the sub-categories *pre-judgment distortion, motivation, control ability, uncontrollable factors, trial and error, and self-knowledge*. The sub-categories S4 (unanticipated difficulties) and S5 (acknowledgement of cultural differences) have already been discussed in the previous section (5.2.1.). Then the story line of how Taiwanese postgraduate students' experienced sense of failure is summarised.

### **S8. Pre-judgment Distortion**

The first sub-category is termed "pre-judgement distortion". Judgement is the ability

to come to sensible conclusions and make wise decisions, i.e. good sense. Based on their self-conceptions developed under the parent cultural context, Taiwanese postgraduate students will make judgements or create images about their study life before going abroad. However, this pre-judgment is unlikely to be entirely realistic, and as the difference deepens, the students become more and more disappointed. Psychological movements into new dimensions of perception and experience very often tend to produce forms of personality disintegration:

*When I arrived here, I found that Taiwan is far ahead England except in social welfare. You would not believe that I used Windows 3.1 in my school. God! Can you believe it? I am majoring in Computer Networking... My classmates are quite funny and have a poor knowledge of computers. They always ask the same stupid questions. As my English ability is not as good as theirs, I cannot answer the tutor's questions immediately and properly. Therefore, I have to put up with them always scrambling to give the wrong answers! I always say to my friends in Taiwan: "Do not be envious that I am in England, as I think I will become an idiot if I stay here too long." (B6, England)*

Contradictory judgements are often based on differing perceptions of the number of skills a person should have and the number of situations in which informants are to be used. In intercultural relations, individuals may or may not have positive feelings about other cultural groups. According to some authors (e.g. Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward and Searle, 1991), this depends on in-group pressure to maintain social distance or simply a lack of knowledge concerning how to approach and interact with people from a different background. Initially, certain informants (A10, A14, B2, B7,

B18) gave a great deal of deference towards people of the host country and other international students.

An understanding of affective, cognitive and instinctive issues helps to elucidate the differences between prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping (McGuire, 1969). Prejudice refers to a person's emotional reactions and thus represents the affective component. Discrimination refers to a person's behaviour which puts members of other cultural groups at a disadvantage and consequently represents the instinctive component. Stereotypes most frequently refer to a person's beliefs about out-group members and are consequently manifestations of the cognitive component. To take an example, informant B4 changed her attitude toward her classmates' thinking and reactions, which she used to think were nonsense. She examined herself closely and compare herself with her classmates. At first, she lost her confidence and felt frustrated. Fortunately, she rebuilt her confidence and encouraged herself to tackle the problems. Other informants were able to add value to their experience when they encountered difficult situations:

*In the beginning, I thought I could make friends by playing badminton, because I knew my English ability was very poor. I went to the local sports centre to ask if I could play badminton with the members. After playing for a while I was told that I should try another sports centre, which had a badminton club at a lower level of ability. It was quite shaming. However, I suddenly realised that I had to meet the level and requirement of any situation. Therefore, I went to the smaller sports centre to*

*improve my badminton skill and make some friends there. I am always aware that I have to be well prepared in order to meet any requirements under any situation. I always remember this experience...( A7, Taiwan)*

In this study, I found that disintegration is the basis for developmental thrusts upward, the creation of new evolutionary dynamics, and the movement of personality to a higher level. For thoughtful informants (A7, B4, B5, B18), the most important thinking was internal and the most important learning was about themselves. Erikson (1964) states that when the human being, because of accidental or developmental shifts, loses an essential wholeness, he/she restructures himself/herself and the world by having recourse to what we may call "totalism". Such totalism, in Adler's (1977) words, above and beyond being a mechanism of coping and adjustment, is a part of the growth of a new kind of wholeness at a higher level of integration.

## **S9. Motivation**

While cultural influences can lead to many unpredictable problems, the contact with another culture should not be seen solely as a source of problems but rather as a positive force promoting human development (Jacobson, 1996, Taylor, 1994). That is, the influence of culture may also stimulate the learner directly or indirectly to release the potential of his/her study. Adler (1975) states that this kind of adjustment (or "culture shock") can be a motivational force. Clearly, no two people are affected in the same way by a situation, or experience the same set of symptoms. In this study, some informants (A7, B4, B5, B15, B18) have personality traits which include a high need for achievement, skills and very efficient work habits. They are not affected by

negative factors and will get their work done regardless of their personal discomfort:

*I am preparing myself. I'll have the energy to face all the challenges...(B15, England)*

Thus, culture directly influences the pursuit of achievement. However, other informants (A1, A10, B7) with less need for achievement and less strong work habits wanted to spend some of their time making themselves comfortable in unpleasant situations. There should be no value judgments placed on different ways of dealing with such situational variables. However, it seems that some informants (A2, B2, B4, B5, B16, B18) had to put a tremendous amount of energy into learning task-related (i.e. taught course programme) skills and/or complex subject matter, and many identified themselves with others who shared the same level of ability. As Brislin (1981: 63) states, "this sharing is one reason for the existence of interest groups which allow people to come together and to learn about recent developments in their fields of specialisation". This shows that the informants' own feelings of competence were based on positive attitudes and self-confidence:

*I feel that the experience of studying abroad made me mature more quickly. I don't think this is the peak of my life, as I still do not have any achievements. However, I would rather believe that I will have better achievements in the future...( A2, Taiwan)*

Thus culture indirectly influences the pursuit of achievement. It is true that many situations on study abroad programmes evoke the anxiety associated with failure.



Examples include keeping one's sense of identity when conformity is required, seeking to be included and accepted by the group, competing with peers for success and rewards, and entering into relationships with authority figures:

*I learned so much about myself and grew so much knowing that I could do things by myself. (B5, England)*

Informant B5 did not know anyone when she went to London for three months of intensive English courses. According to her, being thrown in with new people and circumstances enable her to develop the ability to appreciate and welcome challenges.

Facing the challenges of studying in another culture prompts students to realise their potential because they are put in unfamiliar situations that at first seem impossible to grasp. As some informants discovered (A11, A16, B12), it is possible to succeed by standing in from of one's classmates speaking English or conducting a seminar. As a result, they develop self-confidence: "*My study abroad forced me to do things on my own*", said informant A6. By the time their MA/MSc programmes were over, the students knew their capabilities and had a powerful understanding of themselves and what they wanted to accomplish in their future careers.

## **S10. Control Ability**

Chinese people often score high on external control due to their traditional upbringing (Tseng, 1972). In the Chinese language, the word "crisis" embraces two meanings: danger and opportunity. Indeed, in Chinese philosophy, crisis always offers an opportunity if one can control it. At least, after the crisis, you will be stronger and

will have more power to confront future crises.

However, some Taiwanese postgraduate students also believe that life's outcomes are be shaped through individual effort (e.g. Hau and Salili, 1996; Rogers, 1998; Salili, 1995; Yan and Gaier, 1994). In this context, the skills considered especially important in cross-cultural interaction include knowledge of subject matter, and the ability to follow up on opportunities and to use one's talents in a given culture. In this study, these are referred to as "control ability". When Taiwanese postgraduate students confront an in-depth cultural influence which may seriously harm their feelings, judgment and beliefs, they can enforce their feelings of internal control against adversity. Internal control becomes a counter-offensive strategy since they must face and cope with so many new situations. They cannot usually depend on others but must take responsibility for themselves. The majority of informants in this study kept their feelings to themselves. Instead of simply feeling disappointment, frustration and anger, they achieved self-control through thinking positively.

Since internal control includes the feeling that informants can influence their destinies through their own efforts, it seems that achievement-oriented feelings will be increased. Achievement (Saenz, 1999; Hutley, 1993) refers to:

1. setting a reasonable standard of success, not so high as to lead to failure but not so low as to guarantee a trivial success (A1, A10, A15, B11, B16); and
2. working toward that standard (A2, A7, A14, B2, B4, B18).

Many adjustment problems stem from ignorance of basic facts that could easily be learned by informants willing to make the effort. Some individuals experience a feeling of isolation and insecurity when everything around them is unfamiliar and uncertain. We may use thus the positive-negative dimension and the control dimension to generate a typology of crisis situations. The positive dimension is when students enhance their motivation to pursue and achieve their goals. The negative dimension is when students selectively ignore some situations. Individuals develop certain attitudes, traits and skills which play a major part in determining the amount and success of intercultural interaction (Ying and Liese, 1994). Many researchers (e.g., Smith et al, 1998; Solberg et al, 1993; Suen, 1998) have actively investigated these individual-level variables, and their combined efforts have led to a good deal of insight. Clearly, this is not just a case of learning about the balance between studying and living, and developing a confident attitude to the changes, although these personal skills can be beneficial (Saenz, et al., 1999; Tyseen et al., 2001). There is anxiety about one's very survival. "*Survival of the fittest!*" said informant B4 when she had to come to terms with her failed assignments.

### **S11. Uncontrollable Factors**

Negative situations and arguments support the conclusion that uncontrollability is a key element of threatening stimuli. Some informants may overreact to academic setbacks in the belief that their academic difficulties are out of their control and resistant to change (Saenz, et al., 1999; McKean, 1994; Perry et al, 1993). Some informants (A10, A12, A14, B2, B19) were so upset that they were unable to focus on new learning possibilities. In this respect, their attitudes towards language learning and increasing their knowledge are especially important. Many observers (e.g. Xu,

1991; Biggs, 1987; Biggs, 1990) note that foreign students' efforts to speak another language, even imperfectly, are appreciated by people from the host country. However, some informants (e.g. A14, B19) stated that British people did not want to hear their language spoken less than perfectly.

Informants (A2, A3, A5, B14, B15) with favourable attitudes toward the host culture were able to learn English more quickly than those (A1, B6, B7, B19) with unfavourable attitudes. However, it is not possible to form a conclusion concerning the insider-outsider status of these informants based solely on language abilities; there are other significant factors. Once informants were confident of their language ability (A3, A8, B3, B14), cultural knowledge (A13, B5) and subject knowledge background (A9, A15, B6, B9), they could meet their everyday needs through interaction with their hosts in a variety of situations.

Due to their experience of failure, most of the students developed a new self-consciousness of themselves. For example: "*To admit the limitation of my ability was embarrassing,*" said informant A10, who was in receipt of a scholarship from the Taiwan Government and thought that his studies in Taiwan had gone very smoothly. However, he soon realised that his research ability was much poorer than he thought, and he decided that he would not proceed study for his Ph.D.

Uncontrollable factors may also arise in the home country during the period of study abroad. Many Taiwanese postgraduate students have family problems in Taiwan (e.g. A3) and sometimes they even lose their family members (e.g., A11). Such factors can hinder students' studies and even lead some of them to give up their study abroad.

## **S12. Trial and Error**

In confronting the experience of failure, new ideas lead to experimentation with different behaviours. Thus, sojourners can engage in trial and error attempts to deal with a situation, and can learn a great deal in the process, As some authors (e.g. Adler, 1977; Chan and Drover, 1997) observe, sojourners experience the elation of success after discovering the most appropriate behaviour. Trial and error involves risks, since the individuals never know if their response will be effective. While it is not a matter of saying that particular strategies are either “good” or “bad”, some are possible only with extensive knowledge of the host culture. Much of the relevant knowledge can be obtained only if individuals spend a great deal of time living in another country (Brislin, 1981). For example: informants A3, A6, A7, A10, A13 and A14 all found that it was much easier for them to pursue a second MSc/MA degree:

*I wasted a lot of time in trial and error in my first year abroad.*

*Yes, it was much easier for me to live in the second year...(A10, Taiwan)*

*I tried to write an assignment using different methods of presentation after my previous assignments failed. I sought any useful help, by any means, from my tutor and classmates...(B4, England)*

## **S13. Self-Knowledge Development**

Culture shock was treated by international students as something only unsuccessful sojourners experienced. Any of the symptoms could be interpreted as an indicator of

poor cross-cultural adjustment. As a result, many sojourners took their feelings of culture shock personally and let the symptoms interfere with their work. They came to doubt their self-worth. While most students eventually cope with their feelings (Szanton, 1966), the time necessary to progress from frustration to coping can take much longer than is necessary (as shown in the cases of A7, B10, B14, B2, B4, B19).

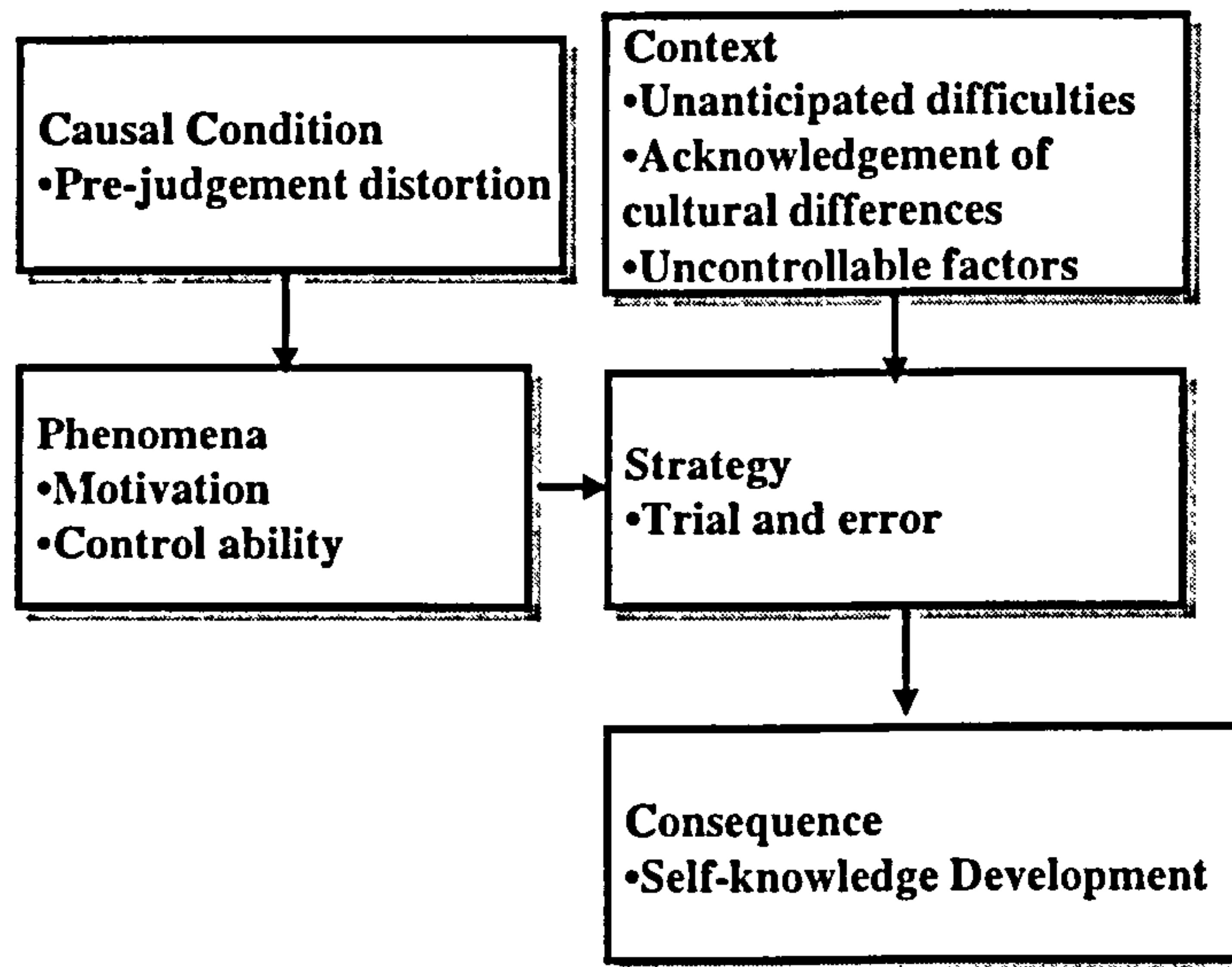
Informant A10 recalled that when he failed his oral examination for his MSc degree, he felt a sense of panic and helplessness: "*How will I do the next time?*" He could not make any sense of the situation. Informants A12, A14, B2 and B19 stated that they had to motivate themselves all the time in order to live abroad. Informant B4 doubted whether she was suitable to pursue her next academic degree, as she thought she might not meet the academic requirements. All these cases show how the informants began to doubt their decision to study abroad. Even worse, they could not answer this question because they felt totally lost. According to some informants (A7, A10, B4, B19) they found themselves thinking about every situation. They tried to explain all possible conditions. Informants A15, A16 and B9 found themselves putting all their efforts into getting things under control. Informants A13 and B15 described how they actually felt more mature. However, informants A4 and B8 became more defensive when they felt threatened.

## **Summary**

### **The Story Line: Experienced Sense of Failure**

In this section, the core category is termed "experienced sense of failure". This is the second form of cross-cultural adjustment related to self-identity. The term "experienced sense of failure" is abstracted from the existing coding categories S8 to

S13, and also S4 & S5 (see Table 5.2). Thus, the second grounded theory model for the self-identity dimension is presented in Figure 5.2.



**Figure 5.2: The Story Line of Experienced Sense of Failure**

When students study abroad, contradictory judgements arise and *pre-judgement distortion* becomes a form of causal condition which ultimately leads to two phenomena: and *control ability*. In this case, Taiwanese postgraduate students try to put a tremendous amount of energy into overcoming the pre-judgement distortion and maintain the internal control perception that life's outcomes may be shaped through individual effort. At the same time, the strategy of *trial and monitoring* is developed in response to *motivation* and *control ability*. This strategy is influenced by particular contextual markers related to the causal condition (pre-judgment distortion) and the resulting phenomena. These contextual markers are the uncontrollable factors, the extent of *unanticipated difficulties* and *acknowledgement of cultural differences*. However, students are usually unable to manage the uncontrollable factors. The strategy used by informants became a vicious circle and led to *self-knowledge development*.

What affects Taiwanese postgraduate students' self-knowledge is their sense of self-efficacy, or their belief that they can or cannot organise cognitive, behavioural and social skills to achieve desired objectives (Bandura, 1986; Saenz, et al., 1999). In this study, self-efficacy not only involves confidence in the ability to perform course-related tasks, maintain harmonious relationships with room mates, and have rewarding social interaction with others (Solberg et al, 1993), but also relates to willingness to undertake challenging tasks, persistence at tasks, and successful performance (Selmer, 2001, 200; Harrison et al., 1997).

### 5.2.3 *Self-Regard*

For good reason, nation, culture, and society exert tremendous influence on each of our lives, structuring our values, engineering our view of the world, and patterning our responses to experience. No human being can hold himself apart from some form of cultural influence. No one is culture free...(Adler, 1977: 24)

Adler (1977) states that the core of cultural identity is an image of the self and the culture intertwined with the individual's total conception of reality. This image, a patchwork of internalised roles, rules and norms, functions as the coordinating mechanism in personal and interpersonal situations. Taiwanese postgraduate students, because of their physiological characteristics and their internalisation of cultural patterns need to adopt both a positive and a negative perspective towards the situation they encounter. In this study, some informants (A7, A10, A14, B4, B5, B11) encountered their *social values crisis*, then their self-conscious development followed, and this led to a reassessment of their values. Accordingly, they exhibited more openness towards different cultures, no matter whether they were in Taiwan or



England. The sub-categories S4 (unanticipated difficulties), S5 (acknowledgement of cultural differences) and S11 (uncontrollable factors) have already been discussed in the previous sections (5.2.1 & 5.2.2).

A conflict may exist between two needs that are both internalised. Such conflict may occur even without a person's awareness, and when this happens we say that one or both of the needs involved is unconscious. Many conflicts are of just such a nature, being too weak to have serious consequences for one's adjustment. However, in other instances, such internal conflict may occur between two extremely powerful yet incompatible needs; then the task of making a satisfactory adjustment is far more difficult (Lazarus, 1963). Under such circumstances signs of stress are likely to emerge.

#### **S14. Social Values Crisis**

During their sojourn in England, Taiwanese postgraduate students have to deal continually with situations that are unfamiliar to them. They are forced to change their behaviour so that they can cope with the cultural differences they encounter. They may also struggle to discover what is meaningful or meaningless in a situation, keeping in mind that cues learned in their own culture may not be relevant. In other words, the only judgment they can make is that the new situation is ambiguous. The constant coping with unfamiliar situations causes almost all sojourners to question their competence. As a result, self-doubt seems to be the primary symptom of culture shock.

Ying and Liese (1990; 1994) state that it tends to be those persons more traditionally oriented who suffer the most psychological marginalisation, rather than those who wish to move on and cannot. The degree to which individuals can continually modify

their frame of reference and become aware of the structures and functions of a group while at the same time maintaining a clear understanding of their own personal ethics and cultural identifications may very well depend on the degree to which the multicultural person can function truly successfully between cultures (Worchel and Goethals, 1985; Watkins et al., 1991). Although it is difficult to pinpoint every condition encountered while in cross-cultural contact, the biggest challenges to Taiwanese postgraduate students are likely to occur where the foundations of collective cultural identity have been shaken.

According to Brislin (1981), a niche refers to a clear and valued role in the host society that a sojourner can readily fill. The term “development niche” refers to the physical settings in which an individual lives, including daily routines, activities and the company of others. While occupying a niche, the students are appreciated by their hosts and gain satisfaction from doing work which is valued by others. The students can become so satisfied with their niche that they do not want to leave it. Some informants (A1, A5, B5, B15) pointed out that they became so settled in an English community that they did not want to return to Taiwan. In contrast, other informants (A10, A15, B1, B2, B8) expressed their eagerness to return to Taiwan as soon as possible.

Yet potentially multicultural attitudes and values may develop where cultural interchange takes place between cultures that are not totally disparate or where the rate of change is evolutionary rather than immediate (Altbach et al., 1985; Adler, 1977). The reorganisation of a culture, resulting in the formation of in-between attitudes, is more appropriate for the satisfactory adjustment of individuals in transitional situations (Biggs, 1990; Brislin, 1981; Dawson, 1969). Clearly, everyone

has his/her preferred model of learning. In some situations, models are available that present correct, acceptable behaviours. In this study, I found that Taiwanese postgraduate students often seek out a model, and sometimes the concept of learning from a model becomes institutionalised. Probably these models are extremely important in situations which are much longer in duration and which have greater consequences for the people involved:

*After the failure I encountered while I was abroad, I started to develop a total different way of thinking. That is, my behaviour depends not only on my own thought but also on how other people expect me to behave ... Consequently, I always try to be well-prepared to face any situation...(A7, Taiwan)*

### **S15. Reassessment of Values**

One view is that once established, the adult personality is rather stable and not easily changed without great personal struggle. The interaction with the new culture should be viewed as an experiential learning opportunity during which students have an unparalleled opportunity to acquire new intellectual and emotional skills. Sometimes, assessment of the consequences of behaviour adjustment requires that a distinction be made between what is adjustment or tension-reducing for the individual (Wan et al., 1992; Ying and Liese, 1994; Alland, 1973). Sometimes, adults will probably not change their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, but will try to adjust the situations they encounter.

*I confess that my English is far from perfect. Sometimes, I cannot express my ideas in English precisely. However, this does not mean that I am a stupid person. Sometimes I just do not want to*

*argue...(A1, Taiwan)*

*Comparing other classmates from other countries, I do find that the Taiwanese are smart and intelligent...(A2, Taiwan)*

*I was too late to attend the seminar today. I was very angry about the attendance record. My classmate said to me "Never mind! Taiwan is far away from here!" I suddenly felt I must learn how to face the situation with humour when I could not change the facts.*  
*(B4, England)*

### **S16. Self-conscious Development**

The development of an open mind, receptive to different ideas, concepts and behaviours, is crucial to success in an intercultural situation. A certain amount of "cultural self-analysis" might reveal much about a Taiwanese postgraduate student's own motivations and value systems. Such knowledge can contribute to increased communication skills and increased acceptance and understanding of others, and can be more productive. Until individuals have acquired enough self-knowledge to realise the true extent to which their outward personality is shaped by cultural habits and values, they will not be completely capable of comprehending or learning from the cultural habits and values of a different society. As Foust et al. (1981: 17) state, "When a cross-cultural adventure reveals to a person the extent to which outward behaviour (and many inner feelings as well) is shaped by arbitrary cultural habits and values, when that person can learn not to define himself or herself through those values, it becomes possible for that person to broaden his or her range of responses to

new situations and behaviours.”

In this study, A13, B1, B8 developed different approaches to what they learnt from England. This confirms that if individuals can really come to see it from the other's standpoint, they are likely to be less hostile and opposing, and might even change their position altogether (Lazarus, 1991):

*I learnt the way to deal with things from the staff here. I concentrate on one thing at one time. This seems quite ineffective compared to the Taiwanese style. However, I find it is much easier to exercise control, no matter what has to be done. (A13, Taiwan)*

*I learnt that I must first have self-esteem. Then people will hold me in esteem. And I do think that self-esteem has to be taken into account. I will be esteemed if I am confident or powerful or achievement-oriented. (B1, England)*

Sometimes, this sense of self-conscious development is a radical departure from the kinds of identities found in both traditional and mass societies. According to Adler (1977), the individual is neither totally a part of nor totally apart from his/her culture; he/she lives, instead, on the boundary. Furthermore, Adler states that as unique as he/she may be, the style of identity of the multicultural person arises from the myriad of forms that are present in this day and age. Therefore, an understanding of this new kind of person must be predicated on a clear understanding of cultural identity.

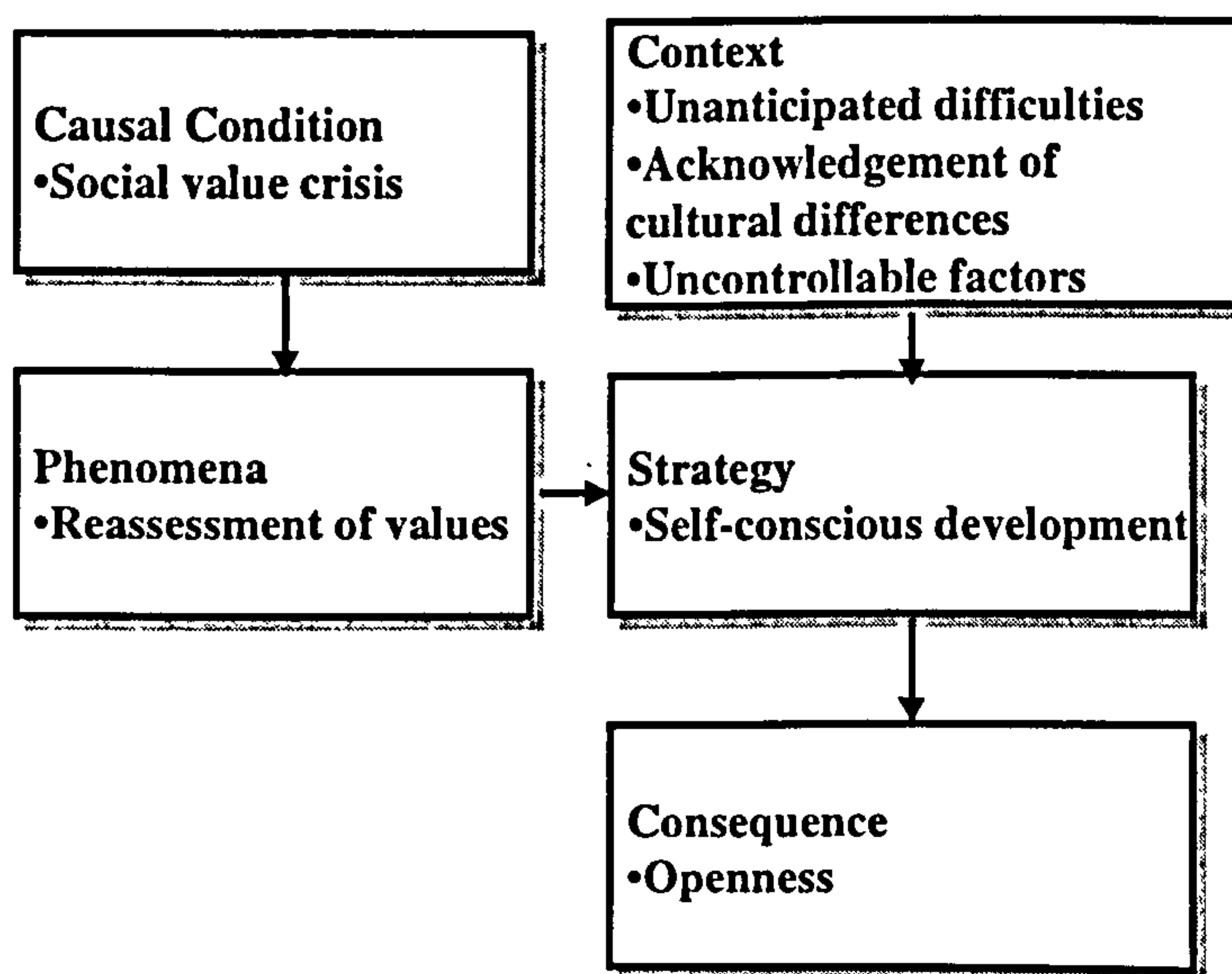
## **S17. Openness**

Studying with other students from different cultural backgrounds is a privilege; it presents an opportunity to gain mutual benefit by learning about other ways of seeing and being in the world. It involves not only seeing the world differently but also changing as a person because of it. This study reveals that Taiwanese postgraduate students in England became more world-minded in their thinking. This means that they became more accepting and tolerant of people from other cultures, and more aware that solutions to important problems demand contributions which transcend national borders. Some authors (e.g. Altbach et al., 1985; Baker and Siryk, 1989) state that the most effective sojourners have open minds which allow categories to be modified through experience. This allows an individual to begin a sojourn with some limited knowledge about the host culture. Specific experiences then act as training which allow students to discipline themselves in unique ways.

It has also been suggested (Tomich et al, 2000; Hutley, 1993; Church, 1982, Ying and Liese, 1994, 1990) that younger students are better adjusted because of their greater openness to interaction with the new environment. In this study, it was found that the younger Taiwanese students were more naive in some respects than the older students. On the other hand, some younger informants (A2, A14, B4, B14) did not necessarily conform to these patterns. It is simply not possible to say that these younger informants were better adjusted or showed greater openness to interacting with the new environment.

Attitudes toward different cultures may also involve rigid thinking about right and wrong based on one set of standards, the value attached to unquestioning obedience, beliefs about the importance of strict parental discipline, and a distrust of people who are different. Nevertheless, it is not doubted that adjustment to a different culture requires tolerance, flexibility and open-mindedness (Church, 1982, Ying and Liese, 1994). As Horner and Vandersluis (1981) state, openness to learning is directly reflected in our attitudes and behaviours by the demonstration of respect, love and acceptance of the other person, regardless of the nature of the need, problem or cultural perspective.

**Summary: the story line of self-regard**



**Figure 5.3: The Story Line of Self-Regard**

For the self-identity dimension, the depth of cultural shock is caused by personal beliefs and attitudes formed by the parent culture which conflict with those of the host culture. Conflict exists between two needs, both now internalised. In this study, the pattern of adjustment is termed *self-regard adjustment*. Such conflict may occur even

without a person's awareness, and when this happens I say that one or both of the needs involved is unconscious. When a student studies abroad, *social values crisis* arises and the crisis becomes a form of causal condition which ultimately leads to the *reassessment of values* of self. The student struggles to discover what is meaningful and meaningless in a situation, keeping in mind that cues learned in his/her own culture may not be relevant. In turn, the strategy of *self-conscious development* is followed in response to the earlier *reassessment of values*. However, this strategy is influenced by contextual markers: the extent of *unanticipated difficulties*, *acknowledgement of cultural differences and uncontrollable factors*. The *self-conscious development* strategy used by informants finally led to *openness*, which allows the individual to begin a sojourn with some limited knowledge of the host culture.

After Taiwanese postgraduate students had completed their studies abroad, they then encountered the shock of re-entry to their own culture. Informants A2, A5, A14, B5 and B10 found themselves forced to change their behaviour and attitude toward the events they encountered in Taiwan. They found it difficult to accept some situations when they first returned to Taiwan. This is because they had changed their values while they were in England.

### **5.3 The Second Dimension: Academic Pursuit**

International students often find that their academic experiences are extremely stressful because the academic demands of their programmes of study are heavy. Indeed, research indicates that for international students, problems associated with



academic experiences are more stress-provoking and more persistent than social or personal problems (Suen, 1998; Hull, 1978; Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Sharma, 1973). Tyssen et al. (2001) state that the postgraduate years are particularly stressful. Therefore, international postgraduate students are under a dual pressure in this context: from cultural differences and the demands of academia.

Taiwanese postgraduate students face many difficulties in their adjustment to higher education in England. In terms of the dimension that I have called “academic pursuit”, the main difficulties are: inadequate English-language proficiency and the need to complete various academic tasks (e.g. oral presentations, exams, essays and dissertations). Furthermore, at the cultural level, the philosophy of Confucianism is the most widely followed set of beliefs for most Taiwanese postgraduate students. Thus, they are likely to view their academic role and tasks from a different perspective than that of Western academics and students, and accordingly they tend to adopt particular approaches or strategies to accomplish these tasks (Hau and Salili, 1996; Rogers, 1998; Salili, 1995; Yan and Gaier, 1994). Taiwan's culture and educational system emphasise a view of knowledge as something to be conserved and reproduced, in contrast with Western systems, which emphasise a more speculative and critical approach. There are three core categories to this dimension, as shown in Table 5.3: *instrumental diversities, enhanced pressure undertaken, and logical conflict adjustment.*

**Table 5.3: Coding Themes and Core Categories of the Second Dimension:  
Academic Pursuit**

Coding Scheme (Subcategories)	Core Categories		
	Instrumental Diversities (5.3.1)	Enhanced Pressure Undertaken (5.3.2)	Logical Conflict (5.3.3)
P1. Instrumental diversities (condition)	✓		
P2. Classroom culture (phenomenon)	✓		
P3. Curriculum (phenomenon)	✓		
P4. Communication structure (context)	✓	✓	✓
P5. English-language proficiency (context)	✓	✓	✓
P6. Background knowledge (context)	✓		
P7. Withdrawal (strategy)	✓		
P8. Passive participation (consequence)	✓		
P9. Academic overload(condition)		✓	
P10. Goal ambiguity (condition)		✓	
P11. Ongoing problems (phenomenon)		✓	
P12. Time constraints (phenomenon)		✓	
P13. A sense of chaos (phenomenon)		✓	
P14. Instant learning (strategy)		✓	
P15. Achievement orientation (consequence)		✓	
P16. Being or doing (condition)			✓
P17. Logic diversity (phenomenon)			✓
P18. Dual-logic interchange (strategy)			✓
P19. Contingent behaviour (consequence)			✓

### 5.3.1 Instrumental Diversities

In this study, “instrumental diversities” refers to those acknowledged differences in formal education systems between the host and the home countries. The major types of interactions of persons with this type of adjustment centre around achieving specific tasks. According to Klein (1977), this type of adjustment characterises those with clear professional and academic goals and tasks to be accomplished (see also Brislin, 1981). Personal contact is maintained with fellow nationals; relating with hosts is conducted primarily by assuming professional roles. The coding categories P1 to P8 (Table 5.3) are incorporated under the heading of instrumental diversities, and we will consider each of them in turn.

## **P1. Instrumental Diversities**

For Taiwanese postgraduate students, the major tensions arose due to difficulties in accomplishing goals. The changes the students made in their behaviour were designed to serve their needs or, more specifically, to be instrumental in task accomplishment. Certain informants (A1, A9, B6 and B10) engaged in instrumental activities which may not appear at first glance to be task-related, as problems such as loneliness and frustration were sometimes addressed by students devoting even more time to their work. Some informants used study abroad as a chance to test themselves and as an opportunity to experience a different culture (A2, B4, B16). Others looked upon the experience as enhancing their career status (B5, B9). In fact, this is a task-oriented response, since the students see the increased status as helping them to achieve long-range goals. What is more, some of the informants stated that they wanted to completely change their lives in Taiwan (A3, A4, B6). After studying abroad, they returned to their goal-oriented lives, perhaps enriched and refreshed. They anticipated that during their sojourn they would feel free, relaxed and less anxious. However, according to them, they were not always relaxed during their stay since they felt under constant pressure to prove themselves by constantly overcoming new challenges.

Instrumental motives of self-conscious testing, status enhancement or even escape were found in these informants. Some informants anticipated that after the study abroad, they would ideally return home with increased feelings of self-confidence (A1, A5, B4, B12), even though they fully realised that they would still face difficulties upon their return (A4, A12, B1).

## **P2. Classroom Culture**

Some situations have clearly defined norms that all people accept. As long as people abide by the well-structured types of inter-group interaction allowed by these norms, there is no conflict, tension or stress. Other situations are less structured since there are no guidelines regarding what behaviour is acceptable or correct. Taiwanese postgraduate students may be expected to experience more stress in the UK classroom than students from EU countries because of the cultural differences between the two groups (Hutley, 1993; Surdam and Collins, 1984; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Sadowsky and Plake, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Babkier, Cox and Miller, 1980).

Taiwanese postgraduate students may be excessively deferential to authority of their lecturers, and may thus be reluctant to question their lecturers' opinions (Samuelowicz, 1987). Classroom experience can involve role expectations that are clearly defined and which conflict with the students' previous academic experiences. The resulting stress can have a strong, negative impact on students' experience in the English educational environment:

*I can even feel that some professors don't like Asian students to attend their classes since we (Asians) are too quiet and are not good enough (according to their standards)... (A14, Taiwan; B4, England)*

*The classroom in Taiwan is teacher-centred. However, I found that here it is student-centred. (A10, A13, A16, Taiwan; B5, B4, B9, B11, England)*

*As for my supervisor, she is very busy, so I seldom bother her. I don't know if it's normal to study so "individually". Usually, my supervisor tells us she will give a presentation the following week. I feel a lot of pressure since the learning system here is rather different from that in Taiwan. I have to have a clear idea about what I am going to learn before the terms start. (B11, England)*

However, it cannot be assumed that all Taiwanese postgraduate students will find the same cross-cultural educational experiences to be equally stressful. Individuals differ in their perceptions of the severity of the same academic demands and of their resources for coping with these demands. Nevertheless, all students need time to adjust to the new classroom culture at the beginning of their study abroad.

### **P3. Curriculum**

Academic courses designed to integrate the knowledge and skills gained while abroad into a formal academic programme provide a way for students to obtain academic credit for their cross-cultural learning experiences and simultaneously to deal with the problem of adjusting to study abroad. Most importantly, Taiwanese postgraduate students need practical information about the educational system they will become part of while they are abroad. They need to understand the academic calendar, the formats for instruction (e.g. lectures, seminar discussions, laboratory work, etc.), methods of evaluation, and the intellectual skills required to succeed in the system.

The labour market for graduates is becoming increasingly international in scope as the mobility of graduates and the demands for internationally - aware professionals

continue to grow (Wagner and Schnitzer, 1991). The links between higher education and the labour market are two-way: while demands from the labour market influence the content and methods of study programmes, there are also impacts on the labour market as increased numbers of graduates come to possess skills and knowledge that are internationally applicable. Both aspects need to be taken into account.

Differences in curricula in certain fields currently reflect how graduates in these fields are used within specific national and regional settings. This is particularly the case in professional fields. However, some informants (A4, A11, B5, B16) stated that they did not receive adequate assistance in planning their academic programmes from the point of view of taking into account what they wanted to do when they returned to Taiwan:

*I wonder if my friends will ask me why I studied abroad, as what I learnt from here seems to be no different from what I would learn in Taiwan or anywhere else... (B16, England).*

Some informants (A1, A2, A9, A10, A12) stated that in the main they learnt how to solve problems. Others (A6, A14, B5, B19) said that they thought their working experience was more important than their academic training.

#### **P4. Communication Structure**

Culture is a powerful force that shapes our thoughts, perceptions, behaviour and communication (Briggs, 1999). A number of skills relate to the ability to communicate with others from different backgrounds. Communication here can be referred to as “intercultural communication”. This arises when people of different cultures attribute meaning to each other’s behaviour. The result can be misunderstanding, misjudgement, and difficulty, but it can also be enlightenment. For

example: in English, the term “good try!” means that you are not very successful but you made an effort. However, most of the informants in this study were aware that in Chinese “good try!” means “well done!” The variation across cultures is greater in terms of the structural aspects of language and non-verbal behaviours than in terms of the verbal content of dialogue.

It has been suggested (Briggs, 1999; Cortazzi and Jin, 1997; Mullins et al, 1995; Quintreel and Westwood, 1994; Brislin, 1981; Foust et al., 1981) that communication skills are especially important in a cross-cultural contact. A basic necessity in communication is to understand the meaning of what is said by others. In a cross-cultural context, understanding is harder to achieve as people bring different backgrounds, needs and values to the communication setting. Communication factors are not independent of those already mentioned, but are involved in every aspect of the cross-cultural experience. The capacity to communicate effectively will influence the general satisfaction of the parties in all realms of contact and activity. Briggs (1999) suggests that in order to ensure that there is genuine communication rather than a series of misunderstood speeches, individuals should state the position of the other to ensure that the latter is satisfied that he/she has been understood.

Some informants (A10, A15, A16, B7, B9) stated that they had developed different attitudes toward towards different cultural contexts. That is, they were more direct toward people from Western countries (e.g., England, Europe, America) than to people from Taiwan. Furthermore, the majority of informants were concerned about embarrassing others in public. Accordingly, they were polite during communication. However, it is interesting to note that some informants (A15, B9) were able to go beyond simplifying everything into stereotypes in the situations they encountered.

Cultural diversity makes communication more difficult. Obviously, in a multicultural environment (such as a taught Master's programme), the differences are increased as there may be international students from many different parts of the world. According to some informants (A5, A11, A12, B3, B9), understanding the other side's culture allows a more correct interpretation of verbal and non-verbal communication. However, this knowledge can only be gained by a combination of the prior study of the culture in question and personal experience.

#### **P5. English-language Proficiency**

Most researchers (e.g. Dillon and Swann, 1997; Hutley, 1993; Stafford et al., 1978; Tompson and Tompson, 1996; Yin and Liese, 1994; Klinerberg and Hull, 1979; Smalley, 1963; Church, 1982) view language shock as one of the basic elements of culture shock because it is in the language domain that many of the cures to social relations are to be found. English proficiency (in terms of reading, writing, speaking and listening abilities) is perceived by Taiwanese postgraduate students to mean their English competence in dealing with the required academic tasks, as measured by their TOEFL, IELTS (or WELT) score. Clearly, there are variables other than language proficiency that influence the students' academic success. Nevertheless, some of the informants stressed that they would have performed better if their language proficiency had been better (A11, A16, B7). Some authors (Dillon and Swann, 1997; Choi, 1997; White, Brown and Suddick, 1983; Wan, Chapman and Biggs, 1992) state that perceived language proficiency is a strong and consistent predictor of cross-cultural stress that is experienced by international students in social interactions, academic adjustment and personal adjustment.



There are six general areas of English language ability related to academic life (Chapman, Wan and Xu, 1988):

1. understanding spoken English,
2. reading comprehension,
3. writing academic papers/research reports,
4. participating in class discussion,
5. taking notes in class, and
6. conversing with faculty and other students.

In this study, English language skills do not seem to override other concerns. Taiwanese postgraduate students who have satisfactory TOEFL or IELTS scores still have an enormous amount of difficulty in their academic pursuits. The results of this study suggest that students' eventual academic adjustment depends on training that pays close attention to "functional" language skills – such things as note taking, dealing with faculty matters, and participating in class discussion (Chapman, Wan and Xu, 1988).

Nevertheless, the difficulties that the informants had with English caused them many academic problems, even though many of them had previously studied English. The main difficulty that the majority of students encountered was understanding the content of lectures. They also found it difficult to express their opinions in class (A1, A16) and write assignments (A14, B4). Furthermore, having problems with written English also affected their abilities to take tests (B10, B19). "Frustration" was the word most commonly used by the majority of the informants to describe how they felt when they experienced difficulties with English. Accordingly, it is clear that language ability is reflective of both self-confidence and the capacity to interact

successfully with the environment (Tomich et al, 2000; Tompson and Tompson, 1996; Church, 1982; Yin and Liese, 1990).

## **P6. Background Knowledge**

Although there are undoubtedly exceptions based on individual capabilities, the Taiwanese postgraduate students who possessed sufficient background knowledge on their courses were more satisfied with their academic pursuits and achievements than the students who did not have such knowledge. The background knowledge examined in this study consists of students' prior academic study and work experience. The students were given opportunities to stretch themselves beyond the level that they brought to the programme. While this finding may hold true for some informants (e.g. A15, B9), the opportunity to use ready-developed skills was more important for the majority.

Some informants (A3, B4, B5) had high IELTS scores and still experienced a high level of academic difficulty. This may imply that institutions or academic programmes cannot judge international students' ability to accomplish academic tasks solely on the basis of their formal IELTS scores. It has therefore been suggested that multiple measures should be used to assess students' potential academic ability (Xu, 1991). Accordingly, academic coping ability can be conceptualised as the combination of students' perceived ability to successfully accomplish the required academic tasks and their perceived language proficiency:

*Yes, I set up my own achievements. I had expected that these studies would not be easy, but I had not expected that they would be so hard.*

*I worried a lot about that, and I still do. Due to lack of sufficient course background, I feel very frustrated...(B16, England)*

*That remained a problem for me, because for me everything was new, whereas someone from the EU countries has a lot of experience with the policies of Europe. However, I had absolutely no idea at the beginning of the course... (A16, Taiwan)*

Some informants (A6, A14, B7) who pursued MA/MSc degree programmes were often in a different field from that of their undergraduate studies. At first, their English ability did not cause problems. According to the informants, however, this seemed to depend on the structure of the course. For example, English ability is more important in social science than in the field of science (A14, A16, B4). Furthermore, when some informants (A12, B7, B14) received positive feedback on course assessment, they felt that their English ability seemed not to be “good enough” to interact with people during their sojourn period.

*I think the problems arose at the beginning. I had no confidence in my English. Furthermore, everything was totally new for me. It was really a big challenge for me... Now, I find it seems much easier to handle. I feel more comfortable in my ability to succeed in my studies as I got a high grade for my assignment (B7, England).*

## **P7. Withdrawal**

Most Taiwanese postgraduate students in the study experienced difficulties when they were expected to participate in classroom discussions because of their lack of

confidence in their English abilities. They coped by withdrawing into the role of passive receivers:

*I can easily resist talking out of turn, even when I'm excited and want to express an idea...(A3, Taiwan)*

*I feel very uncomfortable about having to speak in public. Therefore, I prefer to keep silent in the seminar and the group discussions...(B19, England)*

Furthermore, Higginbotham (1979) suggest that sojourners actively try to make sense out of new situations but inevitably will make a number of errors. That is, some individuals may adapt dysfunctionally to their new environment and thus international students find themselves in a new social setting producing undesirable, disruptive experiences that can reduce self-esteem and control (see also Hau and Salili, 1996; Rogers, 1998; Salili, 1995; Yan and Gaier, 1994), or interrupt the moral identity process. The result is likely to be unhappy outcomes:

*In the beginning when I went back to Taiwan, not only my friends and family but also I myself sensed that I seemed too quiet. Sometimes I acted as an observer rather than actor. Then I recalled that I always remained silent and inactive when I was in England. (A14, Taiwan)*

## **P8. Passive Participation**

Most informants said that unless they were sure that their opinions were correct or wished to say something very significant, they preferred to keep silent in group discussions. Some informants (A3, A6, A14, B6, B10, B19) with this learning style were afraid that they could not cope with their studies, that they did not do well, and

that they did not use their study materials very effectively. With little confidence in their communication capabilities, they were disappointed in themselves and built up failure expectations in the course of their studies. They worried about their own views being inappropriate in course discussions. In many cases, they decided which goals they should be committed to by observing other significant persons. Therefore, they tended to exhibit classroom behaviours that were relatively passive when compared to the behaviours of students from other countries:

*I could have participated more actively if my English had been as good as the English of British people...Sometimes, I could have made some very good points. I think my thoughts were very creative, but I could not express them very well. Therefore, I preferred to keep my points to myself instead. (A6, Taiwan)*

*I always keep silent in the class even when I really want to say something. Maybe I am afraid to be laughed at if I may make mistakes in grammar or my pronunciation. I do not think they (teacher or students) will be patient with my explanation...(A14, Taiwan)*

## Summary: the story line of instrumental diversities

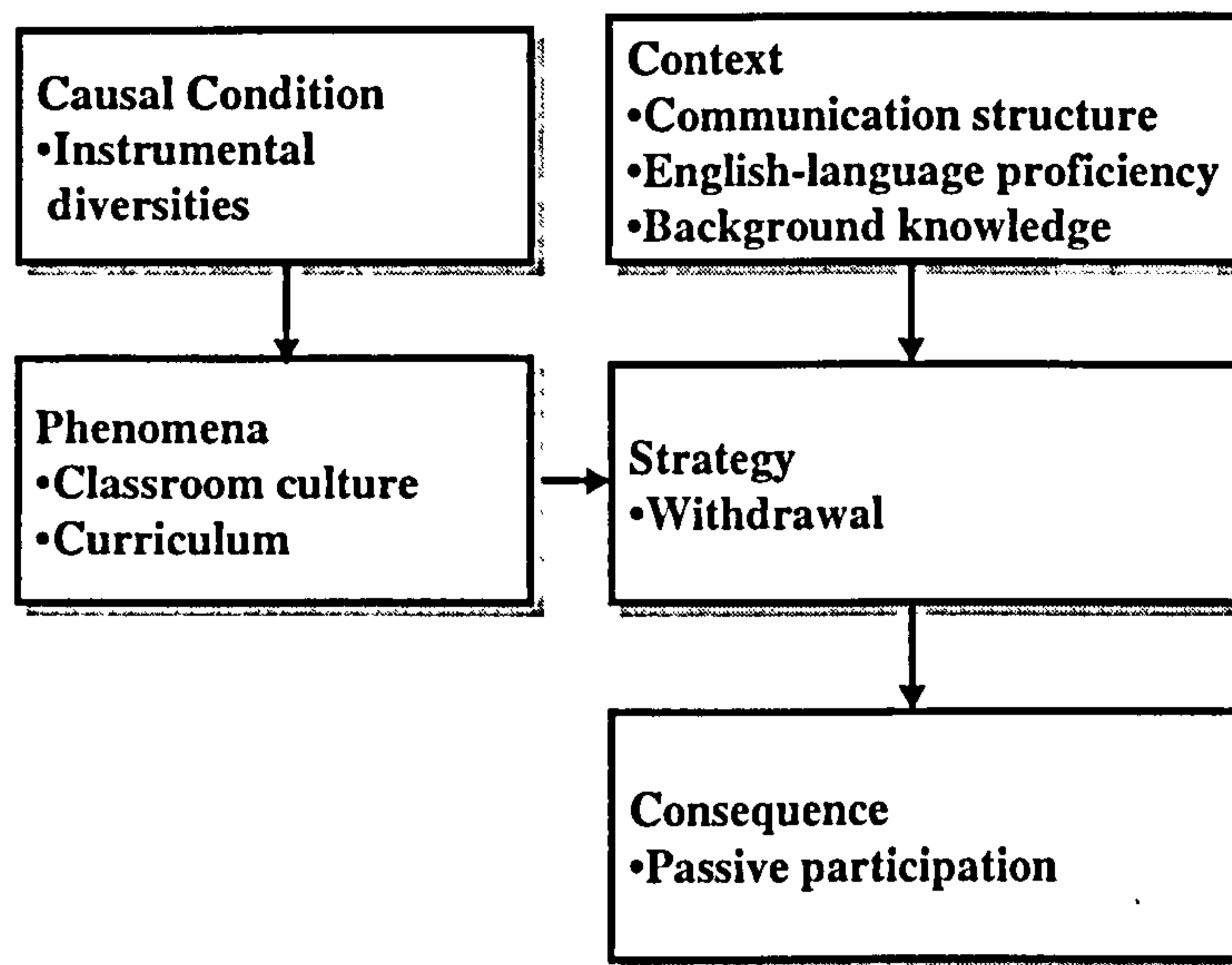


Figure 5.4: The Story line of Instrumental Diversities Adjustment

When students study abroad, the emergence of *instrumental diversities* becomes a form of causal condition that ultimately leads to two subjective phenomena as reported by informants: (a) *classroom culture* and (b) *curriculum diversity*. The *classroom culture* is different in England from that in Taiwan because it is teacher-centred. Thus, Taiwanese postgraduate students have to learn not only to express their attitudes and opinions properly, but also how to defend their arguments. Regarding *curriculum diversity*, in Taiwan most students tend to be dependent on their tutors, i.e. they are inter-dependent and not independent. Sometimes, they have considerable difficulty in thinking independently. This was especially so for those informants studying the social sciences (A11, A14, B10). However, in science programmes, even though the curriculum seems much easier to handle, it is also difficult as the courses are really intensive (A1, A9, B2, B16, B18). In many cases, the *withdrawal strategy* is developed in response to the curriculum and the challenge of a different *classroom culture*. This strategy is influenced by particular contextual markers related to the causal condition (*instrumental diversity*) and the resulting phenomena. These contextual markers are *communication structure*, *English-*

*language proficiency* and *background knowledge*. The strategy commonly used by the informants has one major consequence: they become a *passive participation* in the class. The majority of informants all stated in one way or another that they played varying roles -- from passive to active -- in class. However, they also stated that they wished they could be *more active*.

### 5. 3.2 *Enhanced Pressure Undertaken*

The second core category of dimension 2 (academic pursuit adjustment) is “enhanced pressure undertaken” (see Table 5.3). Obviously, some distress while trying to adjust to a new culture is understandable. However, my main concern here is with the extra effort needed to comprehend what is happening, which adds to students’ burden by increasing their fatigue and drawing on their reserves of energy. This “enhanced pressure adjustment” incorporates coding categories P4, P5 and P9 to P15 as indicated in Table 5.3. As I have already considered P4 and P5 in the previous section, I will focus here on categories P9 to P15.

#### **P9. Academic Overload**

There are additional characteristics of institutions that may impact on informants’ adjustment. University selectivity represents the general level of academic ability among the student body and therefore poses challenges of academic adjustment for students. Some students (B3, B10, B12) encountered pressure from academic work and found it difficult to pursue their degrees because they experienced a degree of overload that they could not absorb:

*Lacking a relative knowledge background, I found it was hard for me to understand the context of the lecture. I had to spend extra*

*time on preparation and ask my classmates to help...(A9, Taiwan)*

*I'm reading academic journals for my assignments at a crawler's speed compared with local students... (B3, England)*

*After my residential course last weekend, I feel very frustrated. There were too many articles to me. Reading is a big...big problem to me. I think my life is a bit of a mess now. I feel panic. I cannot discuss with my classmates because I read slowly... (B10, England)*

*The course here is really intensive. Just two weeks ago I handed in my essay and last week I was assigned another essay. Of course, this essay is much more difficult than the last one was for me. Anyway, I have to do it. This essay is a groupwork essay. There are five students in my group. Two are native, one is from Hong-Kong, and the other two are Taiwanese, including me. Ha! It will be a tough job. I have to work hard not only on the content of the essay, but also on communication in English. Whoops! I will learn a lot from this group work. Hoho~~~~~(B12, England).*

### **P10. Goal Ambiguity**

TPSs studying abroad are usually quite skillful at putting problems aside if they have clear goals to which they are deeply committed. International students, for instance,



are highly motivated to obtain a university degree. Their intensity often stems from a fear that home country reference group members will think ill of the returnees if they fail in their quest.

If people deal with familiar situations, they know how to behave so that their goals might be attained. They know how to interact with others whom they might meet, what the probable response of the others will be, and even the type of events which might change the situation. When interacting in other cultures, however, most situations are unfamiliar. Brislin (1981) states that cultural differences can be considered as situational variables since sojourners have to confront them directly so that they can achieve their goals.

Certain informants (A10, A14, B4, B19) experienced times when they could not make sense of their academic work, when they could not predict the actions of others, or when their own habitual actions seemed to produce bizarre responses in others. They feared that they had made a mistake in deciding to go to a different country, and they considered returning home immediately. Some did just that (A4). There was uncertainty about educational and career plans due to new insights and opportunities gained through experience abroad (B16). Similarly, frustration built up in the students' professional situation due to the pressure to study or work in a chosen field (B4). Their previous experiences with studying had raised doubts about their long-term goals. Typically, there was a somewhat ambivalent, insecure attitude toward their studies (with no guarantee of a degree at the end). They doubted their own capabilities to succeed and did not know whether they would continue.

Informants indicated that most difficulties were due to new performance standards: *“Not getting the grades I was used to. I was never at the bottom of a bell curve before”* (B4). Some informants (A10, A14, B4, B16) felt the pressures of no longer being at the top of the class. Informant A14 recalled experiencing difficulties in *“Getting adjusted to no longer being one of the brightest students in the school.”* Clearly, this is a problem that can affect all international students, indeed all students not just those from Taiwan.

### **P11. Ongoing Problems**

Some informants (A10, A14, B2, B4) had a lot of trouble with their academic performance. They had great difficulty in selecting the most important parts of the study materials and in distinguishing between major and minor points. They considered everything to be of equal importance and paid equal attention to all parts of the course contents. They did not know what they had to remember, and the study materials were too voluminous to memorise everything. Their most important processing activities were reading and re-reading the study materials many times:

*My course is too heavy. I always spend a lot of time in preparation. I do think I haven't ever studied hard like this while I studied in Taiwan. However, I still think that I could not keep abreast with my classmates...(B2, England)*

Often international students find the objectives, instructions and introductions given by the teacher, or the details of a book, too vague and not clear enough to support their learning (Vermunt, 1996). Often they experience tensions between questions and assignments that deal with broad issues and which distract them from important

factual information. The only variations in their approach to studying are of a quantitative nature: the more difficult a chapter or learning unit is, the more time they spend on it by re-reading it. This was the case with informants A12, A13, B2 and B16.

### **P12. Time Constraints (Time Management)**

People in some situations find that there are deadlines which force immediate action. Decisions about recommended behaviours often suffer because not all alternatives can be given adequate consideration. Since other situations have fewer time constraints, a more leisurely, careful examination of alternatives and their consequences can be undertaken. After reviewing a great deal of information on cross-cultural adjustment, I therefore, concluded that the existence of a transitional stage was a major factor in lessening the difficulties sojourners face while coping with another culture.

In the present study, the time constraints referred to are those in situations where informants faced the challenge of balancing essay-writing, course attendance and dissertation preparation. The most frequently described difficulty for informants was time management (A1, A10, A12, B2, B4, B10) – an issue which arose because their courses were typically very intensive. Informant B10 stated that he had problems *“learning to manage my time to do all my work and still be involved. I still have trouble”*. Informant A12 stated that *“learning to manage time effectively was the most difficult aspect of the MSc programme”*. Informant A10 added:

*I recalled the time of my MSc studies. I did nothing apart from attending the course and writing the essays and a dissertation.*

*The course was very intensive... (A10, Taiwan)*

### **P13. A Sense of Chaos**

Some informants (A 10, A14, B10, B16, B19) had trouble seeing the relationship between the various parts of the subject matter and integrating these parts into a comprehensible whole. They also had difficulties conceptualising and applying the subject matter and they saw little relationship between what they studied and their everyday lives. Thus, for some Taiwanese postgraduate students, their time spent in pursuing a degree was chaotic:

*I used to work and underachieve ... poor me! If someone can set the dissertation title for me, maybe I can do it better. Maybe I am too dependent -- I need someone to suggest everything for me. I feel panic now. I can't sleep now; maybe I am too nervous. Today, I read a lot ... Reading is still quite hard for me. I spent a lot of time on reading, but only finished 17 pages...(B10, England)*

*It is very difficult to select. I do not know what is important concerning my assignment. When I was on my own it was very difficult to find the main point of the literature. I never know all that the tutor wants me to know...(A10, Taiwan)*

*Some of my classmates can understand the main point as soon as they have read it, but that is not the case with me... (B17, England)*

#### **P14. Instant Learning**

Informants with low ability or little motivation tend to develop “survival” strategies, that is, ways of completing tasks with only a superficial understanding of the text content. At the other extreme, able, well-motivated students develop sophisticated problem-solving strategies (Johnson and Ngor, 1996). In terms of survival within the education system, weak students who use survival strategies can complete tasks they could not otherwise complete, and this means that students obtain marks in examinations that they would otherwise not obtain.

There is growing evidence that the level and quality of academic performance that is attained through learning depends greatly on the particular learning activities displayed in the learning process (see, for example, Vermetten, Lodewijks and Vermunt, 1999). Learning spontaneously uses specific patterns or combinations of learning activities which are called learning strategies (Vermunt, 1996). Qualitative studies have identified the two most basic approaches as “surface” and “deep” (Marton et al., 1984). Factor analytic studies have not only confirmed these two approaches but have added a third common approach: the “achieving” (Biggs, 1987; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983).

The informants emphasised the variability of their learning strategies and sensitivity to context while they pursued their academic degrees. The results indicate that the same informants took different approaches under different circumstances (e.g. reading for learning, completing essays and a dissertation, and studying for an exam):

*Every week for my core course I have to prepare an oral presentation for 15 minutes, which at first is a big burden for*

*me, but now I am used to it. Maybe it's because I have changed the standard for my achievement, not that my abilities have improved as I just want to pass it. However, I was always frustrated by not being able to express my ideas clearly and fluently (B11, England)*

Taiwanese postgraduate students adopting “deep” and “achieving” approaches to learning tend to be the most successful academically. Moreover, positive academic self-esteem seems to be associated with the adoption of these approaches (Watkins, Reghi and Astilla, 1991). These results are consistent with the 3P Model of Learning (Biggs and Telfer, 1987) which depicts self-esteem as one of the causal factors in the adoption of deeper learning strategies and suggests that higher grades are associated with that adoption.

### **P15. Achievement Orientation**

In order to gain more insight into possible differences in learning processes across differing contexts, informants were asked additional questions related to the difficulties they experienced, time management, and exam, essay and dissertation preparation. Surface approaches were reported more often when a course was perceived to put a strong emphasis on examination performance (B7, B16). Such approaches were characterised by attempts to memorise sufficient isolated facts and fragments of arguments to pass examinations, even though the students knew that this method would not help with problem solving. However, as informant B6 claimed, “*I cannot understand the C++ programme, but I try to memorise it instead. However, I can apply the Java based approach to the C++*”. Or as informants A10 and A11

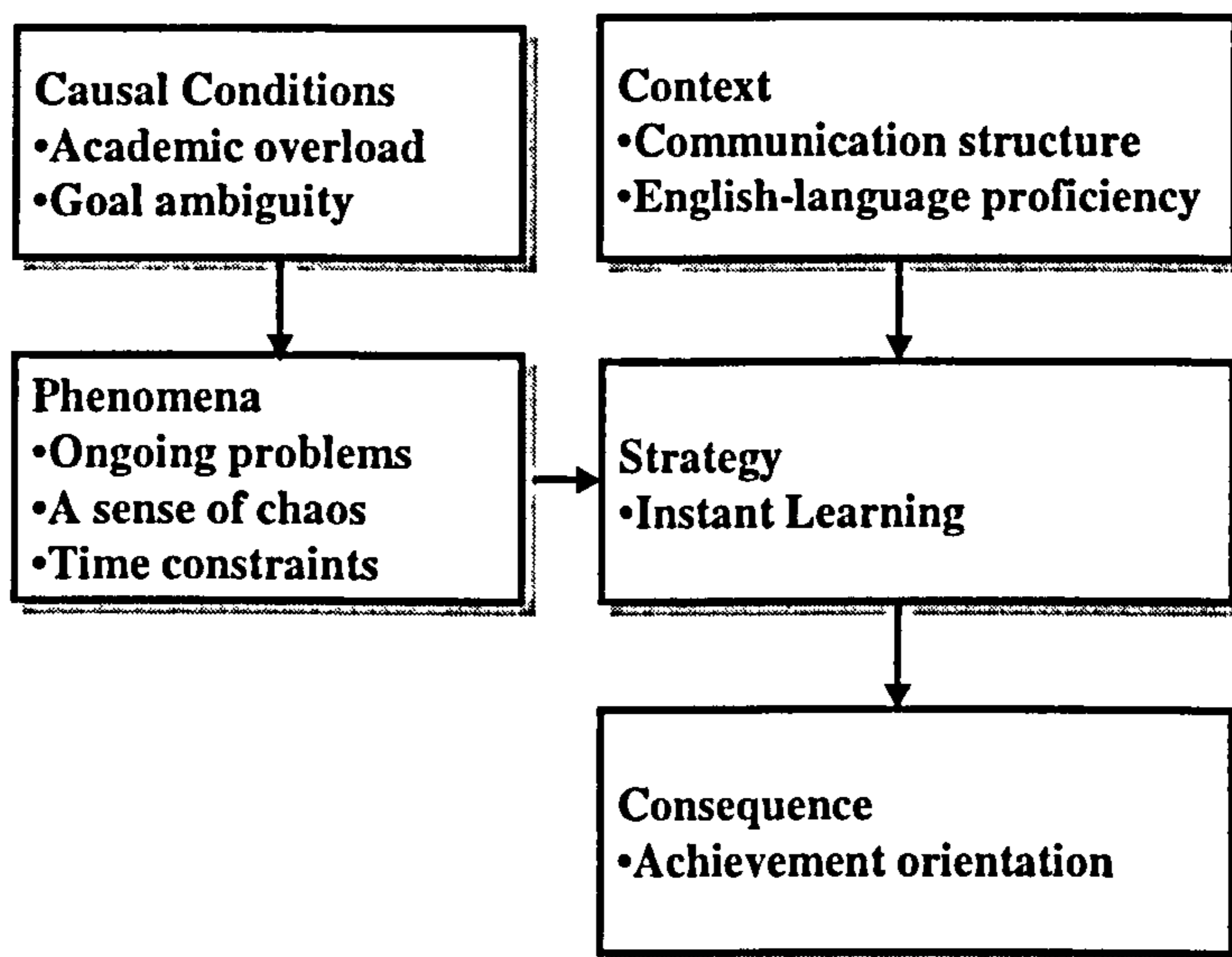
stated, "*there was no time for me to understand everything; I just had to pass it*". This "narrow" approach is characterised by the particular sequence understand-memorise-understand-memorise and tends to be utilised for a task that is clearly defined by the teachers (Kember and Gow, 1989). Using this learning style, the informants strongly directed themselves toward the information supplied by instruction, but they did not fully grasp it.

Informants A10, A12, A13, B7, B10 and B16 noticed that they did not have a sense of what was important, that the quantity of the study materials was far too large to process in a reasonable time, and that their pace of studying was too slow. Informants B4 and B19 also experienced problems with testing and evaluating their learning results. They were strongly focused on the questions, assignments, and self-tests supplied in the course materials or by teachers, but what they needed to know for the exam remained unclear to them. Their only adjustment strategy when they did not understand something was to continue reading and re-reading the difficult parts. They realised that their current learning style did not suffice any more, but they did not know how to approach their studies in a better way.

When students study abroad, *academic overload* and *goal ambiguity* operate as causal conditions which ultimately lead to subjective phenomena as reported by informants: *ongoing problems, a sense of chaos* and *time constraints*. The *instant learning* strategy is developed in response to those subjective phenomena. This strategy is influenced by particular contextual markers related to the two causal conditions and resulting phenomena. These contextual markers are the same as for the previous core

category: *communication structure* and *English-language proficiency*. The strategy used by informants finally has one consequence: *achievement orientation* in the class.

**Summary: the story line of enhanced pressure undertaken**



**Figure 5.5: The Story Line of Enhance Pressure Undertaken**

Some informants (A1, A9, A14, B2, B10, B19) recalled their method of study. They said that they were too busy to write their assignments and deal with the requirements of their tutors and supervisors. What they learnt was not the content of the curriculum, but the process and ability of problem solving.

**5.3.3 Logical Conflict**

Higher education aims to educate people to think, decide, and keep on learning independently (Vermunt, 1996). The majority of informants stated that they learnt different logical thinking styles while they were studying and writing their assignments and dissertations. According to them, they felt happy with this change even though it was painful to adjust to the logical conflict at the beginning. This represents the third core category of the academic pursuit dimension on cross-cultural



adjustment. It contains six sub-categories for coding: *being or doing*, *logical diversity*, *dual-logic interchange*, and *contingent behaviour*, plus *communication structure* and *English-language proficiency*. The last two have already been described above.

### **P16. Being or Doing**

The most serious problem that the Taiwanese postgraduate students faced in pursuing a degree was the philosophical issue of knowledge acquisition. Unlike logical training in the West, for the Confucianist knowledge acquisition can be separated into two phases: knowing (making sense) and disciplining (practice). The tutor takes responsibility for the knowing phases, which emphasise “what” has to be studied. In this phase, the only thing that pupils need to do is to remember what the tutor taught them. Following this, the superior pupils can realise the true meaning (why and how) of what they acquired from school. The Confucian education system emphasises after-school discipline rather than class training. The advantage is that pupils can develop their own disciplinary methodology and can learn without a tutor. However, from ancient China until the present, only those who specialise in “memory” can pass the Chinese style of examination and succeed in academic life. Today, the Ministry of Education of Taiwan still struggles with how to reform the education system by eliminating the “crammer” style of education tradition (MOE, 2001). For obvious reasons, the experience of cross-cultural contact leads many students to change their attitudes towards education.

Since the system also emphasises “self-discipline”, the Taiwanese postgraduate students in the UK felt hindered by the inefficiency of learning. Some informants defined their own tasks as, among other things, being motivated, being interested in

the subject matter, being involved in their studying and putting energy into it

*I dislike studying for the sake of only being able to reproduce knowledge in an exam and forget it afterwards. I rather see it as my own responsibility to perform most learning functions (B4, England)*

Some Taiwanese postgraduate students realised that it was necessary to improve their way of thinking. For example, informants B5, B9 and B10 thought that they should keep their eyes on the meaning of theories (the knowing phase) and mimic what the theories made sense of (the disciplining phase):

*Being motivated, I told myself that I have to like it and have to be actively engaged in it. Putting energy into it is not just taking everything, but also trying to think critically about things, trying to make the subject matter come alive for myself. (A10, Taiwan)*

According to informants A1, A9, A12 and B11, the assignments stimulated them to give their own interpretations, to apply the subject matter, and to involve supplementary literature, newspapers, and the like. They learned purposefully and in general did what was recommended in the lectures and study aids. Most informants saw the main goal of their studies as learning to use the knowledge they acquired. They wanted to utilise in practice the experience they gained during their studies:

*I try to apply it in practice. I think I get knowledge by studying, and of course it is very useful that I can also apply these things*

*when I find a job in the future. Maybe, also, I just apply it in practice for myself by looking around in my own environment, seeing what happens there, and comparing that to what I have learned and done...(B5, England)*

### **P17. Logical Diversity**

Cooperation with fellow students was considered to be very important by informants. The affective functions that students attach to this cooperation include: getting support from others, motivating each other to carry on at weak moments, and noticing that other students have the same problems and questions. Some informants (A6, A16, B3, B7) also found that it was important and useful to consult other students when they did not understand something. However, in a multi-cultural context good cooperation is based on the quality of communication. Informants B11, B10 and B4 experienced diverse ways of thinking:

*I can feel the cultural impact, which is strong...the Eastern logic is very different from the Western one. It takes time to involve us. Anyway, I will do my best and survive. (B11, England)*

*I found my classmates who are from Greece and India had different logics in course discussions. They just focused on the product rather than the whole process perspective. Probably they lacked the business training compared to me. (B10, England).*

*It was very interesting to learn from the group discussions. At first, I found myself always focusing on the macro-perspective rather than my classmates' focus on the micro-perspective. I just wonder if this is because the educational culture is different. The traditional Chinese heritage always teaches us to examine the things from a macro-perspective. (B4, England)*

### **P18. Dual-logic Interchange**

As mentioned before, in communication with people, informants (A10, A15, A16, B7 and B9) confessed that they had developed different attitudes towards different cultural contexts. That is, they were more direct towards the people from Western (e.g., the UK, European and American) countries than the people from Taiwan. In learning, some informants (A2, A7, B14) stated that they studied to deepen their interests, to develop as a person, or for the sake of studying itself, since they found this pleasant. They wanted to become acquainted with the subject area, were curious about it and wanted to know everything they could learn. The most efficient way to do so was to change their way of thinking to the Western style. This mean developing a dual-logic system:

*The most important thing about studying is that I am engaged with myself, that I try to make myself sharp, and especially to stay that way. I do not study for a career, but really only because I want to develop myself. (A2, Taiwan)*

*I like to sharpen my thoughts with the ideas of others. I find it*

*fascinating to follow the ideas of others, think about them and develop other versions of them. (B14)*

In this study, informants also tried to apply in practice the lessons they gained from a course. They used knowledge acquired through their studies to interpret and think about related phenomena that they observed via the media. They recognised phenomena in daily life that they had heard about in lectures or read about in their textbooks.

### **P19. Contingent Behaviour**

When an individual engages in behaviour that is rewarded externally, or when an emotion is followed by positive and negative consequences, these behaviours and attitudes are apt to become habitual responses in similar contexts. Reward and punishment connect learning theory to emotional development in part by tying learning to pain and pleasure and to events in the real world with negative and positive consequences, which in turn contribute to the learning of social motives (Lazarus, 1991).

Expectation is a cognitive concept that refers to what is going on in an individual's mind. Lazarus (1991) states that for the cognitive psychologist, conditioning is best understood in terms of events such as expectation, knowledge, and appraisal in the mind of the individual. With the exception, again, of certain students whose adjustment will be facilitated by accepting monism, most students will not experience a complete role acclimatisation (Brislin, 1981). Rather, they will adopt a certain role consistent with their goals but will not necessarily change old behaviour patterns or even bring newly developed role behaviours back to Taiwan. At times, to be sure,

role acclimatisation has to be quite sophisticated. Most of the informants understood how their role could interfere with the power base possessed by certain influential hosts. They therefore had to adopt roles that increased their chances of success within their academic disciplines. For example, certain professors had more influence and could offer more assistance than others. Other professors gave inadequate and delayed feedback to the students' proposals, and were judged negatively by other students and colleagues. By association, their assistants also became tainted. Accordingly, some of the Taiwanese students developed contingent behaviour in different situations:

*I find tutorials important and useful because there I can ask questions more directly than in lectures. If I cannot understand something, I can ask until I do understand...(A10, Taiwan).*

*At the beginning, I felt a little uncertain and lacking in confidence in myself as I faced so many troubles, so many challenges that I hadn't encountered before. The way British people evaluate things -- the way they handle things -- is so different from mine. Sometimes I am just confused with what they do. Nevertheless, I am more familiar with the British way and deal with things better... (B12, England)*

## Summary: the story line of logical conflict

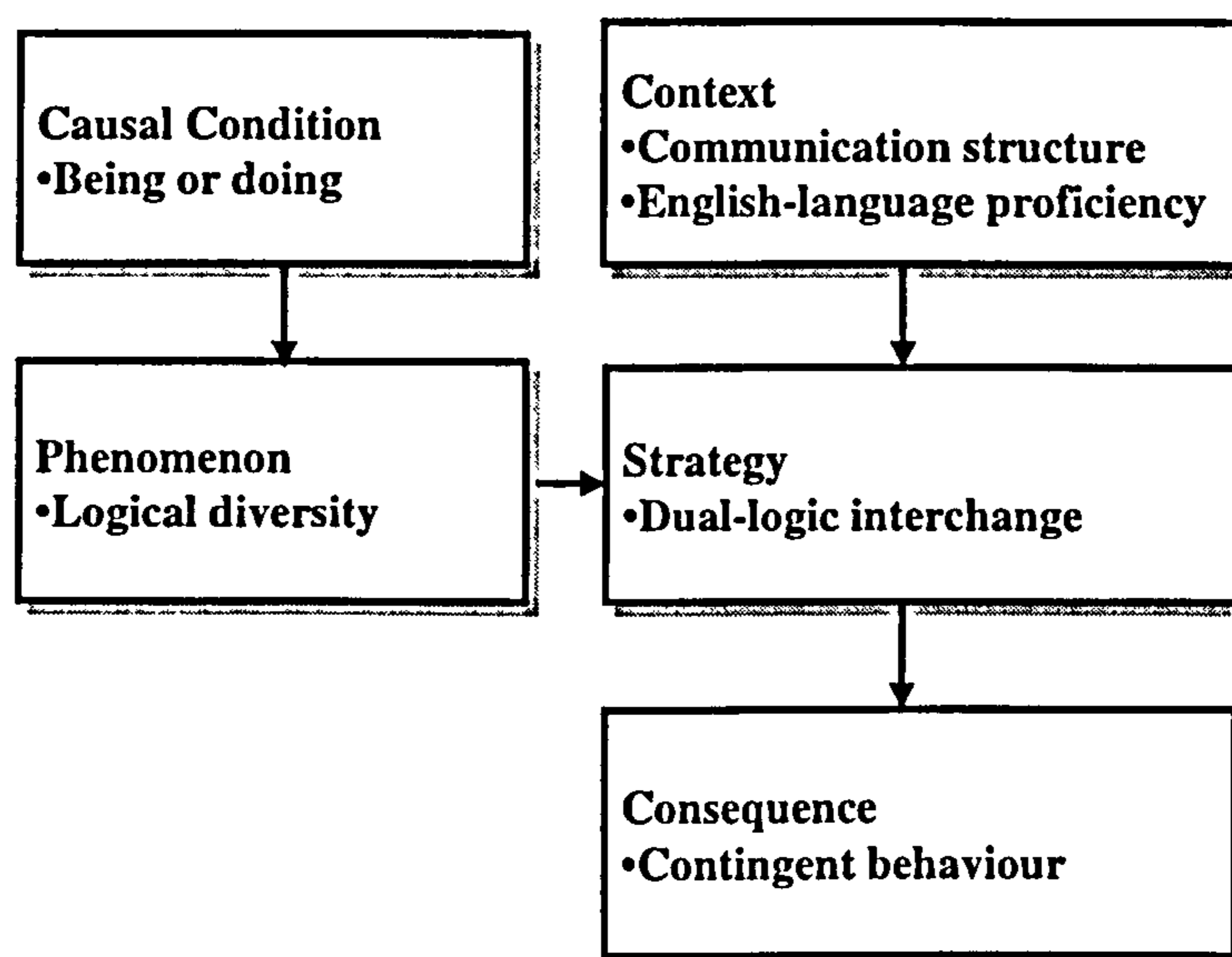


Figure 5.6: The Story Line of Logic Conflict

When students study abroad, confusion concerning the logic of *being or doing* becomes a causal condition which ultimately leads to the subjective phenomenon, reported by informants, of *logical diversity*. A strategy, *dual-logic interchange*, is developed in response to this phenomenon. This strategy is influenced by a particular contextual marker related to the causal condition and the resulting phenomenon: *communication structure* and *English-language proficiency*. The strategy used by informants finally has one consequence in their studies: *contingent behaviour*.

Generally speaking, *being* tends to be more process-orientated and *doing* is more achievement- or result-oriented. The Taiwanese postgraduate students changed their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour toward the situations they encountered. On the one hand, they improved their communication ability and their English-language proficiency to match academic requirements. On the other hand, they also developed logical diversity. They could examine a situation in terms (for example) of how many resources they could employ and how much time they needed to feel well prepared.

Then, the strategy of the dual-logic system was well developed to cope with any situation. Consequently, they could apply what they had learned while they were abroad.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the data analysis and research findings for the first two of the four dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment: self-identity and academic pursuit. There are three core categories belonging to each of these dimensions, and each core category has a number of sub-categories for coding purposes. Appropriate quotations from informants have been used to illustrate each category and sub-category. The story line for each core category has been presented and discussed. The causal conditions, phenomena, and the contexts for each story line have also been examined. The quotations used in this chapter have come from both the retrospective (first stage of data collection) and the longitudinal (second stage data of collection) samples. The first stage of data collection and analysis was used to develop a suitable set of ideas and an appropriate framework for the research. The results of this first stage were then used to guide the second stage. The longitudinal focus allowed me to study the key activities and decisions that occurred during the study period and increased the reliability of this study.

The findings for self-identity incorporate the Taiwanese postgraduate students' cultural orientation towards Taiwan. They have developed this orientation through their contact with other international students. Clearly, Chinese culture gives the students their basic identity (Grahnn and Swenson, 2000; Fan, 2000). However, while



the students identify themselves with the same values, they differ significantly in the way they interpret and apply Chinese traditional culture (see Section 3.2.2 for details).

The findings for academic pursuit support some of the characteristics that Taiwan students possess (as detailed in Section 3.3.2). These include, most importantly, the propensity to use rote learning, an excessive regard for authority, collectivism (interdependence) and the strategic use of effort. They also reveal the shifts of TPSs' personal attitude from collectivism to individualism depending what events happened and who they encountered. In my own experience, I have a strong memory of my participation in group discussion changing from passive to active. Unavoidably, "no pain, no gain" probably is the golden rule for all of the TPSs in their academic pursuit.

## Chapter Six: Data Analysis and Research Findings (2): Affection Adjustment and Sojourn Life-Experience Adjustment

### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five reported the findings in terms of the self-identify and academic pursuit dimensions. This chapter deals with the third and fourth dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment: affection and sojourn life-experience. From the perspective of affection adjustment, three core categories are developed: *separation*, *rootlessness*, and *anxiety* adjustment. They are discussed in Section 6.2. In Section 6.3, sojourn life-experience adjustment is considered in terms of three core categories: *behavioural diversity*, *attitudinal diversity* and *belief-system diversity*. The conclusion is presented in Section 6.4.

### 6.2 The Third Dimension: Affection Adjustment

In this study, the affection adjustment process is defined in terms of three core categories: separation, rootlessness, and anxiety. (see Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Coding Themes and Core Categories and Sub-categories for  
Dimension 3: Affection**

Coding Categories (Sub-categories)		Core Categories		
		Separation (6.2.1)	Rootlessness (6.2.2)	Anxiety (6.2.3)
F1.	Homesickness (condition)	✓	✓	✓
F2.	Social deprivation (phenomena)	✓		
F3.	Physical isolation (phenomena)	✓		
F4.	Social support (context)	✓	✓	✓
F5.	Network-building (strategy)	✓		
F6.	Pseudo-family relationship (consequence)	✓		
F7.	Prior Social Ties (phenomena)		✓	
F8.	Lack of Belonging (phenomena)		✓	
F9.	Just visiting (strategy)		✓	
F10.	Selective Avoidance (consequence)		✓	
F11.	Stress and worry (phenomena)			✓
F12.	Comfort-seeking (strategy)			✓
F13.	Emotional overloading (consequence)			✓

### 6.2.1. *Separation Adjustment*

Making contact with others is necessary for most human beings. For the majority of overseas students, the family is the most important support unit while they study abroad (see Maxwell et al., 2000; Diaz and Krauss, 1996). In addition, forming friendships and having a fulfilling social life are also very important for them. However, when individuals go abroad, the connection structure with the family and social relationships changes. Bunz's (1997) study found that the majority of international students studying abroad without their families had left their friends and natural support systems behind. Furthermore, because of their limited vocabularies and diverse ways of thinking, students often found that their conversations with British people were limited to superficial issues (Choi, 1997). In this study, some informants (A1, A9, A11, A12, B1, B7, B13, B19) were disappointed that their relationships with British students could not be developed further because of the difficulties they had with spoken English and knowledge of the host culture. The range of topics became repetitive and quite boring – a bit like the experience of childhood. It is not surprising that researchers (e.g. Grahn and Swenson, 2000; Black et al., 1992) stress the importance of cultural awareness, understanding and role-playing for effective cross-cultural adjustment:

*What I remember is that there was there was little connection with British people except of my tutor. My best friends all came from Taiwan...(A1, Taiwan)*

*I made a good friend who comes from Singapore. Actually, there is no language problem at all. This is the reason why we can make a good friendship...(A6, Taiwan)*

*With the family beside me, the connection network was limited to the other Taiwanese family. This helped my wife to adjust to foreign life. However, on the other hand, my wife's life seemed no different from what it was in Taiwan ... (A12, Taiwan)*

*I very much cherish the opportunity to meet the people from Mainland China. Because we have the same language, we can communicate and share different thoughts toward political issues...(B7, England)*

Obviously, language communication is the most important issue while Taiwanese postgraduate students are abroad in terms of their affection adjustment. Informant A2 fell in love with her German boyfriend while she was studying for her MA degree. This enabled her to broaden her friendship network and to make contact with European culture. Increasingly, she found that she did not limit her friendship to others from Taiwan or Mainland China.

However, in this study, the majority of informants seemed content to remain part of a Taiwanese group or to be with other people who spoke Chinese. They considered this to be an acceptable transitional arrangement because they anticipated returning to Taiwan soon. In some cases informants developed a "pseudo-family relationship" with other Taiwanese but they knew that this relationship would not survive when they returned to Taiwan (A1, A5, A9, A12). On residential campuses, living in student accommodation is one way of making friends with fellow students (Saenz et al. 1999). However, informants who brought their families to England saw fewer

opportunities to form friendships with other international students (A10, A11, A12, A15, A16, B9). I will now consider the sub-categories of separation: *homesickness*, *social deprivation*, *physical isolation*, *social support*, *network-building*, and *pseudo-family relationship*.

### **F1. Homesickness**

Maintaining and establishing social relationships, especially those with family and friends, was a common difficulty for the informants. Several specific problems were cited: missing one's family (A2, A4, B10), missing one's spouse (A8, B1, B7) or boyfriend/girl friend (A14, B8, B18), missing friends (B10, B15), missing Taiwan (B5, B19), and loneliness (e.g., B19). Generally speaking, these problems could be seen as homesickness problems (Maxwell et al., 2000; Yin and Liese, 1994). These feelings were extremely intense when the students had just arrived in the UK. Taiwan is a very long distance from the UK, and it was thus impossible for informants to go back home (Taiwan) very often. It takes some 17 to 24 hours (including the transfer time) to return by air to Taiwan and the cost of a ticket is between £500 and £800. Even in Taiwan itself, students often leave home to pursue their studies and may only return home once or twice per year. But at least in the home country they do not feel so far away from their family and do not feel lost. This sub-category also links to the self-identity dimension of cross-cultural adjustment because the students feel that they do not belong to the host country. In the affection dimension, it represents a warm gentle feeling of caring for their family, which is temporarily impossible because of the distance and sense of separation that this produces.

## **F2. Social deprivation**

At the early stage of their study, the students' social relationships were disrupted and they felt an intense sense of deprivation. In contrast with the time spent with family and friends in Taiwan, some of the informants felt that they were alone (A2, A5, B4, B8). The periods spent with family and friends were seen as a source of physical comfort and security for them. However, this was lacking when they were abroad:

*When I was abroad in England, I realised that I was not as independent as I used to believe. I felt I was deprived of my family, my close friends...(A2, Taiwan)*

*I always went swimming and took a walk alone. It was very sad that there was nobody around when I wanted to share my feelings. I am sure that I enjoyed myself while I was alone. However, sometimes I just felt I was very poor. I missed the time when I was in Taiwan with my mother and younger brother every day...(B8, England)*

Of course, the students could use e-mail or phone to contact their family or friends. But e-mails send words and messages but are not always good for expressing feelings, and they also involve a delayed response. Furthermore, there is an eight-hour time difference between the UK and Taiwan (seven hours in the summer time). This meant that sometimes informants could not get the comfort they needed from their families. And, even getting in touch with their family and friends, they still cannot communicate. Moreover, some informants (A2, A4, A5, A14, B5, B8, B19) stated that after talking to their family on the phone, they felt even more lonely and helpless. The social deprivation and loneliness increased. One reason for this was that most

informants tended to avoid expressing sad emotions or bad news to their families or friends. They preferred to concentrate on the good news.

Participation in campus activities (e.g. sport activities and arts events) is another way to promote the social integration of international students (Bennett and Okinaka, 1990; McCannon and Bennett, 1996, Saenz et al., 1999). However, a lack of time, particularly for those informants (A1, A10, A11, A12, B2, B16, B19) with heavy work schedules, influenced their ability and willingness to participate in such events. In some cases, although informants (A4, A7, B11) recognised the importance of participating in on-campus events, they felt that they were not welcomed by members of other ethnic groups and thus refrained from participating.

### **F3. Physical Isolation**

At the early stage of their studies, the Taiwanese postgraduate students not only felt that their social relationships were disrupted, but also that they were physically isolated in a very small space: their study bedroom. Obviously, in their home country, they could travel at any time to any place and with anyone they wanted to accompany them. But in England, before their social relationships were rebuilt, some informants had difficulties with travelling because there was “no place to go”, “no one to go with” and they did not know understand the transport system. Many of them were uncomfortable travelling alone because they felt unsafe in an unfamiliar environment. Furthermore, public transport was not very convenient and quite expensive in England compared to Taiwan. Some informants (A14, B4, B11) who actively socialised with British people were often troubled because they experienced language difficulties. Some informants (A2, A3, B5, B8) were also bothered because the other Taiwanese students tended to gossip. Thus, they kept people at a distance and were not

interested in socialising a lot:

*I think the most difficult thing is the language, and I don't know how to make friends with the other students. You know when I was in Taiwan, I was very sociable. But here, I can't speak out. I just keep quiet. It's not like my way in Taiwan. (A14, Taiwan)*

*I lost my active nature, aggressiveness, and my ability to communicate and make friends with others because I didn't have enough time and energy. Although I had some common interests with my classmates, I just couldn't develop these ...(B2, England)*

Accordingly, some informants spent most of their time alone in their “small room” (A4, B5, B8, B10) and felt a sense of alienation and isolation from their family, friends and community. Informant B8 described a particularly serious difficulty: “Getting a person to share! When I got stressed out I didn't want to go crying and complaining to my new friends or home to my family. Now I do though.” In fact, before studying abroad, the students never experienced having to stay in a small room for such a long time. Even when their social relationships were rebuilt, they still had to stay alone in their room for much of the time due to the pressure of academic work. During the periods of Christmas festivities or Easter vacations, the majority of informants stayed in their accommodation. Some of them attended host-family activities laid on by the universities (A1, A9, A12, A13, B5, B10). They felt especially homesick at the time of special Chinese celebrations (Moon Festival, Chinese New Year, etc.). According to the majority of informants, they were very keen to attend family parties, e.g. for birthdays, but they could not do so while they were abroad.



#### **F4. Social Support**

Research indicates that there is a clear connection between the presence of satisfactory social relationships and one's liking for, and overall adjustment to, the host country (Choi, 1997; Church, 1982; Ying and Liese, 1994; Coleman, 1995). Satisfactory relationships facilitate access to the information that is needed to flourish in the new culture. Ying and Liese (1994) suggest the hypothesis that adjustment is related positively to the size of the Chinese community, both on campus and in the surrounding area.

Social support is seen as an additional coping resource. Its importance for successful adjustment has been documented by several researchers (Saenz et al., 1999; Church, 1982; Ying and Liese, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). In this study, social support refers to the extent to which Taiwanese postgraduate students have a network of friends in the host culture context who offer them encouragement, support and advice. Friends within the social support network operate both to help interpret the new culture to the Taiwanese students and to reinforce the latter's self-confidence (Wan, Chapman and Biggs, 1992). The attitudes of some informants (A14, B4, B13) towards England seemed to be influenced as much (if not more) by their fellow sojourners (who might also be from other countries) as by the host nationals. One way in which the informants sought to improve their adjustment was by learning to imitate the behaviour of those sojourners who were able to adjust successfully (A8, A10, A12, B6, B9).

Many universities have home hospitality programmes which enable students from other countries to visit English families. The family represents the core of their social support system; by providing this kind of support to someone from another country, it can facilitate cross-cultural adjustment. These relationships may develop and become more time-consuming and intimate, affording the students an increased sense of belonging and a base from which to explore other, perhaps more challenging, social aspects of the culture. Informants A13 and B5 stated that they extended their understanding of English culture by attending various host-family activities and making friends with their hosts. However, other informants (A1, A9, B10) said that they felt more like tourists when they visited their host families. Informants A12 and B19 had negative experiences with their host families since they were not made very welcome.

In general, the Taiwanese postgraduate students in this study seemed to be more focused on their academic work. However, often, when some on campus activity programmes were available, the students failed to take advantage of them (Saenz et al., 1999; Dodge, 1990). As Wan, Chapman and Biggs (1992) state, for some international students the new educational environment is so confusing, ambiguous and overwhelming that they tend to wrap themselves up in their academic struggles and appear indifferent to other aspects of life on campus. Thus, their academic stress is further compounded by their isolation from the campus community.

#### **F5. Network-building**

Any individual who is faced with unfamiliar situations is likely to experience “transition shock” (Selmer, 2000; 2001). Attinasi (1989) highlights the area of student transition that involves making sense of large, new environments. In our

sample, married students (A10, A11, A12, A15, B6) whose spouses stayed with them in England tended to be more emotionally stable and happier than married students (A8, B7) whose spouses did not stay with them. Initially, the majority of the informants did not have close friends on campus. They generally felt closest to students from Taiwan. Informants A1, A12, A14, B17 and B19 felt that it was more difficult to socialise with British students than with other foreign students:

*I think that it is easy to talk to international students because their English is not very good and they have enough patience to listen to you, but not the British people. I think most of the native people have no patience to listen to you as they speak very fast. Sometimes, I think I just stand there like an idiot when I cannot fully understand and join in the topic under discussion...(A14, Taiwan)*

*I just wonder if I've got the time to socialise with other international students as the course load is too heavy for me...(B2, England)*

In these circumstances, Taiwanese postgraduate students resolve the transition dilemma by finding their niche and learning how to negotiate the physical, social and cognitive geographies in England. Ethno-social networks have been found to be beneficial for psychological well being because they provide a sense of security and facilitate the transitions, particularly in the initial stages (Ying and Liese, 1991; 1994):

*The best friends here are the Taiwanese students in my flat. I think the reason for this is that we are all in the same situation. Therefore, we can discuss the same things that we encounter. Students from other countries may not be interested in the same activities. Their*

*leisure activities, eating and lifestyles are different from ours. With Taiwanese students, we have the same background. We always talk about events in Taiwan. We can speak the same language. Furthermore, our ideas are similar. For me, my life here is studying, shopping, sports, and sleeping. It is worth mentioning that I learnt how to cook for myself when I arrived here. This is extremely commendable, isn't it? ...(B18, England)*

*The most relaxing thing for me while I was in England was sport. I played badminton with my friends who were from Taiwan, Malaysia and Hong Kong. It is my best memory of the time I spent in England...(A7, Taiwan)*

Therefore, the most important factor found to inhibit adjustment was the failure to establish and maintain strong social connections (Senyshyn, 2000). Many informants (A1, A6, A11, A12, B1, B2, B4, B10, B19) stated that in some situations they felt they did not “fit in” on campus. Therefore, they chose to associate primarily with students from a similar ethnic or racial background (i.e. from Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Korea and Japan) in order to gain security and identity (Dorsey and Jackson, 1995).

## **F6. Pseudo-Family Relationship**

Loneliness due to family separation was experienced by a majority of the informants. Most informants were separated from their families for the first time when they came to England and suffered intense bouts of homesickness. Most of them expressed feelings of depression, loneliness and helplessness during their period of study. A few

of them even thought about giving up their studies and returning to Taiwan at some stage (A4, B10). Ying and Liese (1994) state that a support network that consists exclusively of fellow nationals may be limiting, fixing the person at the periphery of mainstream society and hindering long-term adjustment. Moreover, friendship formation within the host country (e.g. through the host family) serves to facilitate understanding of, and entry into, the mainstream host culture and life, thereby mediating better adjustment (Saenz, 1999; Selmer, 2000; 2001; Hull, 1978; Klineberg, 1980). However, Taiwanese postgraduate students are more likely to use ethno-social networks for coping, for example through their dependence on their membership groups, rather than seeking the help of friendships formed within the host country:

*[The most support came from] fellow students and knowing that other students had the same troubles and concerns that I had. We students would talk to each other about school, family, problems, etc., offering each other support and friendship. (A15, Taiwan)*

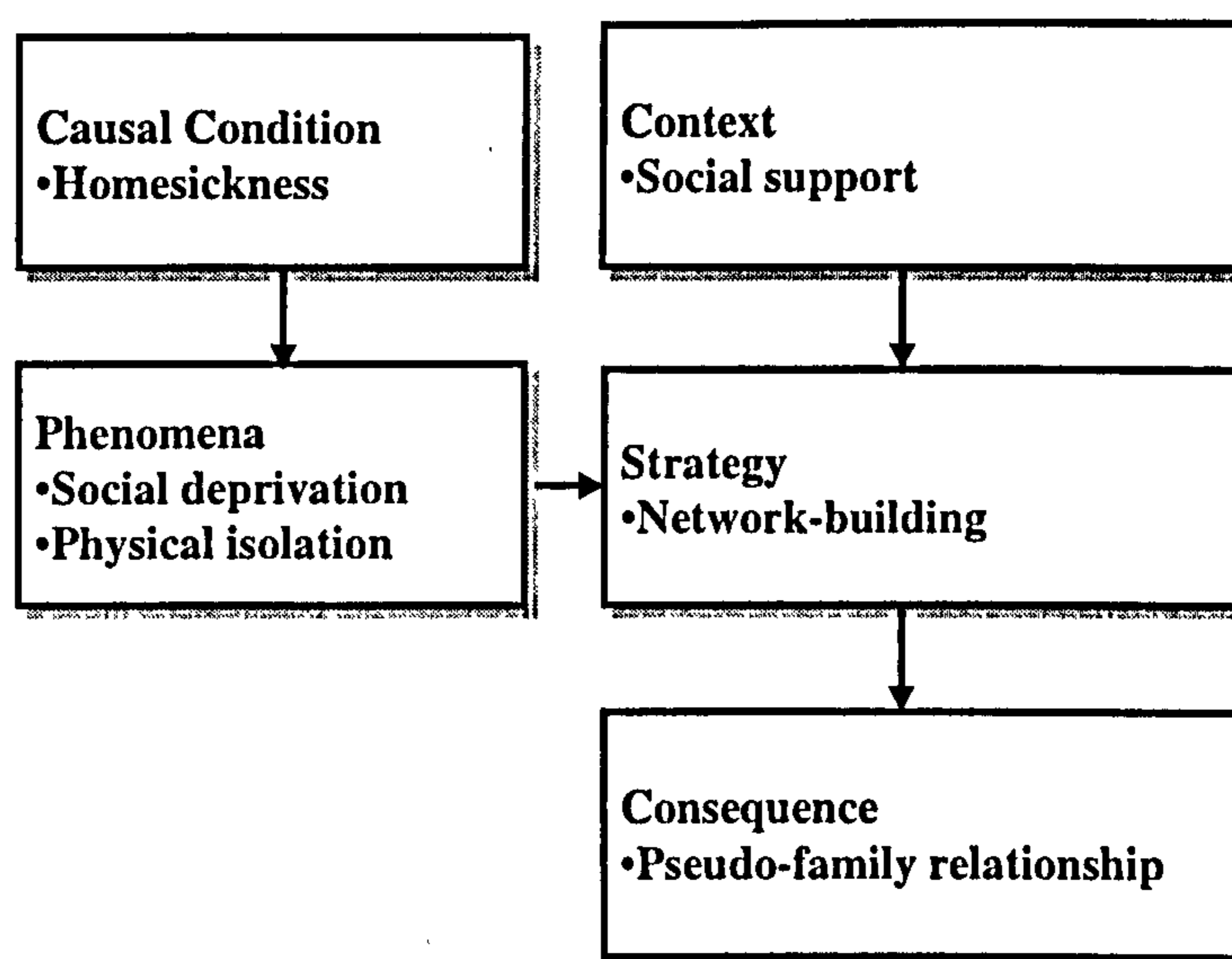
*Now, I am with my girlfriend. We are in the same flat. I'm not quite sure why we are together. Probably because she is very kind to me. She takes care of everything for me. Now we are together...(B2, England)*

Obviously, the connections in the parent country are based on a shared culture, language and way of thinking. In particular, the “family” concept is of great importance in Chinese tradition (Saenz et al., 1999). In this study, a special relationship which emerged as a temporary replacement for the lack of contact with the student’s own family is termed a “pseudo-family relationship”:

*The senior class Taiwanese students took me under their wing academically and socially. We look like a family. (B5, England)*

Since it is a pseudo-family, the relationship will be terminated when the student returns to Taiwan. Nevertheless, this kind of relationship did make the majority of informants comfortable and helped to ease the adjustment to their sojourn life.

**Summary: the story of separation**



**Figure 6.1: The story line of separation**

When Taiwanese students study abroad, the sense of *homesickness* becomes a form of causal condition which ultimately leads to two subjective phenomena as reported by informants: (a) *social deprivation* and (b) *physical isolation*. In response to these phenomena, the network-building strategy is developed under the influence of a particular contextual marker related to the causal condition and the resulting phenomena. This contextual marker is *social support*. The strategy used by informants eventually has one major consequence: *pseudo-family relationship*.

Interestingly, some informants (A1, A9, A10, B5, B10) maintained connections with friends while they were abroad when they returned to Taiwan. However, other

informants (A5, A6, B2, B17, B19) seemed to have less contact with friends they met in England, probably because they were simply too busy. While it is clear that social support was very important for most of the informants, nevertheless other informants (A4, A8, B1, B19) said that they did not value the friendship they were offered:

*It is very funny -- I found myself improving my Chinese language communication ability after I arrived in England. This is because I spend most of my time here with other Taiwanese. (B1, England)*

In Taiwan, everybody seems to be very busy with his/her life, work and family. Being a student in England, the majority of informants had more free time to think about themselves, especially when they stayed in their small study bedroom on campus to do their work in the evening. The majority of informants indicated that life was quite boring in England: there was nowhere to go apart from shopping in supermarkets. Therefore, most of them got together to chat or cook and they developed pseudo-family relationships. They took care of everybody in their networking group. In this study, we found that this relationship was very healthy in helping most of the students to adjust to life in England. From a more positive viewpoint, informants (A1, A2, A5, A10, B10, A11 and B18) said that they paid more attention to caring for their families and friends in Taiwan as a result of their experience abroad.

### *6.2.2. Rootlessness*

Cultural adjustment involves sojourners developing a sense of comfort in the host society. This includes a feeling that one is “at home” in the society and is not a total outsider. In turn this requires acceptance of sojourners by new reference groups in the host culture. The term “rootlessness” is used to denote Taiwanese postgraduate students’ realisation that the conditions they encounter in the host country will be

temporary, because the students will return to Taiwan sooner or later after they graduate. However, in some situations, the social customs, behaviours and beliefs they encounter are not the same as those they previously accepted in Taiwan. The extent of this “rootlessness” will depend on the students’ prior social ties, their personal feeling of a lack of belonging, and their self-identity as tourists in England.

### **F7. Prior Social Ties**

In terms of prior social ties, Becker (1968) used the term “favourableness to the home country”. Some informants resist informal interaction with hosts and make only the minimal adjustments necessary to complete certain tasks, e.g. their academic work. Although some informants in our study were very concerned about their status and enjoyed playing the role of cultural ambassadors (A2, A6, A7, B8, B16), and they were willing to exchange information with their hosts about the features of their respective countries, there was only rarely any sharing of personal experiences and insights which could lead to real friendships (A7, B8, B16).

Some informants were much more willing to talk about positive aspects of Taiwan than negative aspects (A8, A11, B7, B12, B16). According to research (e.g. Brislin, 1981), most social ties are with fellow nationals who happen to be living in the same area. In this study, certain informants (A1, A9, A8, A10, A12, A14, A15, A16, B7, B8, B10, B16) travelled for an hour across town to interact with a fellow national rather than chat with a cordial host who lived next door. Furthermore, when students formed a close-knit group, they reinforced each other’s maintenance of first-culture norms, shared news from Taiwan, and supported each other’s adjustment. These students seemed to have few problems returning home since they had kept abreast of



developments in Taiwan and had not involved themselves in host-country activities. The norms of these informants (A6, A10, A11, A13) included a strong sense of tradition, a value placed on group rather than individual achievement, and deference to elders.

Some informants realised that some fellow nationals formed groups and made a point of avoiding them (A2, A3, B10, B14, B18):

*I already have a lot of Taiwanese friends in Taiwan. Therefore, I thought I wanted to make friends from other counties while I was in England... (A2, Taiwan)*

*The Taiwanese group was too complex for me to handle. I did not like so much gossiping within the same group with the same people... (A3, Taiwan)*

*I wanted to learn about England. I would never get much out of it if I were to live in a neighbourhood with many other Chinese-speaking people. I definitely decided to become involved with England through my choice of living arrangements, social activities, and even clubs that I joined. (B14, England)*

## **F8. Lack of Belonging**

The Taiwanese students experienced unhappiness over their loss of status, income, Taiwan-based country activities and other benefits and enjoyments of living (A14, A15, B1, B6). “Belonging to England” implies either owning or being owned by the

culture, and this seemed to be impossible for most of the informants while they were studying abroad. Rather they developed a style of self-consciousness that was incapable of negotiating a new form of reality and putting down new roots (Forster, 2000; Adler, 1977):

*I have a strong feeling that they (the British people) don't really understand me. One reason is that my English is not very fluent. Furthermore, my background -- my culture -- is so different from theirs. I do not think they really have the patience to listen to me and try to understand my feelings. No one expresses respect for my culture. The conversation with them is superficial. I am depressed. Thus, I have become conservative, not so open and aggressive...(B11, England)*

*Yes, my behaviour was polite, gentle, suitable for the imagination of most British people. "Look! He is Taiwanese!"...I thought I was myself no matter where I was... (A9, Taiwan)*

Some informants could not avoid feeling unhappy when they had contacts with the British. For example informants A11 and B16 felt misunderstood by their colleagues and they felt that their classmates were judgmental in a negative way. However, afterwards, some informants were able to accept the new "reality". In this study, conflicts have been cited as one of the primary sources of stress during the period of study abroad; these are often due to cultural misunderstandings (Grahn and Swenson,

2000; Hammer et al., 1978). The majority of informants seemed to be willing to contact the different culture if it was possible:

*It is not necessary for them (British people or other international students) to understand other people from other countries. I am here to study and get a degree. However, I am still eager to know about the different cultures from other countries if I get the opportunities ... (B16, England)*

### **F9. Just Visiting**

International students may become confused about their own values after studying abroad (A7, B4). They can become careless (A14, 15), complain (e.g., B16, B18), or become determined to maintain their traditional beliefs (A11, B3). Some of the informants were so confused about their values after being in England that they changed their beliefs, attitudes and even their behaviour. However, some informants (A2, A3, B14, B15) were careful not to become too close to students from Taiwan because they thought they might lose their privacy and they wanted to get to know the people of another culture. For most Taiwanese students, conversations with other international students were generally limited to daily greetings and discussions about academic courses.

Some informants (A12, A15, B2, B9, B7) said that as they knew they would return home in the near future, they did not want to learn new skills that would be useful in England (Saenz et al, 1999). They had a clear date in mind for their return home. Thus, they could demonstrate some cultural adjustment as travelers, but with varying degrees of disorientation and discomfort. They could feel reasonably comfortable in

England but at the same time felt no need to “belong” in the host country.

### **F10. Selective Avoidance**

Taiwanese postgraduate students need help to develop their own abilities to adjust to new living conditions and to learn from them. Foust et al. (1981) suggest that sojourners must be encouraged to take advantage of learning opportunities, not to retreat from them or to ignore the significance of new events. The basic difficulty is that Taiwanese postgraduate students are faced with problems to which they have no familiar response. They simply behave as they would in Taiwan, i.e. they use the strategy of non-acceptance (avoidance). Some informants (A1, A10, A11, B2, B9, B19) refused to spend the extra time and effort learning host-country norms and consequently they did not achieve good communication with British people. They simply used the response judged most appropriate by their hosts and behaved accordingly. They also made a judgement regarding the appropriateness of particular forms of behaviour in different situations, and then behaved either as they would at home or according to the host-country norms. For instance, they might behave one way with fellow nationals and another way with hosts (A15, B9). Sometimes they used a strategy of synthesis, i.e. they combined and integrated elements from different response patterns. As some researchers (e.g. Selmer, 2000; 2001; Torbiorn, 1988) have pointed out, cultural barriers manifest themselves in individuals' ability or willingness to understand, accept or adopt the norms of a foreign culture.

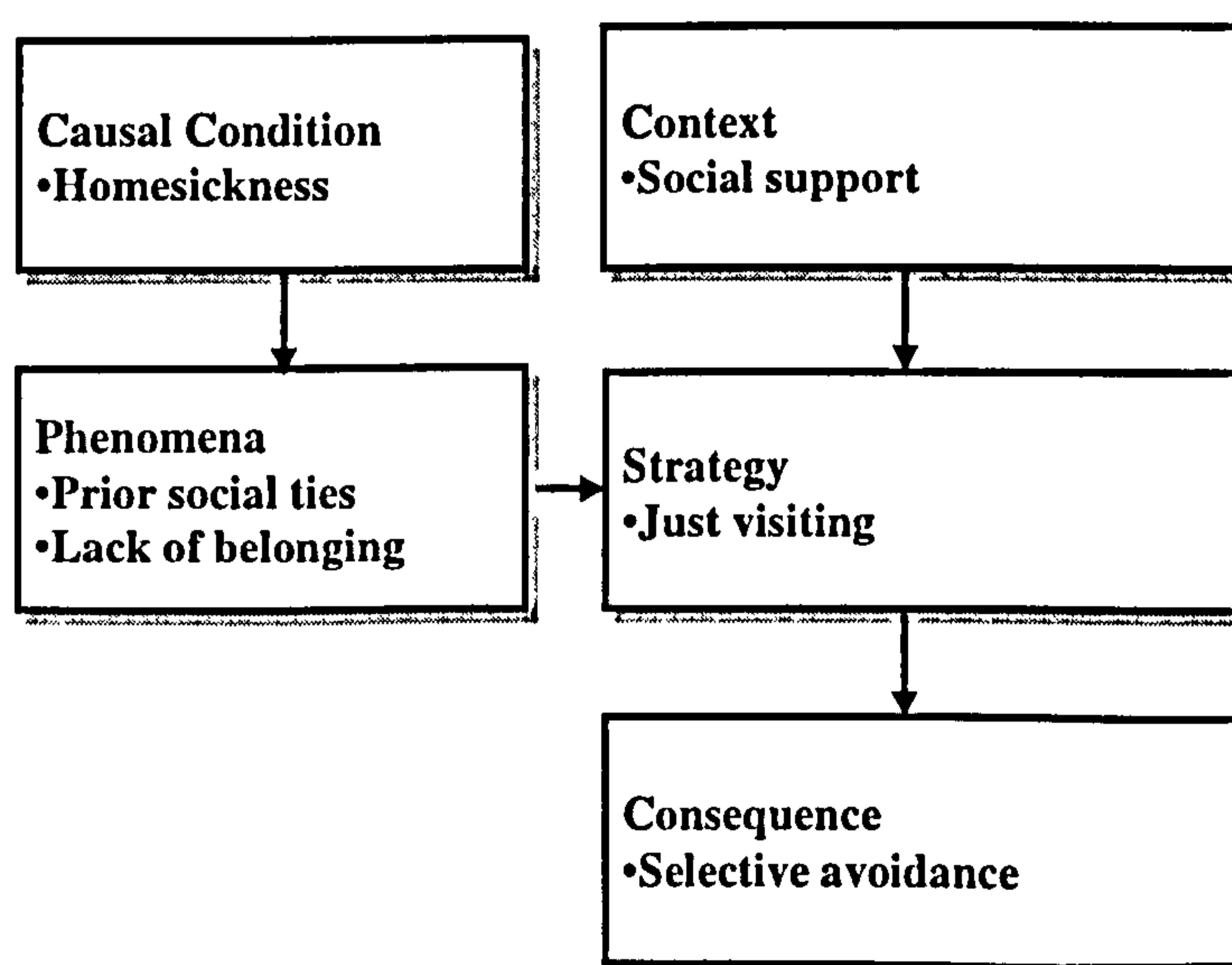
The majority of the informants were frustrated because they often felt unable to discuss topics that appeared to interest British people and they lacked knowledge

about these topics. Therefore, they tended to withdraw from relating socially with British people. As one informant stated:

*They (the British people) want me to be like them as soon as I arrive in England. Actually, I do try my best to be like them in my speed of speaking, if possible, and to understand their jokes, slang, and their “culture”. However, I just do not think that they have learnt to tolerate foreigners. I just adjust myself to get rid of that feeling of being hurt and frustrated...(B4, England)*

Thus, for some informants, cultural adjustment is taken as the absence of “concern” about selected items (Rohrlich and Martin, 1991). Thus, a low level of reported concern over using foreign languages is taken as a sign of successful adaptation.

**Summary: the story line of rootlessness**



**Figure 6.2: The story line of rootlessness**

As Figure 6.2 shows, when Taiwanese students study abroad, the experience of *homesickness* becomes a form of causal condition that ultimately leads to two

subjective phenomena as reported by informants: *prior social ties* and *lack of belonging*. A particular strategy, *just visiting* is developed in response to these phenomena. This strategy is influenced by a particular contextual marker – *social support* -- related to the causal condition and the resulting phenomena. The strategy used by informants eventually has one major consequence: *selectively avoidable*. As the students refer to themselves as travellers, they tend to pursue what they value with limited resources and time.

Among the informants, it seems that there was not a total *lack of belonging* toward England or their university. They did indeed exhibit some commitment. However, some of them seemed unwilling to admit this commitment. Informants A10 and B2 said that for them life in England was full of pain. A14, B4 and B5 stated that they found life in England very lonely and boring, but that they would still consider pursuing their future degrees in England. For other informants (A9, B3, B17), their experience of life in England meant that they preferred to study in the USA. Informant A1 stated that “I always remember life in England. I am sure that I will visit England again”.

The term “prior social ties” also denotes a kind of “cultural baggage”, as culture shapes people’s values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Thus, in this study, informants did experience some degree of change but not always in a particular order. For example, some informants (A7, B4, B5) changed their beliefs, then their attitudes, and finally their behaviour. They seemed to experience a process of constant adjustment. And when they returned to Taiwan, they had to adjust back to life in Taiwan.

Some informants (A1, B7, B13) were forced to change their behaviour and probably also their attitudes, but not their beliefs. For example, some of them took up cooking and sports activities. When they returned to Taiwan, they resumed their “normal” patterns of behaviour. Other informants (A3, A14, B10, B19) definitely changed their beliefs when they were in England. When they returned to Taiwan, they also found it quite difficult to adjust. Informants A3 and B10 tended to compare the situations in England and Taiwan. They found themselves judging things differently from a “Western” perspective.

### 6.2.3 Anxiety Adjustment

Common symptoms of culture shock are an excessive concern over food and drinking water; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; unreasonable fear of being cheated, robbed or injured; obsession with minor pains, negative feelings toward England; and a longing to return home (Selmer, 2000; 2001; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Foust et al., 1981). *Anxiety* refers to a persistent and recognisably irrational fear of an object or situation, along with a compelling desire to avoid that object or situation and the significant distress it produces. The most common symptoms our informants encountered are: *stress and worry, comfort-seeking, and emotional overload*. I will discuss each of these in turn.

#### **F11. Stress and Worry**

This refers to physical, mental and emotional anxiety and irritability due to changes in the environment and in relationships with others. Identity crises result from the inability to reconcile previous values, attitudes and life styles with those experienced

and adopted while in Taiwan. Due to the unfamiliarity with the host environment, the majority of informants said that they had become subconsciously anxious and stressed towards life in England. For example, they avoided walking alone in the city centre and seldom went out at night. To some extent, at the beginning, these fears may have been caused by prior expectations. Thus, they had assumed – largely on the basis of media images -- that in Western cities there would be some violence:

*As my school was near a big city centre, I heard some bad news about women being attacked...I was always worried and concerned about this while I was in Leeds... (A14, Taiwan)*

Some informants (A2, A3, A6, B10, B19) said they had been victimised by local teenagers. Even though they understood that these individuals were still young and just playing and jeering at them, the experience gave them a negative impression of British people.

*Stress and worry* is an inherent part of all cross-cultural experiences. It expresses itself in varying degrees of ambivalence, dissonance and threat, which contribute to feelings of fear, powerlessness, confusion and anger (Ying and Liese, 1994; Horner and Vandersluis et al., 1981). These feelings tend to limit the ability of Taiwanese postgraduate students to cope by interfering with their willingness to change and to learn new interpretative and behavioural skills. Consequently, the students may rely on old skills which are often culturally, socially, and personally inappropriate in the new setting. In such cases (A10, A12, A13, A15, B7, B9, B16, B19), the meanings of interactions are not shared, objectives are not achieved, and intercultural communication results in frustration. Taiwanese postgraduate students' personal



sense of cultural transit and their self-defence present different patterns of behaviour, such as dullness, worry, nervousness and anxiety. The situation will only change if the students change their sense of cultural transit and self-defence:

*Actually, I really did not care about other people (British people)...It is beyond my control. What I can do is to just concentrate on my studying... (A13, Taiwan)*

*Sometimes, I just wonder why British people are so cold...probably they are polite, gentle, well behaved. However, I think the British are rude and cruel in some ways... (B9, England)*

## **F12. Comfort-seeking**

All human interaction involves thinking, feeling and behaving. How one thinks, feels and behaves is greatly influenced by one's cultural background as well as one's personal characteristics and social environment. The ability to draw upon a large repertoire of behavioural alternatives can be very useful for Taiwanese postgraduate students in developing communicative competencies for intercultural interactions (Selmer, 2000; Grahn and Swenson, 2000; Horner and Vanersluis et al., 1981). Alland (1973) draws a "cultural-ecological" distinction between internal adjustment, as a form of cultural homeostasis, and external adjustment, as part of the cultural-physical environment relationship nexus. That is, the presence of alternatives is frequently the result of contacts with external social or natural environments.

In the most general sense, human adjustment behaviour is based on the capacity for “self-objectification” and “normative orientation”: the human ability to perceive and receive information on, and act upon or against, the environment in order to enhance the satisfaction of needs:

*I always focused on my studying. At the weekend, I accompanied my wife and child. I gave up contacting local people as I thought it was unhelpful and useless. But I and my wife still watched the TV programmes and learnt about British culture... (A10, England)*

*Before I arrived here, I never thought I would speak Chinese all the time. Due to loneliness, I chatted with other Taiwanese very often... (A1, Taiwan)*

*Cook! Know what? The most relaxing thing for me is “cook!”*  
*(B4, England)*

As eating customs in England are different from those in Taiwan, most informants had to learn how to cook by themselves. This helped them to develop their self-confidence (A7, A13, B2, B19), relaxation (A11, A14, B4, B5), and social life (A6, A10, A12, A14, B1, B10). Some of the informants just made fun of themselves and said that they would probably consider becoming a housekeeper or cook when they returned to Taiwan.

### **F13. Emotional Overloading**

One informant (A14) stated that she found the situation in England quite ironic. She

always had to be cautious, e.g. when she was in the city centre, but she never felt threatened on campus. The degree of emotional overloading appeared to depend on the quality of the host-sojourner relationship and on how secure the attachment of the student to the English actually was (Ying and Liese, 1991; 1994). Being naturally fearful in the presence of the unfamiliar, students were likely to have a low threshold for experiencing negative emotions, although this could be alleviated by the universities' own efforts, which were motivated by the desire to limit students' withdrawals from the environment and make them less damaging.

Some Taiwanese postgraduate students also developed methods of countering their fearful inclinations, and actually developed even stronger coping competencies and skills than those students who did not have to struggle against their inner constraints. In fact, according to Lazarus (1991), stress theory suggests that learning to cope depends on having enough stress, but not trauma, at the right times.

## Summary: the story of anxiety

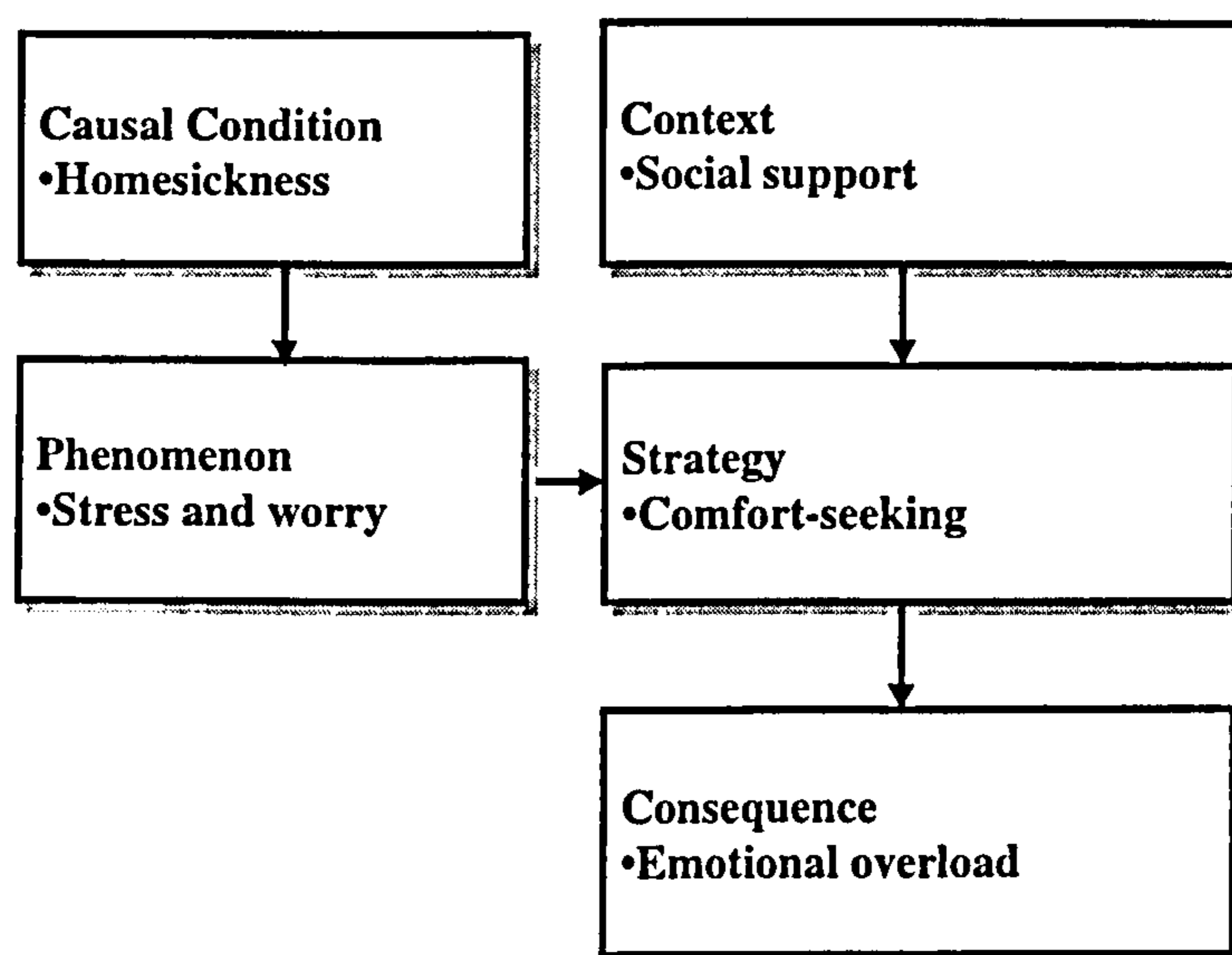


Figure 6.3: the story line of anxiety

As Figure 6.3 indicates, Taiwanese students study abroad, the experience of homesickness becomes a form of causal condition which ultimately leads to the subjective phenomenon as reported by informants: *stress and worry*. The strategy of *comfort-seeking* is developed in response to this phenomenon. This strategy is influenced by a particular contextual marker related to the causal condition the resulting phenomenon. This contextual marker is *social support*. The strategy used by informants eventually has the consequence of *emotional overload*.

Because they were abroad, the students concentrated not only on themselves, but also on Taiwan. Due to the *homesickness*, they tended to be cautious about all the situations they encountered. For example, they were always concerned about what was happening in Taiwan. In the first stage of data collection, the informants were studying abroad from 1995 to 1997. In 1996, China aimed two missiles at Taiwan (Marsh, 2000). Some informants (A2, A6, A7) recalled that they felt very worried about whether China would actually go to war with Taiwan. In the second stage of data collection, there was a Taiwan Presidential Election in March 2000. The new

President, Chen, was elected directly by the people and declared that his mission was to improve Taiwan's situation. Some of the male informants (B2, B9, B14, B16, B17, B18) said that they wondered if they might have to go back to Taiwan to join the army. Inevitably, this caused them anxiety and stress.

Students were also affected by their experience of the university environment in England, concerns about drinking water conditions, the threat of CJD ("mad cow disease") from eating beef, and the possibility of terrorist (IRA) bombs. These are examples of factors which added considerably to the students' emotional overload.

### **6.3 The Fourth Dimension: Sojourn Life-Experience**

While living abroad, Taiwanese postgraduate students discover that the dynamics of "actually being there" are somewhat different from just hearing about or discussing those dynamics during the preparation for their departure from Taiwan. It is not just a matter of applying the theoretical knowledge obtained through orientation, books, films or conversations to the process of cross-cultural adjustment. Thus, this section will discuss some of the factors influencing the dynamics of adjusting to a new culture.

Taiwanese postgraduate students who accept a "melting pot" ideal are motivated to make a complete adjustment if they choose to accept the host culture and do not retain ties with their parent culture (A3, A7, B 14, B17). If they are successful, they adjust completely and are totally assimilated into the host society (Millar et al., 1990; Berry, 1970). Returning to individual differences, the adjustment and mental well being of some people is undoubtedly facilitated by assimilation rather than half-hearted attempts at cultural pluralism (Ying and Liese, 1994; Brislin, 1981). On the other

hand, cultural integration (Watkins et al., 1991), in which members of the dominant majority within any society accept and encourage pluralism, leads to better adjustment among other people. Both assimilation and pluralism can become moulds into which some people are unwisely forced.

Table 6.2 presents the coding themes and core categories of the sojourn life-experience adjustment of Taiwanese postgraduate students. We will now proceed to discuss the three go on to discuss the three core categories of behavioural diversity, attitudinal diversity and belief-system diversity.

**Table 6.2: Coding Themes and Core Categories of the Fourth Dimension: Sojourn Life-Experience**

Coding Scheme (Sub-categories)		Core Categories		
		Behavioural diversity (6.3.1)	Attitudinal diversity (6.3.2)	Belief-System diversity (6.3.3)
L1.	Life-style diversity (condition)	✓		
L2.	Positive/negative comparisons (phenomenon)	✓		
L3.	Rule differences (context)	✓		
L4.	Cultural learning (strategy)	✓		
L5.	Personal Flexibility (consequence)	✓		
L6.	Structural diversity (condition)		✓	
L7.	Temporal orientations (phenomenon)		✓	
L8.	Primary goals (context)		✓	
L9.	Rationalisation (strategy)		✓	✓
L10	Self-discovery (consequence)		✓	
L11	Multi-cultural awareness (condition)			✓
P17*	Logic diversity (phenomenon)			✓
L12	Self-confident individualism (context)			✓
L13	Tolerant understanding (strategy)			✓
L14	Creative self-development (consequence)			✓

\*P17 is discussed in Section 5.3.2

### 6.3.1 Behavioural Diversity

When they arrive in England, Taiwanese postgraduate students need information about their immediate physical needs. This information may include the geography of the local area, eating facilities, climate, transportation, housing, communication, shopping, and the availability of people to contact for advice. Such information is

sometimes labelled “survival material” (Saenz et al., 1999; Yin and Liese, 1994; Foust et al., 1981). Some informants (A1, B4, B9) said that to know how to survive is the most important thing of all. We will now consider the five sub-categories (coding themes) of behavioural diversity.

### **L1. Life-Style Diversity**

Society and its culture are constantly evolving human products, growing out of older, traditional ways of thinking, feeling and doing. As Berger and Luckman (1967) have theorised, socio-cultural arrangements came into being long ago as matters of convenience or necessity, but once established tend to persist and to be handed down from one generation to the next as habitual patterns and social institutions with more or less stable rules of conduct. There are some personal issues and concerns of Taiwanese postgraduate students. Some students change their behaviours in eating, sleeping and other habitual patterns.

For some students, eating is the main concern and they have to adjust their personal taste:

*I think that the biggest cultural shock to me now is the terrible British food -- cold, tasteless, and expensive -- which made me try to learn to cook by myself! (B13, England)*

*I found that I have a Taiwanese stomach. The British food always turns my stomach. (B9, England)*

It is worth mentioning that the majority of Taiwanese postgraduate students lost weight during their first term of study in England. Only informant B11 gained

weight, as she enjoyed learning to bake cakes for her friends. However, the conflict not only comes from “eating” but also from the other dimensions of living. As Lazarus (1991; 1976; 1963) states, trouble arises when an individual wants or needs something that runs counter to pressures or demands from without. The majority of Taiwanese postgraduate students coming to England may have particular difficulty with the slow pace of British life as compared with that of Taiwan, which is much more rapid and has a great emphasis on punctuality and efficiency. Some informants (A1, A9, B7, B9, B10) used to think that “Western” countries would be very efficient in dealing with these things. However, once they arrived in England, they found out the truth:

*Probably based on the American life style...I used to think life in a Western country would be like in America...England has a bigger burden to bear... (A9, Taiwan)*

*When I arrived in England, I found that in fact Taiwan is not bad to live in ...In some ways, Taiwan seems more developed than England... (A11, Taiwan)*

*I am in quite an old country. People have rigid thoughts. I just wonder why they will not change or be flexible in dealing with the matter. The office hours are too short, don't mention their effectiveness, very inconvenient (B7, England).*

*Opening a bank account, this was the worst thing -- I couldn't stand it. It took a long time to get my account and cheque book.*



*Can you imagine -- it took me one week!!! God!! I am sure that it only took 10 minutes in Taiwan while I had a coffee provided by the bank (B9, England).*

*From the very beginning of my living here, I didn't get used to it very much because of the slow speed of everything and the long queues everywhere, e.g. in the bank, the accommodation office, and dining room etc.... (B10, England)*

## **L2. Positive/Negative Comparisons**

The initial problems of Taiwanese postgraduate students abroad may involve social boredom (A1, A9, B9, B16), adjusting to a slower pace of life (A13, A15, B7, B10), isolation due to poor news coverage (A14, B4, B5), fear of disease (e.g. CJD), problems with the water supply (A1, A11, B1, B5, B6, B18), feeling lonely (A8, B8), and not being able to obtain much personal gratification from the community (most informants). With experience, students developed their own understanding of the host culture in terms of positive and negative comparisons with Taiwan. Some examples will follow.

A15 stated that he always remained polite when arguing with the graduate office about his fee payments by installment:

*I found that I could argue when fighting about something and get the result if I thought I was right. I found it was very flexible compared to Taiwan. (A15, England)*

In contrast to A15's experience, informants A4, A14 and B7 found that the British style of dealing with things was very rigid.

The financial budget is another concern for most Taiwanese postgraduate students. The prices of some goods seemed higher than in Taiwan. Indeed, some of the students felt that goods in England were always expensive, apart from bread and milk, which were cheaper than in Taiwan:

*I'm OK with the food, though some is terrible. CDs are terribly expensive here. For a music addict like me, the price here just kills me. (B14, England)*

*To live in England is quite expensive and difficult, especially to eat out. Here a simple sandwich costs a lot, not to mention copying, battery and printing prices here. I have to use my intelligence to control the budget. (B8, England)*

*The bread here is quite cheap. I always go for the best-value prices at the supermarket. (A15, A16, Taiwan; B18, England)*

*Books here are more expensive than I expected. Fortunately, my department gives me overseas students gift vouchers (£150) to buy books. It's a real help and saves me a lot of money. Otherwise, I would probably buy the books from the USA via the Internet. (B15, England)*

For most of the informants, the environment in England was very good to live in. The atmospheric and living conditions were better than in Taiwan, except for the water.

The informants who returned to Taiwan remembered England's beautiful countryside and the slow pace and easy life-style.

### **L3. Rule Difference**

We obey formal and informal rules as pedestrians and in traffic; we follow accepted ways of behaving on crowded streets, in elevators, on subways or buses; we learn the proper behaviour for organised social activities (e.g. parties, weddings, funerals) and in university classrooms, and when we are with members of the same or the opposite sex. Equally important as part of our immediate world are the relatively stable, hence predictable, conditions of the physical environment such as the streets and highways, buildings, geography, transportation systems, and climate.

The driving rules in England are different from those in Taiwan (e.g. in Taiwan vehicles have a left-hand drive). Most Taiwanese postgraduate students were aware of such differences and took the necessary care. However, in the summer of 1995, a Taiwanese girl died in a car accident soon after she arrived at the University of Birmingham. Also, the speed of traffic in Britain is quite fast. This is probably another worry for the majority of Taiwanese students:

*I enjoyed the car speed in England. Very fast... (A1, Taiwan)*

*Sometimes, it took me time to cross the road as the car speed was too fast. (A4, Taiwan)*

*I still can't get used to the traffic directions here. I always get on the wrong side of the road to wait for the bus. It costs me a*

*lot of time... (B10, England)*

For most Taiwanese postgraduate students, the weather in England is quite easy to adjust to and comfortable in the summer. Most informants said that they enjoyed themselves very much due to the different climate and beautiful countryside in England. However, they did not like the windy days and bad weather of the winter season. As Taiwan is located in a tropical area, some informants were very excited about the prospect of snow in the winter. However, as B8 said:

*The weather here is very changeable. The climate difference is huge. I can have three in one, that is, sun, rain and cloud in one day. Every morning, I just wonder: should I wear a jacket or shorts? Take an umbrella or not? It is a very awkward problem... (B8, England)*

Nevertheless, the climate is a natural phenomenon. Some informants just complained and tried to adjust to it. However, for some students with a high life-style diversity and difficulties of acculturation (A8, A9, B9), some aspects of British culture (e.g. food) caused problems.

#### **L4. Cultural Learning**

Ward and Kennedy (1993) argue that social-cultural adjustment is primarily a matter of “cultural learning”, a process they define only in terms of its optimal outcome (i.e. fitting in and successfully negotiating one’s way in the host culture). For certain Taiwanese postgraduate students, adaptation to food seemed their main concern. Most students could keep their own food preferences because of the availability of

Chinese food in Chinatown or a nearby oriental shop. Some TPSs said they learnt how to cook Western food with an Eastern flavour:

*I think that I have a talent for cooking. I phoned my family to tell them that I learnt how to cook for myself. It was amazing to them...(B16, England)*

*The happiest thing in England was cooking. To cook Chinese dishes was the most comfortable thing for me. I could use Western food to cook in the Chinese style. I felt very happy...(A14, Taiwan)*

Some informants (A6, A12, B13, B18) learnt how to cook different styles of dishes from other countries (e.g. Greece, India, and England – especially baked cakes). They had different experiences:

*Besides pursuing my degree, I think that learning to cook and making friends from other countries were the most cherished by-products of the time I spent in England...(A6, Taiwan)*

## **L5. Personal Flexibility**

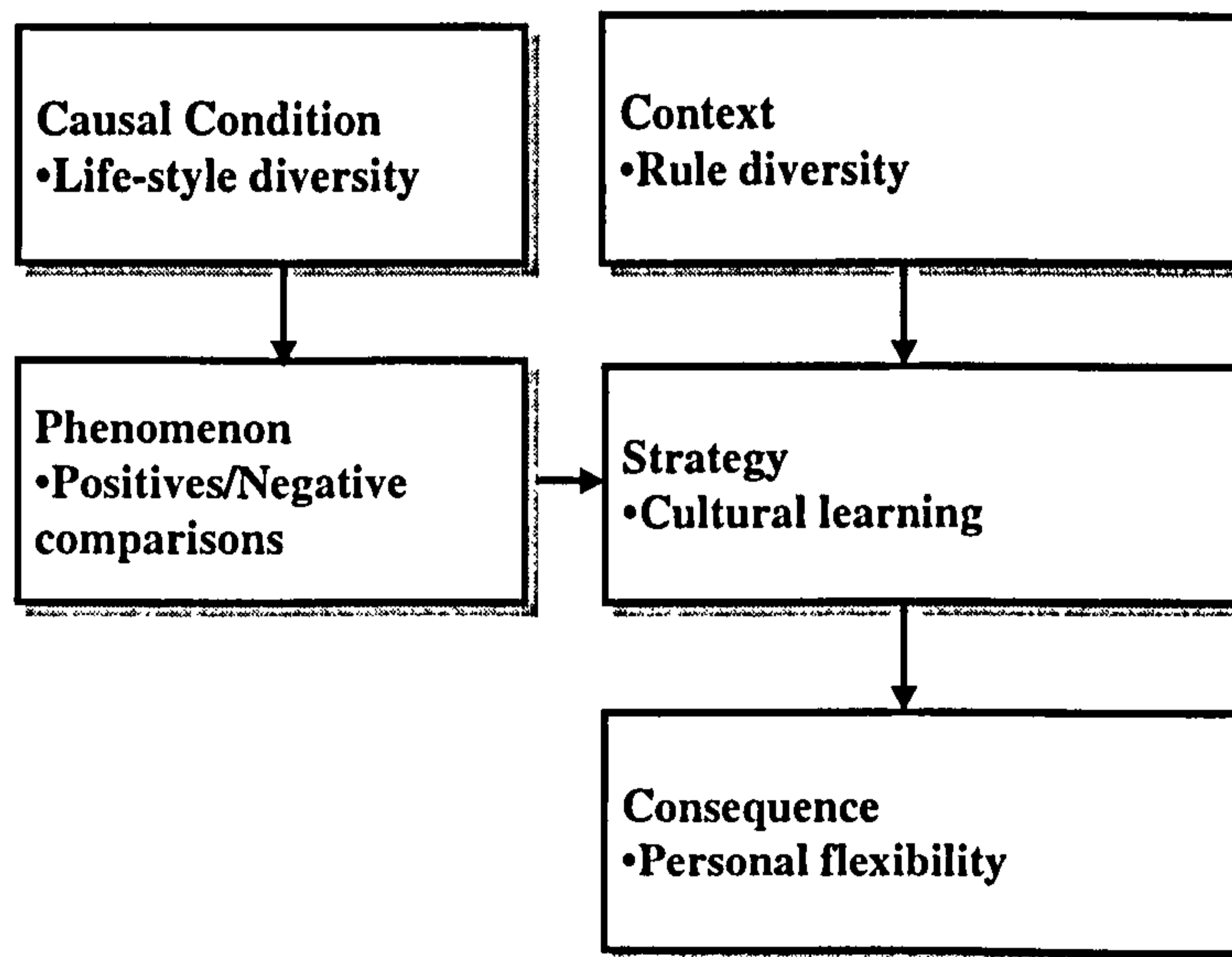
As noted in Chapter 5, the different situations sojourners have to face can be looked upon as providing opportunities which demand new responses (Adler, 1975). To confront “inconvenience” in their life, the Taiwanese postgraduate students were able to keep their habits more flexible. This sub-category is quite similar to the one presented in Chapter 5: “survival flexibility” (S6).

Although prior habits are always a cause of inconvenience, gradually the Taiwanese postgraduate students seemed to get used to “inconvenience” and broaden the scope of their sojourn life-experience. Accordingly, diverse strategies were created to produce de-conditioning (habit conflict). The students developed flexibility toward the operational diversity adjustment of their sojourn life in England:

*I became generally more critical. I would not accept either the UK or the Taiwan system. What is more, I will consider both and choose my own. (A1, Taiwan)*

*Guess what! I developed two kinds of system thinking: one system and behaviour dealing with the life here, one system and behaviour for the people from Taiwan. (B9, England)*

**Summary: the story line of behavioural diversity**



**Figure 6.4: The story line of behavioural diversity**

As indicated, operational adjustment arises from the apparent daily life-style. When Taiwanese students study abroad, *life-style diversity* becomes a form of causal condition which ultimately leads to the subjective phenomenon as reported by informants: *positive/negative comparisons*. A strategy, *cultural learning*, is developed

in response. That is, the informants learnt how to employ strategic flexibility. This strategy is influenced by a particular contextual marker related to the causal condition and the resulting phenomenon. This contextual marker is the extent of *rule diversity*. The strategy used by informants finally has one consequence: *personal flexibility*.

Despite *life-style diversity*, some informants had opportunities to visit the pub (A1, A9, A13, A14, B1, B2, B4, B5, B9, B18), learn how to bake cakes (A2, A5, A13, B1, B2, B10, B19), try to cook by themselves (A8, A13, A15, B2, B12, B13, B16), and learn how to cook other countries' dishes (A1, A4, B3, B17). These examples are all positive. On the negative side was the lack of oriental food. Fortunately, there were other international students in England, so that the Taiwanese students also had opportunities to eat Indian curries, Greek salads, Italian desserts, etc.

The interesting observations the informants made about England – may not be the truth, really in British people' perspective. Inevitably, everybody has his/her own viewpoint and feelings. For example, on the issue of drinking water quality in England, according to the informants this was much worse than in Taiwan. However, in Taiwan people always boil their drinking water first. It is not surprising that the majority of informants felt at odd when they saw other people drinking water straight from the tap.

### 6.3.2 Attitudinal Diversity

Attitudinal diversity relates to how an individual searches for ultimate answers. This is an aspect of the psycho-philosophical patterning of cultural identity (Alder, 1977). Ultimately it is the task of every individual to relate to his/her God, to deal with the

supernatural, and to understand for himself/herself the mystery of life itself. The ways in which individuals do this, the relationships and connections that are formed, are part of the psycho-philosophical component of cultural identity.

In attitudinal terms, somebody may have analytic skills, may know how to readily discern relevant from irrelevant information, may have the capability to make knowledge usable, may be able to motivate himself/herself and others, and may be able to plan independently and monitor work activities, and so on (Vermunt, 1996). The sojourn life in England, for the majority of Taiwanese postgraduate students, was to some extent different in terms of attitudinal diversity adjustment. For example: structural, temporal orientations, and primary goals diversity adjustment were all part of attitudinal diversity adjustment for the majority of the informants:

*Rice and bread are both food. However, I can have rice every day but not bread. I used to think I could adapt to Western food very easily as I could accept fast food in Taiwan. Now, I find I have a Taiwanese stomach. The function of food -- not just food to fill my stomach -- includes missing Taiwan... (B9, England)*

*I used Soya sauce and Chinese-style food from Chinatown. In fact, I hoped I could get used to British-style food. However, in my inner heart, I just did not like the British food... (A9, Taiwan)*

*I used chopsticks to eat all the time... (B1, England)*



## L6. Structural Diversities

People from different cultures have been socialised according to different beliefs, values, expectations and norms. This disparity among experiences can lead to the development of different concerns for achievement, different domains of action, and different success criteria (Worchel and Goethals, 1985; Ying and Liese, 1994). British culture, like other Western cultures, is marked by individualism (Salili, 1994). As indicated by Senge (1990), structures influence behaviour. It is of importance to understand the structure in order to interpret the behaviour correctly. Clearly, there are some fundamental differences between Western and Eastern structures. For example, in Western cultures, where the individual has a sense of emotional independence from the group, organisation and other collectivities (Hofstede, 1980; 1984), the value of achievement through individual effort and mastery is emphasised. In contrast, in traditional collectivist cultures, achievement through cooperation and mutual dependence is encouraged:

*I always had my dinner with my flatmates. No matter what the reason. I did not want to eat alone...(A2, Taiwan)*

For Western students, it probably will not make any sense to have a Chinese meal together every week. However, a shared meal is critical for some Taiwanese postgraduate students:

*Every weekend, myself and some Taiwanese students get together to chat and have some Chinese dishes. It the happiest time during the whole week...(B1, England)*

Human beings engage in everyday activities that, from the perspective of cognitive theories of learning, are seen as the key to understanding complex behaviour (e.g.

Walberg and Haertel, 1992; Watkins et al., 1991). Accordingly, exploring Taiwanese postgraduate students' everyday life-style while they were abroad can help us to understand the structural diversities in relation to other cultures.

### **L7. Temporal Orientations**

Culture gives meaning and form to human drives and motivations that extend toward an understanding of the cosmological ordering of the universe (Alder, 1977). Due to the experience of study abroad, some informants (A3, A5, A12, A13) learnt different customs from people from other countries:

*... When I was travelling alone in England, I felt so depressed in the wet weather. Suddenly, I found a family with parents and two children. In the same weather conditions, they seemed to quite enjoy their family life. I know that, in the same context, most Chinese families would find a place to stay and complain about the weather rather than enjoy the family time. Western people seem to live in the present but we put too much emphasis on the future and are always unhappy in the present. (A7, Taiwan)*

This demonstrates the different spans of temporal orientations. As mentioned our discussion of the core category, behavioural diversity, the majority of Taiwanese postgraduate students coming to England have particular difficulty with the slow pace of British life compared with the more rapid pace in Taiwan and the accompanying emphasis on punctuality and efficiency. I can interpret these diverse paces as two forms of temporal orientation. In terms of their attitude to living, the Chinese seem to

have a long span of temporal orientation; they are always thinking about or expecting the next step or the future. So the Chinese maintain a rapid pace. However, they may have lost the sense of the “meanwhile” (the present), and of course there is no ending to the “future”. Perhaps it is a feeling of risk and uncertainty that has caused them to pursue the future all the time.

### **L8. Primary Goals**

Several Taiwanese postgraduate students (A14, B16, B19) cited the difference of climate, ethnic/cultural adjustment, and recognition of inequality as a difficulty. Difficult transition issues for some students entailed “the social aspect: the attitude of students here was much colder and less caring even than in my violent neighbourhood” (B8); and “I realised that my life would be a struggle because of the way the system is biased against my ethnicity” (A3, A4, B4, B9). However, the secretary of the researcher’s own university department once said that she wondered if Taiwanese postgraduate students were being too narrow in their efforts to learn about English culture. This could be true, as Taiwanese students are at different stages of cultural learning during their period of study. The question is: should cultural learning be planned or not?

Some Taiwanese postgraduate students might feel competent if they can survive the host university’s system of hurdles and attain a degree (A1, A10, B7). They may have no ambitions to interact in the local community or to develop interpersonal skills which are valued by their hosts. However, many other Taiwanese students are interested in more than just degree attainment as long as they have enough time and capabilities to cope with the adjustment. Generally speaking, “survival” may involve

strategies of adapting to the context and/or adopting the context. This will depend on the particular goals of the students:

*After studying for two years in England, I realise that I haven't learned a lot of English culture. To me, study abroad is not only to get a degree. I decided to have trip on my own, to immerse myself in British culture with no academic pressure. (A7, Taiwan)*

### **L9. Rationalisation**

Taiwanese postgraduate students feel that they are behaving in appropriate ways, consistent with their beliefs about their own personalities. Put another way, as informant B16 said, he did not feel as if he was behaving in a certain manner only because he was forced to or because the actions contributed to a temporarily convenient adjustment. In cultures where individualism and achievement are valued, Taiwanese postgraduate students are said to be acclimatised when they internalise beliefs about the importance of these traits (Brislin, 1981).

Thus, via sense diversity and analytical ability, Taiwanese students learn to have certain goals and not others, discover the contingent conditions between such structure diversity and harm or loss and benefits, develop concepts of blame and credit toward their English sojourn life-experience, develop options for coping, and evaluate the conditions on which diverse future expectations rest. With a sense diversity and analytical ability, the Taiwanese postgraduate students developed four patterns of behaviour -- defence, blame, acceptance and conservatism -- toward the functional diversity adjustment of their sojourn life-experience in England.

## L10. Self-Discovery

The gyroscope of cultural identity functions to orchestrate the allegiances, loyalties, and commitments of the individual by giving them direction and meaning. Every human being, however, differentiates himself/herself to some degree from his/her culture. Just as no one is totally free of cultural influence, no one is totally a reflection of his/her culture. Adler (1977) states that the cultural identity of an individual, therefore, must be viewed as an integrated synthesis of identifications that are idiosyncratic within the parameters of culture-influenced biological, social and philosophical motivations. Based on their parent culture, Taiwanese postgraduate students explain and interpret a host lifestyle. Of course, the explaining and interpreting is objective rather than subjective:

*In Taiwan, I just competed with other colleagues. In England, I found everybody was different: hair colour, culture, language, etc. I began to learn and appreciate the diversity of people and culture...However, in Taiwan, probably, everybody is the same. It cannot evoke me to explore the difference between myself and other people... (A8, Taiwan).*

*I learnt self-discovery. I tried to examine myself on the basis of what I learned. I developed a new self. It seems untraditional but make me comfortable... (B1, England)*

## Summary: the story line of attitudinal diversity

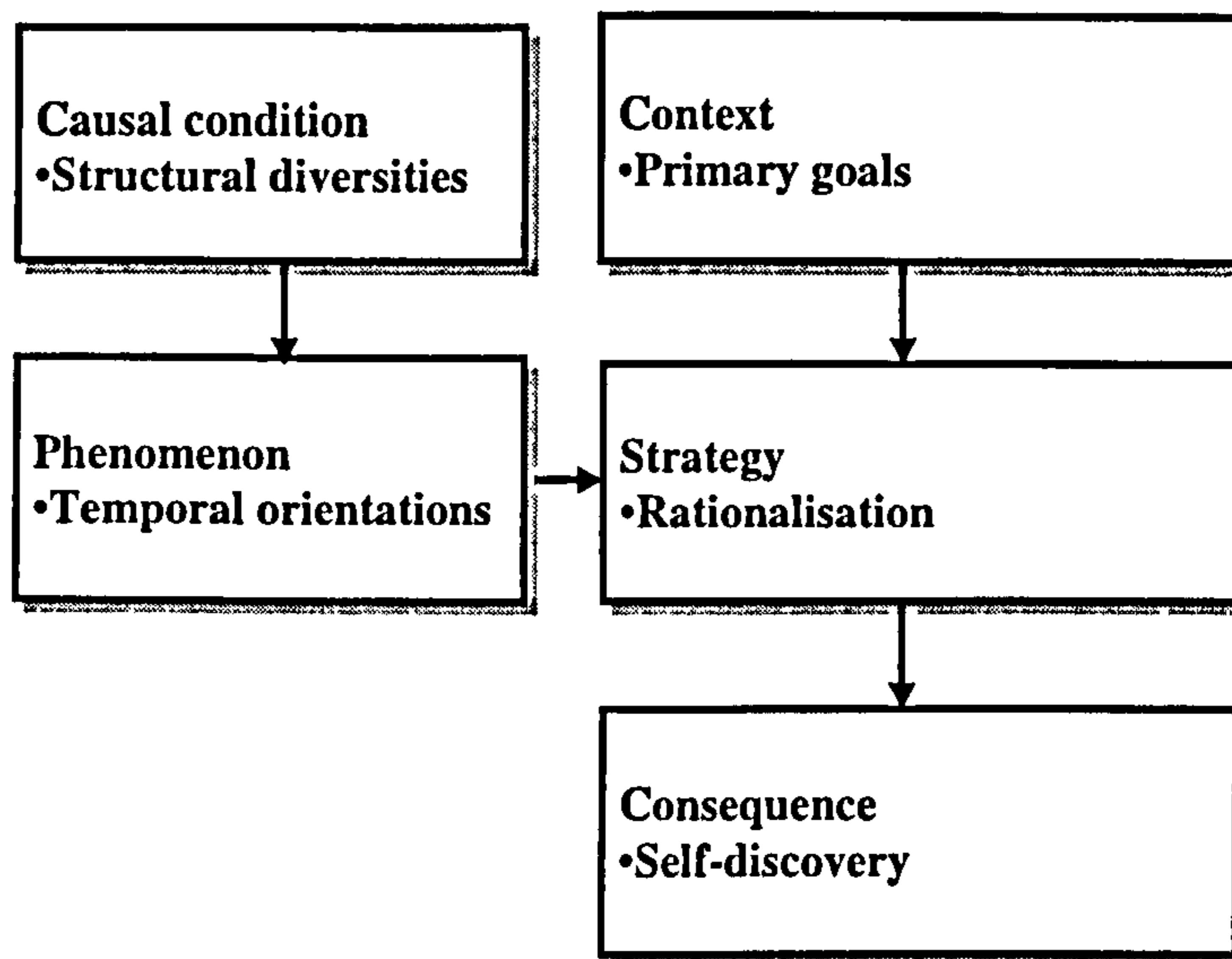


Figure 6.5: The story line of attitudinal diversity

As Figure 6.5 indicates, functional adjustment arises from personal *structural diversities*. The *structural diversities* is referred to as the causal condition. Due to the experience of study abroad, some Taiwanese postgraduate students learn different customs and beliefs from other people. This demonstrates the variability of *temporal orientation* as a phenomenon. In the *primary goals* context, students develop their abilities to *rationalise*. They may find similarities and differences between themselves and other people, and between their home country (Taiwan) and their host country (England). Then, the students learn how to use self-exegesis to interpret themselves through their personal terms and beliefs. The eventual consequence is *self-discovery*. However, during the process of *self-discovery*, students learn to see things from different points of view. The process can be referred to as a learning process: the process of understanding more about oneself.

The *structural diversities* also vary according to the individual's perspective. Different people have different feelings toward the same thing. Some informants (A1, A7, B1, B5, B9) said that they preferred to have Chinese-style food all the time.

Occasional Western food was alright for them, but not twice a day. However, other informants (A2, A3, B14, B17) said that they seldom cooked Chinese food, even rice. They said that they could accept Western food. Nevertheless, in this study, all of the informants stated the view that the food in England is the least tasty food in the whole world. Probably, they had no chance to eat good English food. Moreover, the “art of eating” is very important to most Chinese.

For some informants (A2, A15, B11, B14, B15) understanding English culture was more meaningful. As the image of England is quite traditional, the majority of informants seemed to be willing to get to know the different facets of England, e.g. national heritage, castles, buildings, and the history of the country. The more they understood English culture, the more they could practice *self-discovery*.

### *6.3.3 Belief-System Diversity*

Some Taiwanese postgraduate students placed task-related goals beyond the sense of a desire to involve themselves in the host culture (A2, A3, A7, B5, B10). They wanted to meet people, learn the local language, participate in community activities, and develop close relationships with their hosts. Activities which are task-related, such as sports, art or going to church for bible study, may be used primarily to gain entry into social relationships. Adjustment problems stem from failure to interact effectively with hosts and the perception that the hosts have rebuffed such efforts (see Section 5.2.2). If many host country friends are made, students may also have difficulty readjusting after their return home (A3, A5, A14). For instance, Taiwanese postgraduate students who develop close relationships with hosts will begin to share the same sort of activities. Upon their return home, they may not be able to find people who share their new interests (A2).

From the perception of situated cognition, learning is the process of entering a cultural learning system (Brown, Collin and Duguid, 1989). As Wilson (1993) states, in order to learn, it is necessary to “become embedded in the culture in which the knowing and learning have meaning” (p. 77).

### **L11. Multi-Cultural Awareness**

After an intense cross-cultural experience, TPSs may be able to identify with cultures other than their own. In developing the concept of “multicultural man,” Adler (1977) suggested that the successful sojourner has a number of qualities which distinguish him/her from people tied to the culture into which they were born. Multicultural people, according to Brislin (1981: 197):

1. are adaptive when faced with difficulties and can interact in many situations regardless of the culture in which they find themselves (A11, B5);
2. are continually undergoing personal transitions since they are always finding new challenges in different situations (A7, B2, B4). Of course, this process can lead to discomfort since people will not always find a fit between themselves and new situations;
3. and can look at their own culture from the perception of an outsider (A15, B9).  
Again, this can sometimes be uncomfortable because of trouble over the facts they find and the sense of homelessness which an outsider can feel.

Taiwanese postgraduate students also share knowledge regarding a number of important ideas. They can give examples from their own experience and can analyse the different situations they encounter. Adler’s (1977: 31) three ideas provide a basis



for discussion and even friendship-formation among Taiwanese postgraduate students regardless of the country in which their cross-cultural experience takes place.

1. Every culture or system has its own internal coherence, integrity and logic. Every culture is an interwoven system of values and attitudes, beliefs and norms that give meaning and significance to both individuals and collective identity.
2. No one culture is inherently better or worse than any other. All cultural systems are equally valid as variations on the human experience.
3. All persons are, to some, extent, culturally bound. Every culture provides the individual with some sense of identity, some regulations of behaviour, and some sense of personal place in the scheme of things.

The majority of informants were able to combine their desires to complete specific tasks. However, only a few of them could develop close relationships with their hosts. Nevertheless, the researcher's own impressions from talking with informants is that there are more "combiners/joiners" (A7, A15, A16, B4, B5) than single-minded people. Taiwanese postgraduate students living in England are especially prone to positive judgements since, in general, they are charged with knowing more about the cultural differences between Taiwan and England.

In contrast to a monistic society, where a single set of norms is enforced, pluralistic societies encourage or at least tolerate heterogeneity with respect to the values and customs of different groups. As Brislin (1981: 288) states, instead of a homogeneous society marked by a single set of acceptable beliefs about the country's history, religious practices, desired skin colour, ethnic heritage, and the type of people who can make valued contributions, members of a pluralistic society see worth in

variation. Different sets of religious beliefs are tolerated, skin colour is not a criterion of mobility, many different ideas can be freely expressed, and a wide range of behaviours are seen as appropriate in meeting everyday needs for food, clothing and interpersonal relationships. Some universities have established “international” residence halls where students from various countries live together. In such a setting it is easy for the students to compare notes and insights and provide mutual support. The intent of the international house or flat is not to isolate the “foreign” students from the native student. In the more successful of these arrangements, native students are included as well (Saenz et al., 1999; Foust et al., 1981).

Many Taiwanese postgraduate students studying in England have found living with a native family an excellent means of introduction to the new culture (A1, A12, A13, B5, B10). Home stay offers perhaps the most sympathetic environment for learning and testing new skills in intercultural interaction. Of course, Taiwanese postgraduate students may also find many opportunities to make cultural “mistakes” in the home stay situation, but the consequences are less threatening than in an academic setting. (This view was expressed by informant A12).

### **L12. Self-confident Individualism**

In terms of acclimatising to a culture, Taiwanese postgraduate students can now laugh at the mistakes they made and can accept new challenges with more lightheartedness. Informant A7 recalled that when he encountered a situation beyond his imagination, in his own words, “a shaking of the foundations” occurred. “I began to develop self-destructive behaviour.”

The literature on cross-cultural psychology is rich with examples of the kinds of problems encountered when individuals are exposed intensely to other cultures. Integration and assimilation, for example, represent two different responses to a dominant culture (Selmer, 2001; 2000; Adler, 1977). Integration suggests the retention of sub-cultural differences, and assimilation implies absorption into larger cultural systems. If an individual identifies with his/her own group, he/she will hold favourable attitudes towards integration; on the other hand, if he/she identifies with the host society, he/she should favour assimilation (Maxwell et al., 2000; Sommerland and Berry, 1973).

### **L13. Tolerant Understanding**

Informants' responses reflected a number of key features: general humanitarian tendencies (A8, B1); less emphasis on social, national, and religious differences (A15, B16); greater tolerance and understanding of people (A14, B1, B5, B18); greater skill, ease, and initiative in interpersonal relations (AA6, A11, B11, B18); greater sense of responsibility (A7, B11); more self-control and self knowledge (A15, B9); greater objectivity and flexibility in thinking (A1, A12); and tolerance of different points of view (B6). For example, informant B11 recalled that "at least one of the on-going lessons of study abroad is how to take responsibility, to personally be accountable for every movement and thought, every behaviour and action." Studying, writing, and existing on the far fringe of academic respectability, B11 seemed to be comfortable in her relationships with different cultures.

#### **L14. Creative Self-development**

The general finding was that the foreign student typically started with very positive attitudes toward the host country; then, during the first couple of months, he/she had problems of adjustment and tended to become disillusioned. But after a certain time he/she gained a deeper and more sophisticated insight and became increasingly favourable again toward his/her host country.

Cross-cultural adjustment is very much a part of the stimulus that leads to increased awareness and personal development (Chan and Drover, 1997; Adler, 1974). The disorientation of cultural shock can force Taiwanese postgraduate students into the type of reflection and introspection needed to bring about increased awareness of both self and the environment; and it can challenge the students to develop new communication skills (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997; Bennett, 1977). As Foust et al. (1981) state, exposure to a new culture is most constructively viewed as an “encounter” (not necessarily a shock) which offers unique opportunities for insight into oneself, one’s culture, and the culture of the host country.

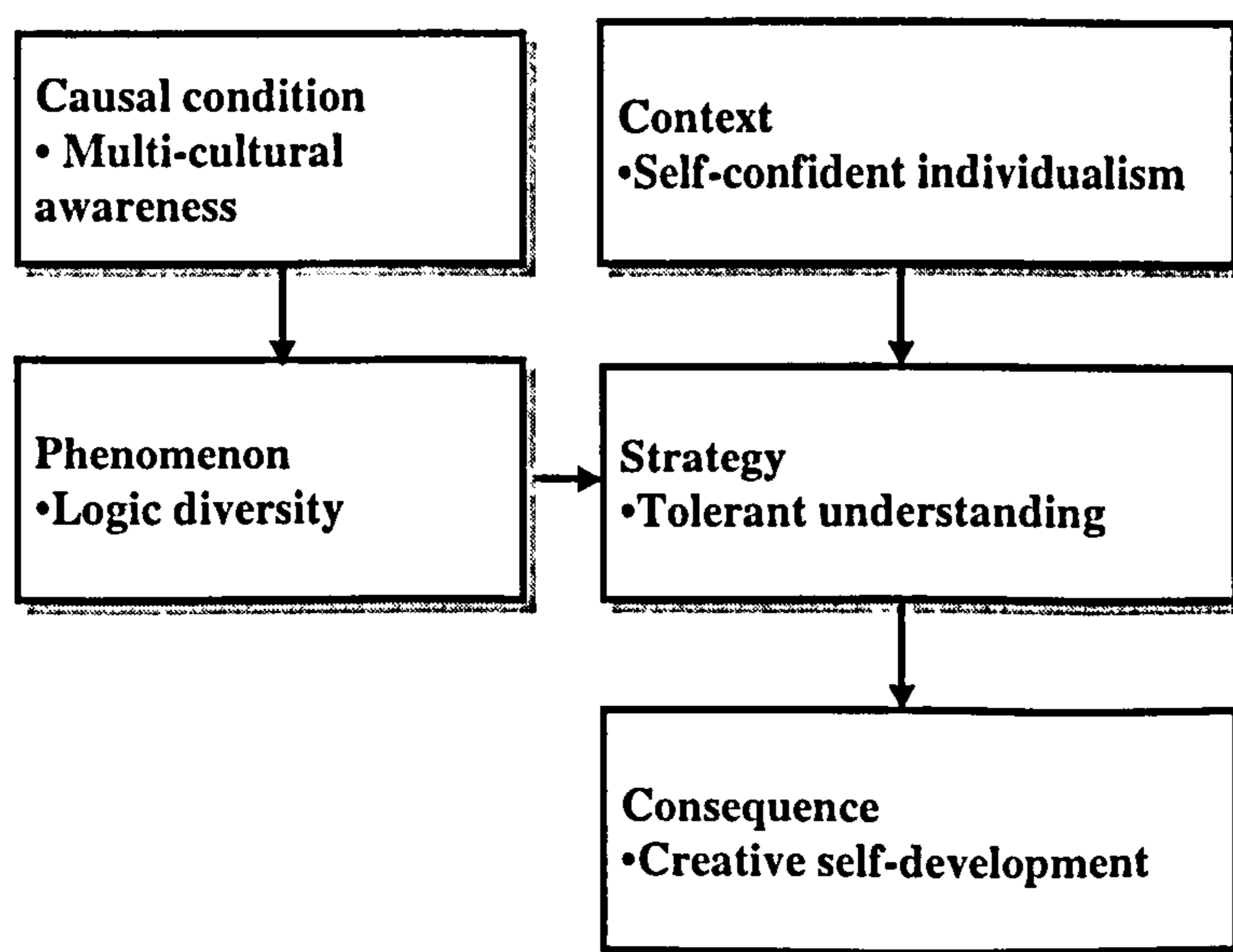
The new insights learned during experimentation are frequently based on comparisons (Section 5.2.3, S15: reassessment of values) and contrasts. Given the motivation provided by culture shock, Taiwanese postgraduate students can relate the new experience to the functioning of various societies. As it was discussed in Section 5.2.2, the motivation to learn (S9) also encourages a confrontation with, and a greater understanding of, Taiwanese postgraduate students’ own culture. Competence in cultural adjustment has received a great deal of attention as a central concept in understanding various types of cross-cultural experiences (Wan et al., 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Brislin, 1981). Competence is a dynamic process that draws from the

individual's cognitive, linguistic and social capabilities. This in turn gives students greater flexibility in responding. As Brislin (1981) states, people must be able to meet their everyday needs in order to have a meaningful sojourn.

The development of creativity is an intriguing possibility. An individual may draw from experience in different cultures and combine ideas into a creative synthesis. Creativity refers to new and original conceptualisations that are infrequently suggested by others. At the same time, creative solutions satisfy the demands of specific problems or meet the demands of specific situations (Brislin, 1981: 296).

More commonly, returning Taiwanese postgraduate students have been able to incorporate their cross-cultural experience into coursework, especially the preparation of term papers and theses (A1, A7, A10, A12, B4, B5, B18). They bring a novel perspective to their analyses, which is bound to please professors accustomed to more parochial treatment.

**Summary: the story line of belief-system diversity**



**Figure 6.6: The story line for belief-system diversity**

As Figure 6.6 shows, by means of *multi-cultural awareness*, Taiwanese postgraduate students develop their *logic diversity* (discussed in Section 5.3.3). Furthermore, in the context of *self-confident individualism*, some of them learn about *tolerant understanding*. Then, as a consequence, they learn to use *creative self-development* to see things differently. However, in some situations, the process of belief-system diversity adjustment is painful. According to some informants (A7, A10, B4, B5), they progressed from the stage of pre-perception to confusion, blame or self-ignorance, then back to self-confidence again. Probably, for most individuals, the meaningful was seen as their inner heartfelt beliefs. Sometimes, the issues of meaningful of individuals are not touchable and not visible. However, the belief was still in everybody's inner heart and could be resistant to change. Belief-system diversity adjustment depends on individuals developing their *tolerant understanding*. Sometimes, it needs individuals' *self-conscious development* (discussed in Section 5.2.3).

However, *multi-cultural awareness* depends on individuals' intention and motivation, i.e. their ability for intercultural sensitivity and their willingness to understand, accept or adopt the host culture (Selmer, 2001, 2000; Torbiorn, 1988). In the context of individuals' *self-confident individualism*, our sample of students developed *thought* and *logic diversities* toward the situations. This sort of condition often happened after they encountered some kind of culture shock. Thoughtful informants (A3, A7, B4, B5) consequently developed an insight into England. For the other informants, at least they had opportunities to understand English culture.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This study seeks to provide an understanding of the adjustment of Taiwanese postgraduate students studying abroad in England. Based on prior research, adjustment was conceptualised as a multifaceted phenomenon characterised by the resolution of psychological distress or transitional trauma. By examining the students' transitional experiences and their behaviours, I have sought to understand both the difficulties and facilitators of adjustment in four areas: self-identity, academic pursuit, affection, and sojourn life experience. I examined four specific dimensions in the previous sections of the Taiwanese postgraduate students' study abroad experience. These instruments provided information about typical adjustment concerns common to most Taiwanese postgraduate students, as well as issues that may pose particular problems for minority students on predominantly White campuses (Saenz et al, 1999; Hurtado, Carter and Spuler, 1996). In this study, I have identified some general patterns in the adjustment process that may have important implications for institutional policy.

I found confirmation of some researchers' (e.g. Saenz et al, 1999; Smedley et al., 1993) findings that revealed a significant contribution of climate-related, minority status stress, over and above some of the typical transitional difficulties. Experience of discrimination had a depressing effect on Taiwanese postgraduate students' feelings of attachment to the institution and England. However, as Hurtado, Carter and Spuler (1996: 151) state, "it was the perception of racial/ethnic tension that was directly associated with lower levels of personal-emotional adjustment, attachment to the institution and (to a lesser extent) adjustment in the academic and social arenas." Thus, it is not just the overt experiences of discrimination that require our attention,

but rather the more subtle forms of intergroup dynamics that can undermine all forms of study abroad adjustment for Taiwanese postgraduate students.

My experience confirmed that to be an insider in England would be very difficult. Some students feel that they do not “fit in”, groups lack good communication, there are group conflicts, and there is a lack of trust between Taiwanese postgraduate students and the administration. Students may internalise these climate observations, presumably because they are more difficult to identify or sanction than overt forms of discrimination.

Aside from these specific aspects of the minority experience on campus, I found that aspects of the general transition experience were key to Taiwanese postgraduate students’ adjustment in England. The successful management of student resources (time, schedules, and so on) has a strong impact on academic and personal-emotional adjustment while they study abroad. Informants (A5, B14) who successfully negotiated the physical, social and cognitive geographies on campus had significant social adjustment and attachment to the institution and to England. These findings emphasise the need to direct further university programmes toward the careful and systematic monitoring of student resource management, academic workloads, and support for students in their efforts to become familiar with the campus environment.

One of the clear facilitators of Taiwanese postgraduate students’ adjustment involves the nature of affiliations that students develop with their peers (both within and across specific ethnic groups). The results reveal how important senior class students (e.g. Ph.D. students) are to a Taiwanese postgraduate student’s adjustment to the campus



community. However, I found some evidence that those students who rely solely on their peers for support in the area of academic adjustment may ultimately be disadvantaged (A14, B10, B19). Exclusive associations with same-class students may provide some level of support, but this is not the support that students need to make positive changes in their academic habits. Some informants (A12, B4, B5) indicated that academic counsellors were particularly important in facilitating their academic adjustment and attachment to the university institution and England.

Almost all the Taiwanese postgraduate students intended to return home after completing their studies in England. Furthermore, their responses revealed that in addition to the help of peers, family support was an important aspect of adjustment in England. The results seem to confirm that there is better personal-emotional adjustment among Taiwanese postgraduate students who had less difficulty separating from the family while also maintaining family relationships and support. The study also suggests that students may be better adjusted when they maintain independence but also maintain a supportive relationship with their family (A10, A12, A15, A16, B8, B10). Maintaining high-quality student-family relationships as well as adequate personal autonomy is more influential in the transition process of CCA.

## **Chapter Seven: A Dynamic Framework of Cross-cultural Adjustment (CCA)**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This study is an exploratory analysis of the cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) of Taiwanese postgraduate students. Through the literature review, the pilot interviews, the longitudinal data collection, and grounded approach to data analysis, several core categories were conceptualised. At that stage, I was satisfied that the findings extended her understanding of the students' adjustment behaviour, and that the task had been completed. But then, after much thinking, new ideas evolved during the data analysis process. I abstracted hierarchical categories from the data and lower-level concepts. The core categories were derived from four diverse but related dimensions (self-identity, academic pursuit, affection, and sojourn life- experience adjustment) and provided clear story lines for the adjustment of Taiwanese postgraduate students' studying abroad. A general pattern of these four dimensions emerged in the my mind during the analysis. In the beginning, it was not entirely clear what this looked like. Efforts were thus made to construct a framework that would identify a meta-pattern of the findings in the previous two chapters and move us a step close towards an understanding of the nature of cross-cultural adjustment. The resulting dynamic framework of cross-cultural adjustment will be presented in this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to extend and integrate the findings and studies to provide a clearer understanding of the nature of cross-cultural adjustment. There are four main parts to the chapter. First, based on the findings from the previous two chapters, the proposed framework and its rationale are presented in Section 7.2. Secondly, through a close examination of the two axes of the proposed framework,

the nature of adjustment and culture diversity is discussed in Section 7.3. Thirdly, an analysis of the process and dynamics of the proposed framework is presented to interpret the path of cross-cultural adjustment in Section 7.4. Fourthly, the significance of the proposed framework is discussed in Section 7.5. Finally, the conclusion is presented in Section 7.6.

## **7.2 The Framework of Cross-cultural Adjustment**

The scientific process involves the ability to move back and forth along the continuum of abstractness. After identifying 12 core categories (three for each of four dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment), the question arises of the relationship between the categories. This study recognises that there is a need for a highly conceptualised framework to represent the complexity of concrete events and to facilitate application. That is, it is necessary to have a general pattern encapsulated by the essence of the research rather than in discrete terms.

Retrospectively, in each of the four dimensions, some core categories can easily be identified but some are less distinct in their nature. For example, in the self-identity adjustment dimension, the core category *awareness of cultural diversity* is much more explicit than *experienced sense of failure*. In turn, the latter is more explicit than *self-regard*. After much deliberative examination, I concluded that the 12 core categories from the four dimensions rest on a continuum space and can be placed hierarchically between the poles *explicit* and *tacit*. The informants seemed to move along the continuum while the different types of adjustment evolved to meet diverse circumstances. Undoubtedly, some of the categories overlap to some extent in each dimension. As a result, it is difficult to locate each category into only one specific

dimension. Rather, it seems best to relocate the categories into three layers: surface, middle, and depth layers.

Clearly, the informants confronted many different situations which involved different degrees of cultural shock during their periods of study abroad. They also evolved different patterns of adjustment. I therefore need to consider the mechanisms that lead to this diversity of adjustment. This study identifies two important features which reinforce the continuum nature of cross-cultural adjustment: the *perception of cultural diversity* and the *process toward adjustment*.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, a general pattern of the four dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment emerged in my mind during the analysis, but its precise definition was not initially clear. In order to overcome this apparent barrier, the researcher decided to return to the basic concepts underpinning the research *culture* and *adjustment*. I decided that each dimension of adjustment proposed in the two previous chapters should be examined in terms of (1) *the perception of cultural diversity* and (2) *the process toward adjustment*. These two antecedents, the researcher reflected, could be seen to determine the pattern of adjustment in specific circumstances.

**The perception of cultural diversity.** In terms of cultural difference, two levels of culture are usually discerned. One is an overt form (often called explicit culture) which is the readily observable regularity in the behaviour of the group; and the other is a covert form (often called implicit culture), which is the set of patterns, rules and structure inferred to account for this observed regularity. The overt (explicit)-covert

(tacit) perspective can be described as the level of cultural diversity of cross-cultural adjustment (Friederichs and Gupta, 1995). The perception of cultural diversity can be defined as individuals' international sensitivity (Selmer, 2000, 2001; Kaye and Taylor, 1997). In this study, for some informants (A7, B4, B5), the perception of cultural diversity was much stronger than for other informants (A1, A10).

In theoretical terms, the literature of cultural anthropology has documented the importance of variations and differences within cultures and their value for conceptual analysis (Fisher and Yuan; 1998; Sergeant and Frenkel, 1998; Au, 1997, Berry et al., 1992; Leung and Bond, 1989). In moving across cultures, the individual perception of cultural diversity varies. However, during his/her sojourn, a person has to deal with psychological strain, a sense of loss, rejection, confusion, surprise, anxiety and feelings of impotence (Selmer, 2001; d'Ardenne and Mahtain, 1989).

**The process toward adjustment.** How do individuals adapt to changes in their environment? Clearly, coping with cultural diversity is one of the major challenges for individuals who have experience of cross-cultural adjustment. The concept of *coping* refers to individuals' cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding their resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Researchers (Selmer, 2001; Long et al., 1992; Folkman et al., 1986) have categorised two coping strategies used by individuals in handling stressful situations: problem-focused (approach/engagement) and symptom-focused (avoidance/disengagement) strategies. Searle and Ward (1990) state that there are two fundamental types of cross-cultural adjustment: psychological and sociocultural.

Adjustment has first of all been defined as a psychological process whereby an individual manages or copes with various life demands or pressures (Lazarus, 1991; 1981; 1966). This refers to psychological well-being or satisfaction (Yin and Liese, 1990, 1994). Secondly, according to Coleman (1995), the strategy an individual develops to cope with cultural diversity is a behavioural episode schema. This strategy will evolve as a result of the models of coping to which an individual has been exposed and the types of reinforcement the individual receives when he or she attempts to replicate the modelled behaviour (Bandura, 1986). It is also related to social skills and the ability to “fit in” or negotiate aspects of the host culture (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). That is, the process of second-culture acquisition is the process of learning behavioural episode schemas that are appropriate for a new cultural context. Therefore, setting a scene for adjustment is a strategic-psychological process in which two of the dimensions of adjustment are to some extent similar, but not identical. As Ward and Kennedy (1993) state, psychological adjustment is interwoven with stress and coping processes, whereas socio-cultural adaptation (strategy) could be predicated on cultural learning.

**The Hierarchy of Cross-Cultural Adjustment.** Two features and their hierarchies have been identified. A reverse check has been done for the all proposed core categories in terms of the perception of cultural diversity and process toward adjustment, as shown in Table 7.1. Each core category has been discussed in detail in Chapter 5 (for dimensions one and two) or Chapter 6 (for dimensions three and four).

**Table 7.1: A Summary of the Hierarchy of Core Categories**

<b>Perception of cultural diversity</b>	Overt	Explicit ← → Tacit	Covert
<b>Process of adjustment</b>	Strategic		Emotional
<b>Self-identity</b>	<i>Awareness of cultural diversity</i>	<i>Experienced sense of failure</i>	<i>Self-regard</i>
<b>Academic pursuit</b>	<i>Instrumental diversities</i>	<i>Enhanced pressured undertaken</i>	<i>Logical conflict</i>
<b>Affection</b>	<i>Separation</i>	<i>Rootlessness</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
<b>Sojourn life-experience</b>	<i>Behavioural diversity</i>	<i>Attitudinal diversity</i>	<i>Belief-system diversity</i>

The rationale for deriving this framework is quite simple. As shown in Table 7.1, the core categories from the grounded approach analysis are listed **horizontally** and ranked from explicit to tacit. Probing the four dimensions, the hierarchical nature of these core categories shifts the observation to the **vertical** scale. From the **vertical** viewpoint, and focusing on the two fundamental features: psychology and logic of adjustment with loosely coupled stimulation, reaction, and action interacting over time to determine particular patterns of adjustment, I propose a multi-layered system of cross-cultural adjustment as shown in Figure 7.1. To make this clearer, I will borrow some terms for labelling different layers, and a close examination of each layer is given in the following.

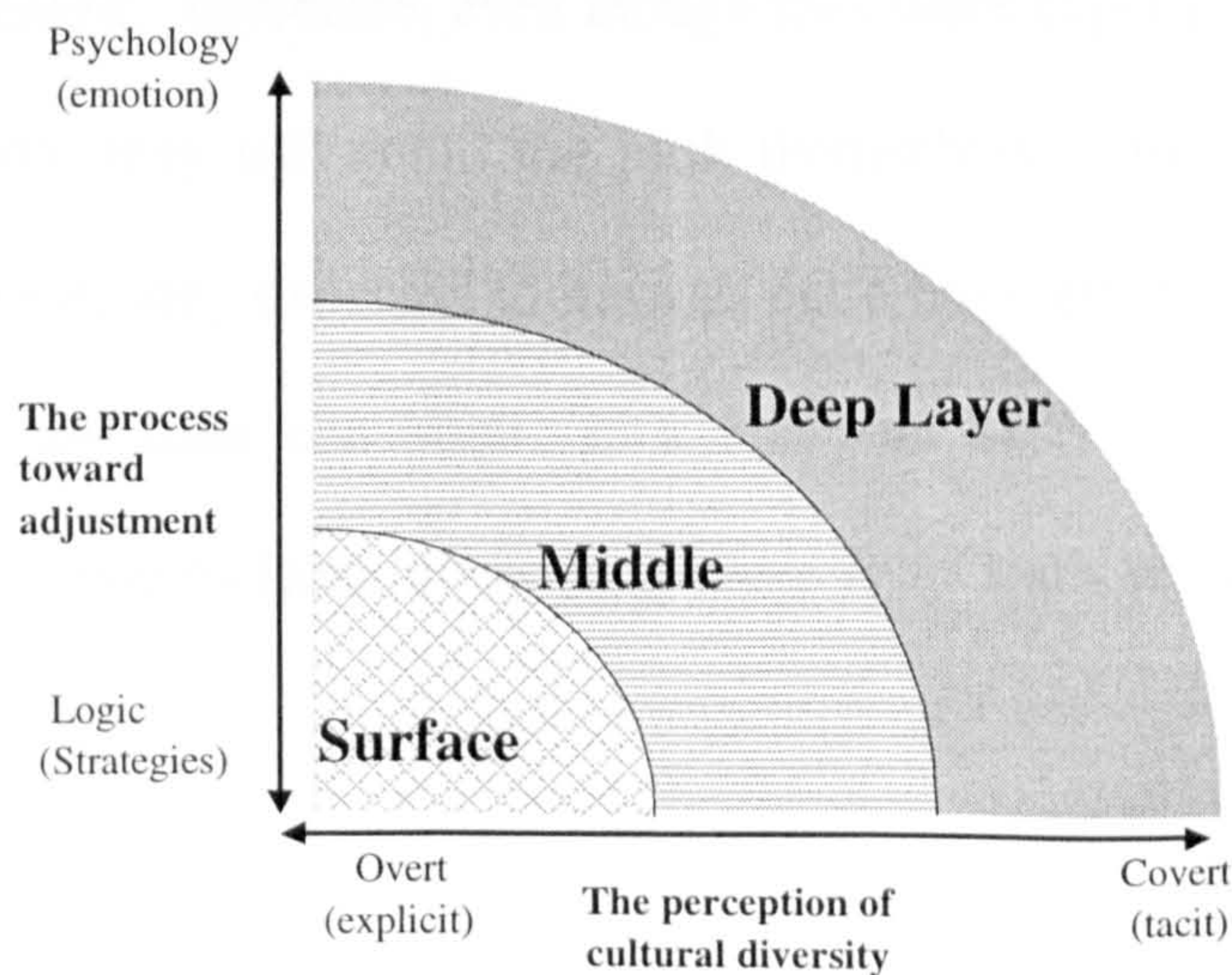


Figure 7.1 A Multi-Layered System of Cross-Culture Adjustment

- The surface layer:

At the surface layer informants can only perceive overt cultural diversities, and their adjustment behaviour is strategy-oriented. For example, in the academic pursuit dimension, some informants (A10, A14, B10, B19) at first seemed more utilitarian in their learning motivation. The main aim of those informants was to pursue their degree programmes at the minimum allowable standard (pass only). The interesting thing is that most of their abilities (i.e. English-language ability, the ability to resist pressure while under time constraints) seemed to give them less competitive advantage than the abilities of other informants. Furthermore, in terms of their awareness of cultural diversity, their perceptions seemed to surface more clearly than was the case with other informants. What is more, their adjustments while they were abroad were more strategic, as they just reproduced their pattern or style of life. Accordingly, their beliefs/behaviours/attitudes remained the same as when they were in Taiwan.

Unavoidably, due to the limited ability of these informants, their adjustment tended to be strategy-oriented. Therefore, even though they were eager to learn more regarding cultural diversity, they still could not push themselves to move further toward this goal. Nevertheless, they expected to have to put a huge effort into this task. Another limitation was the time constraint, as a one-year MSc/MA programme does not provide enough time to learn everything there is to learn about both academic and cultural matters.

Those who are located in the surface layer of cross-cultural adjustment may have a perceived inability to adjust and to problem-solve. Accordingly, they tend to avoid



facing problems and are resistant to change, even if they are aware of the problems which exist. Due to the existence of certain barriers (e.g. poor English ability, insufficient background knowledge, etc.) they tend to adopt a pass-only strategy. This finding is supported by the literature (e.g. Selmer, 2000, 2001; Sergeant and Frenkel; 1998). This phenomenon not only occurs with international students but can also be found in the sojourn adjustment of expatriates. There is also evidence of its applicability to students from the USA, France, Denmark, Germany, Australia and Great Britain (e.g., Schramm-Nielsen, 2000; Tixier, 2000; Selmer, 2001; Fisher & Yuan, 1998).

- The middle layer:

The middle layer is the grey area. That is, the middle layer has a deeper approach than the surface layer and a more superficial approach than the deepest layer. Some informants (A2, A3, B14, B16), to some degree and in some situations, belong to this area. Furthermore, these students expressed a strategic orientation after they had evaluated their situations (but with little time and few resources). When they had more time and resources, they tended to pursue higher standards and develop a greater understanding of cross-cultural encounters in related fields. In addition, in some circumstances, some informants (A2, A3, B14) had the opportunity to broaden the interface with second or third cultures due to contacts with their classmates or flatmates. Therefore, it can be said that the informants who belong in this middle layer in some circumstances tend towards the surface layer, but in other circumstances tend toward the deep layer. This is why the middle layer is defined as a grey area. Here, adjustment sometimes tends to be strategy-oriented, but is sometimes psychology-oriented. Furthermore, in this middle layer, the informants are more willing to devote their effort to contact and learn about the host culture. This grey

area overlaps between the surface and deep layers. Most of the informants confessed that they would like to learn more if they had the enough time. However, their ability and willingness to change or learn affected their adjustment.

- The deep layer:

In the deep layer, informants perceive other cultural diversities, adjust their behaviour, and are psychology (emotion)- oriented. In this layer, certain informants (A7, B4, B5) seemed to be more interested in obtaining the highest possible grades in their academic pursuit and a greater understanding of cultural diversities. Furthermore, in other dimensions, they tended to reach a much deeper understanding of a second and even third culture. Even though their strategy was to achieve high marks by doing extra reading or spending extra time on improving their abilities, their cross-cultural adjustment was more inclined towards personal psychology. These informants had high English-language scores and a greater competitive advantage compared with the other informants.

However, according to the researcher's observation, the students were subject to more "culture shock" than the other informants. The reason is probably that their perception of cultural diversities was covert. The more they understood, the more they felt that their abilities were inadequate. In consequence, they tended to spend more time and more energy improving their performance in their academic pursuit or in adjusting themselves. These informants would probably have greater re-entry cultural shock when they returned to Taiwan. However, such informants (A7, B4, B5) were generally more thoughtful in their adjustment, and in consequence they seemed to be more flexible in their ability and willingness to change and learn.

Accordingly, based on discussions with the informants and direct observation, the characteristics of each layer can be summarised (Table 7.2) to provide a holistic picture of the proposed framework. In the following section, I will present the proposed framework in order to take the dynamic nature of adjustment into account.

**Table 7.2: Summary of the Characteristics of the Three Layers**

Layer	Types of adjustment	Characteristics of Cultural Dimension	Perception of Cultural Diversity	Adjustment
Surface layer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness of cultural diversity</li> <li>● Instrumental diversities</li> <li>● Separation</li> <li>● Behavioural diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural novelty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overt</li> <li>● Surface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategy-oriented</li> <li>● Pass-only</li> <li>● Utilitarian</li> <li>● Task-oriented</li> <li>● Reproduce/rote learning</li> <li>● Avoid problems</li> <li>● Passive</li> </ul>
Middle layer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Experienced sense of failure</li> <li>● Enhanced pressure undertaken</li> <li>● Rootlessness</li> <li>● Attitudinal diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frustration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Deeper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grey area (both or either surface layer and/or deep layer)</li> </ul>
Deep layer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-regard</li> <li>● Logical conflict</li> <li>● Anxiety</li> <li>● Belief-system diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural identity</li> <li>● Cultural conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Covert</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Process-oriented</li> <li>● Self-reflection</li> <li>● Innovation/insight learning</li> <li>● Psychology-oriented</li> <li>● Confront the problem</li> <li>● Active</li> </ul>

For the majority of informants, their personal beliefs guided their way of handling cross-cultural adjustment. In this study, the informants whose adjustment belonged to the deep layer seemed to have the ability to adjust and be more willing to confront the problem. In contrast, informants whose adjustment was in the surface layer tended to avoid problems and lacked the inability to adjust. Concerning culture shock, researchers (e.g. Kaye and Taylor, 1997) have found a strong inverse relationship between intercultural sensitivity and culture shock. However, this is possibly due to the fact that informants with a high degree of intercultural sensitivity are more willing to learn and apply their knowledge of cultural differences. Then they develop their

own *self-discovery* (discussed in Section 6.3.3). It is impossible to assert whether their perception of culture shock is any less than that of people with a low degree of intercultural sensitivity.

Selmer's (2001) study of Western business expatriates in China also found that the expatriates' perceived inability to adjust had a negative relationship with problem-focused coping strategies. That is, the more expatriates consider themselves unable to adjust, the less they attempted to change the situation or to address the problem. These results clearly support the findings of the present analysis.

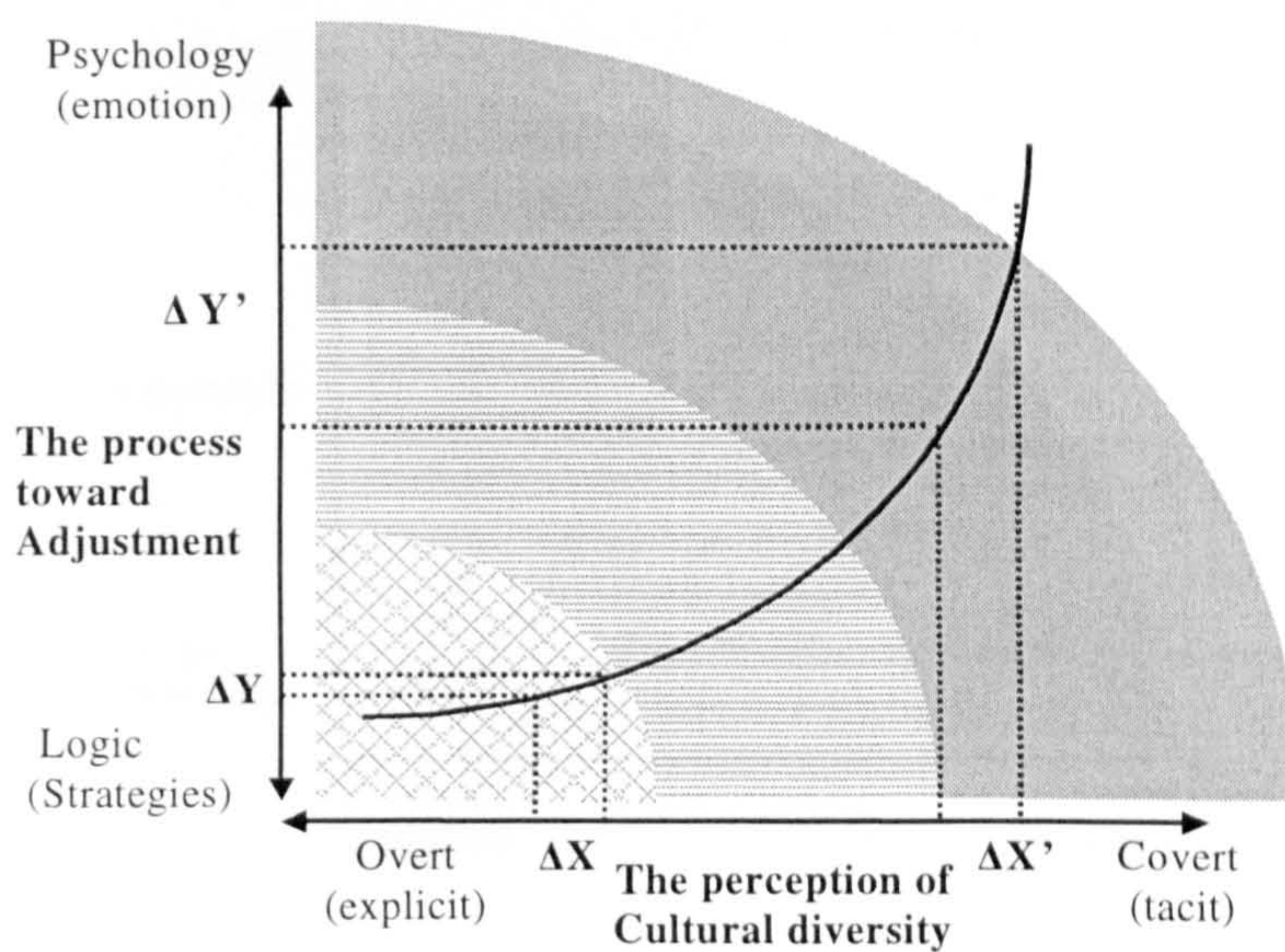
### **7.3 The Shifting Curve of Adjustment**

The proposed framework suggests a multi-layered view of adjustment. As I argued in Section 7.2, the informants moved along the continuum of the perception of cultural diversity while different patterns of adjustment evolved to meet diverse circumstances. In the journal of learning, the individual experience of adjustment changes regularly depending on the individual's psychological reaction and personal perceptions. Obviously, the longer the learner stays abroad, the more cultural diversities he/she may perceive (Tomich et al, 2000; Sodowsky and Plake, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Searle, 1991). This raises the question of what the journal of cross-cultural adjustment looks like, and of whether the extent of psychological reaction remains the same in different phases.

The answer is "probably not". Several informants (A1, A5, A11, B7, B10) indicated that with some cultural shocks (referring to those in the surface layer), they could adapt easily. However, with some in-depth or some subtle cultural shocks (referring

to those in the depth layer), some informants (A7, B4, B5) experienced a heavily psychological reaction. Sometimes, they could not work out a way to overcome these shocks, which become poignant memories for the rest of their lives.

I can illustrate this phenomenon by adding an adjustment curve to the proposed framework. As shown in Figure 7.2, when the perception of cultural diversity moves from overt to covert, the adjustment moves from strategic to emotional. Meanwhile, even if the extent of perceiving cultural shock is almost the same (i.e.  $\Delta X = \Delta X'$ ), the degree of reaction is largely different (i.e.  $\Delta Y < \Delta Y'$ ). That is, if one has a lens that can discover overwhelming cultural diversity, the shock is prodigious and leads to a radical psychological reaction.



**Figure 7.2: The Shifting Curve of Adjustment**

Obviously, each person has his/her own characteristics and not all informants reached the deep layer. Possibly, the shifting curve implies that only those in the deep layer will experience a psychological reaction, but the term *perception of cultural diversity* is subjective rather than objective. For some students, some cultural diversities are really shocking, but not for others. The only thing that is certain is that everyone has a particular path of cross-cultural adjustment during his/her period of study abroad,

and this varies according to personal features. Those informants who perceived a greater dissimilarity between the home and the host cultures experienced more social difficulty during cross-cultural transitions (see Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

#### 7.4 The Paths of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Here, *path* refers to the journey from the start layer to the end layer of cross-cultural adjustment. An understanding of the path of cross-cultural adjustment and its relationship with personal features is meaningful but it is not yet clear. Figure 7.4 shows four possible paths of cross-cultural adjustment. We will use the collected data and map them onto these four paths as a basis for further discussion.

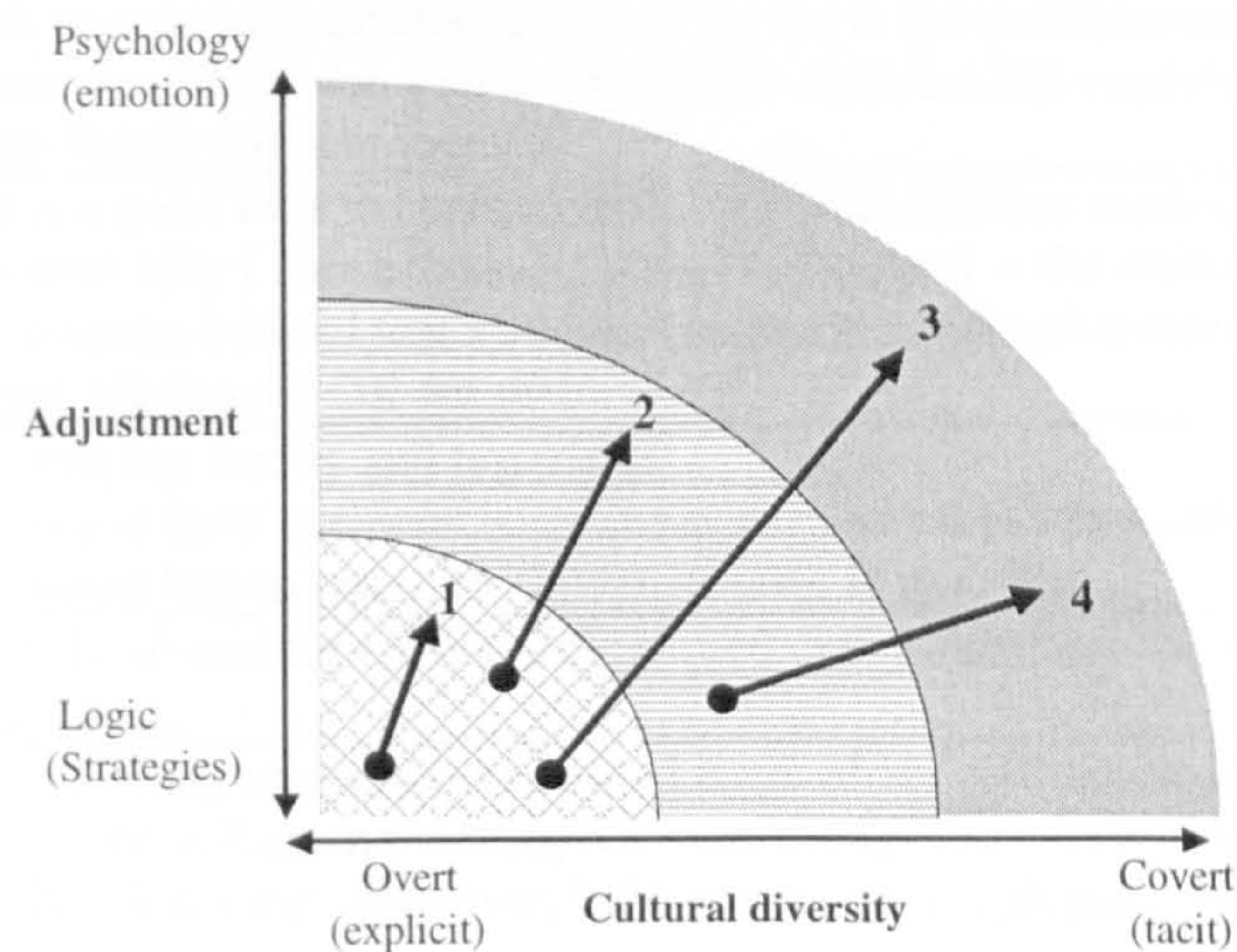


Figure 7.3: The Path of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

- **Type One of TPSs' CCA**

Informants of this type tended to stay with one group, that is with other Chinese students (from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong or Singapore). According to these informants, they spoke Chinese quite often and cooked food with other Taiwanese. With little time and opportunity to contact different cultures, due to their academic degree programmes, they spent most of their time preparing coursework and

assignments. They did change a little while they were abroad. They kept their own values due to their inability to change or unwillingness to learn (Selmer, 2001, 2000). In some situations, they avoided facing up to problems. At first, their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour toward uncertainty tended to be passive.

**Table 7.4.1. Type One of TPSs' CCA**

Informant	Learning from their study abroad
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I am sure that everything will be fine eventually. Too much worry will not help the situation.</li> <li>✓ The slow pace of life in England.</li> <li>✓ Life was comfortable in England.</li> </ul>
A6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Study abroad was a special life experience.</li> <li>✓ I made some friends.</li> <li>✓ I had opportunities to contact different cultures.</li> </ul>
A11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Even though I married and have a child, it was always my dream to pursue an academic degree. I am happy that I can now achieve it.</li> </ul>
A14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ In England, I lost my confidence to socialise and to study due to my poor English-language skill.</li> <li>✓ The happiest memory for me was the travel experience.</li> </ul>
B6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Studying again is quite difficult for me due to role-playing.</li> <li>✓ To earn another academic degree for me is not so important. I like to take my family to live abroad for one year to experience different life-experiences. I am happy that I and my family can live together.</li> </ul>
B7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It is a good idea to change career, to pursue another academic degree. This is the reason why I chose to study abroad in England -- the duration is short (one year). However, I found that I couldn't learn the advanced technical skills here. Apart from that, life here is OK for me.</li> </ul>
B8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I miss my family and boyfriend.</li> <li>✓ I like to have someone with whom to share what I saw and learnt in England.</li> <li>✓ I would like to return to Taiwan as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
B9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Study abroad for me is my childhood dream fulfilled. Now, I've done it. I feel satisfied.</li> </ul>
B10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I saw study abroad as the second stage of my self-development.</li> <li>✓ The life in England was joyful, even though the course loading was very heavy and difficult for me. However, I did not pursue a high pass but settled for a pass only instead.</li> </ul>
B11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Even though I study abroad, I can contact my friends in Taiwan via e-mail and ICQ. I always contact them every day. It makes me feel I am not so far away from them.</li> </ul>
B12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Life for me in England is novel.</li> <li>✓ This is the first time that I have lived alone without my family.</li> <li>✓ I feel quite happy and free.</li> </ul>
B13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Life in England is simple.</li> <li>✓ I rather like to say that I live in an ivory tower.</li> <li>✓ The campus is like an umbrella that protects me.</li> <li>✓ I can quite enjoy a life like this, as it is cosy.</li> </ul>
B16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ From my personal perspective, I am a foreigner in England no matter how long I stay here. Therefore, I don't think that I could be part of the group.</li> </ul>
B19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What I want is to get it over with. Pass it! I cannot bear it any more.</li> </ul>

According to the collected data, most of these informants experienced happiness and comfort when they returned to Taiwan. It would be wrong to assume that these informants disliked England. In some respects, they (A1, A11, A14) enjoyed themselves while they were in England as the life there was simple and much less stressful than life in Taiwan.

- **Type Two of TPSs' CCA**

Type two informants perceived some kinds of failure experience while they studied abroad. They felt frustrated due to the coursework, lack of friendships, and/or communication problems. They felt that communication was the biggest single problem for them. They stated that they were willing to make more effort to reach a higher standard if they could. However, this did not always bring success. Due to the experience of failure, their beliefs/behaviours/attitudes toward the second or third culture tended to be more psychology-(emotion-)oriented. At first, these informants experienced a sense of naivety. When they encountered failure, they blamed themselves and lost their confidence. Eventually, they developed their self-knowledge regarding themselves and rebuilt their confidence. This type of informant is illustrated in Table 7.4.2.



**Table 7.4.2. Type Two of TPSs' CCA**

Informant	Learning from their study abroad
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I liked the fact that life was simple and concise in England.</li> <li>✓ Sometimes, I just wonder whether I am really such an independent person.</li> <li>✓ When I was in England, I realised that I could not be separated from my family.</li> </ul>
A4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What I want is to take a rest. Stop working and recharge my battery.</li> <li>✓ I was very much enjoying being a student again after working for 15 years.</li> <li>✓ I recalled the time I was at university. Now I can appreciate more learning something new.</li> </ul>
A8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When I was abroad, I found that everybody was different: different colours of hair, different nationalities, and different personalities.</li> <li>✓ I have started to think about things from a different perspective.</li> </ul>
A9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When I marvel at the beautiful sincerity, pure air, and history and heritage in England, I think about the effort that the English people put in.</li> <li>✓ I also think about the slow progress they make.</li> </ul>
A12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I like to bring my family abroad in order to let them get a different experience and to contact different cultures.</li> <li>✓ To pursue the academic life is a by-product. However, what I learnt from my MSc programme is very useful for my current job development.</li> </ul>
A16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Even though I did not get the degree abroad, I practice what I learnt from Western education methods.</li> </ul>

This type of informant was mature and thoughtful, with many years working experience. The main concern was to gain cross-cultural experience. These students cherished the opportunity to study abroad. When they returned to Taiwan, most of them expressed the belief that they could apply what they had learned abroad. They confessed that they made comparisons of everything between England and Taiwan. However, they realised that there are cross-cultural differences everywhere.

● **Type Three of TPSs' CCA**

This type of informant received the biggest shock of all during their period of study abroad. They could approach an awareness of cultural diversities with sensibility. They recalled their special experiences or similar situations in Taiwan. While they studied abroad, they considered everything they encountered. Therefore, they always justified their behaviours/beliefs/attitudes towards the new culture. It was not necessary to say that their life in England was very painful. However, their

perception of culture shock was huge and deep. Therefore, this type of informant seemed always to be willing to change/adjust his/her adjustment to any situation that might occur. (See Table 7.4.3)

**Table 7.4.3. Type Three of TPSs' CCA**

Informant	Learning from their study abroad
A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I learnt how to engage in team work.</li> <li>✓ I learnt how to share my ideas with other classmates.</li> <li>✓ I learnt how to take care of other people.</li> <li>✓ I can give what I used to receive in Taiwan.</li> <li>✓ I will pay more attention to my family and friends, as I found that I was missing all of them when I was abroad.</li> </ul>
A7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I learnt that I have to first achieve the standard required. Sometimes, I found that even though I got the qualification, I still could not become involved in certain groups due to my race being Chinese.</li> <li>✓ I learnt to know my abilities in difficult situations.</li> </ul>
A10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I realise that I am not as good as I used to think.</li> <li>✓ Even though I earned two degrees (MSc and MA), I now understand my ability.</li> <li>✓ I am not suited to pursuing a higher degree, not to mention a Ph.D.</li> </ul>
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I have never studied so hard before.</li> <li>✓ I concentrate my spirit to cope with any problematic matters.</li> <li>✓ I am sure that I will not forget the life in England, as it was so painful.</li> </ul>
B17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To pursue the academic life is so difficult.</li> <li>✓ I would feel lonely if I did not contact other people.</li> <li>✓ I learnt how to socialise with my colleagues.</li> <li>✓ I learnt how to discuss the assignments with tutors.</li> <li>✓ At the same time, I found I opened my mind to accept the world, which I never touched before.</li> </ul>

Interestingly enough, when these informants returned to Taiwan, they felt that they could adjust to the re-entry cultural shock more easily if they compared it to the time they arrived in England. According to informant B2, "As life in England was very intensive and painful, I don't think there will be any difficulty in the future that I will not be able to overcome".

● **Type Four of TPSs' CCA**

This type of informant belongs to the so-called "elite" in Taiwan, with high scores in TOEFL or IELTS. Most of these informants graduated from the National University in Taiwan with excellent academic records. They were well-prepared and regarded study abroad as one of their career aims. They were achievement-motivated (Saenz et al., 1999; Watkins et al., 1991) in terms of their academic pursuit. Some of them

considered pursuing a further academic degree (Ph.D.) in the future. Accordingly, they aimed to achieve the highest results possible.

This type of informant studied abroad with clear goals and great confidence. Even the students' adjustment tended to be more psychology-(emotion-)oriented and their perception of cultural diversities perception tended toward the covert; they were able to tackle any problems that might occur. Their schedule seemed well organised. This finding confirms the result of the studies by Rodriguez (1996) and Saenz et al. (1999) – that academic self-efficacy is especially important for minority student success. The characteristics of this type of informant are an activity and problem-solving orientation: they seemed to be more confident, have a greater ability, and be more willing to learn. With an open perspective, they could more easily to accept new ideas. (See Table 7.4.4)

**Table 7.4.4. Type Four of TPSs' CCA**

Informant	Learning from their study abroad
A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By means of interface broadening (e.g. with friends from different countries), I got the opportunities to understand a different culture.</li> <li>✓ The more I learnt, the more I appreciated.</li> </ul>
A13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I learnt how to examine the process and be self-motivated.</li> </ul>
A14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be my self.</li> <li>✓ Whatever I encountered, I played the successful actor wherever I was.</li> </ul>
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop self-identity.</li> </ul>
B3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Building self-confidence.</li> <li>✓ More understanding of cultural diversity.</li> </ul>
B4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Using different viewpoints and perspectives to examine the same things.</li> </ul>
B5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I put myself into a totally new environment.</li> <li>✓ I found myself with the ability to cope with different things. I was more active toward a new experience.</li> </ul>
B14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I will never waste a single second while I am abroad.</li> <li>✓ I am here to learn -- to know a different culture.</li> <li>✓ I developed role innovation.</li> <li>✓ Be myself and I do what I want to do.</li> </ul>
B15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I love the feeling of examining my ability to live alone in England.</li> <li>✓ The more I live, the more I will need to learn about life no matter where I live.</li> </ul>
B18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I encountered a lot of things beyond what I anticipated.</li> <li>✓ Even though I know I will tackle problematic matters, I will reconsider and review my planning for my future.</li> </ul>

Table 7.4.5 summarises the four types of cross-cultural adjustment.

**Table 7.4.5 The Four Types of TPSs CCA**

Types	Characteristics of CCA	Culture Shock	Perception of cultural diversity	Adjustment
One	Informants tend to be task-oriented. Even though they increase their perception of cultural diversity, it still seems to be superficial. Therefore, their adjustment tends to be strategy-oriented. They do not change their behaviours/attitudes/beliefs more than a little toward the host country.	Low	Overt	Strategy-oriented
Two	Informants increase their interface with the host country due to their personal ability (e.g. English-language ability). They have opportunities to contact a different culture with different perspectives.	Middle	From overt to deeper	Strategy-oriented and process-oriented
Three	Informants have little knowledge of the host country when they arrive abroad. By means of self-improvement, they recognise their limited abilities. They change their behaviours/attitudes/beliefs and even their values toward the host country. In particular, they develop their self-identity.	High	From overt to covert	From strategy-oriented to processed-oriented
Four	Informants are well prepared to study abroad. They have a self-confident knowledge of what they want due to their understanding of cultural diversity awareness. They address the interface with the host country through their personal efforts.	Middle	From deeper to covert	Tends towards process-oriented

The previous section discussed the dynamics of cross-cultural adjustment. The relationship of the perception of cultural diversity to adjustment is non-linear. That is, the perception of cultural diversity difference is not equal to the adjustment. The surface layer (type one) adjustment tends to be strategy-oriented, even though students are aware of cultural diversity. For type two, adjustment tends to be psychological and students justify their adjustment to a much deeper extent. For types three and four, even though perception of cultural diversity is small, the students' emotional adjustment is huge.

## 7.5 The Significance of the Proposed Framework

In the previous sections, I presented a multi-layered system of cross-cultural adjustment, which is a highly conceptualised framework to represent the complexity

of the process. A central mission of this chapter is to conduct a further examination of the research findings in order to contribute the knowledge base of the discipline, and to apply that knowledge to practice. Before the implications of these findings are discussed and concluded in the next chapter, the procedure for constructing the framework must be clarified.

Since the essential function of a theory is to help to explain empirical reality, the effort of theory construction needs to ensure that the abstraction of theoretical concepts (i.e. inductive logic) must be closely related to the concrete world. Accordingly, based on the essentials of the grounded approach, this study returns to the collected data again (i.e. through deductive logic) to ensure that the proposed theory is a sensible one and will contribute to both practice and academic knowledge. The researcher believes that the proposed framework adds significant value to current thinking in terms of the following perspectives.

Retrospectively, as reviewed in Chapter 2, the professional literature reveals how international students adjust to being in a new culture by focusing on events/factors (Xu, 1991; Wan et al, 1992; Berry, 1988; Furnham, 1997), stages/processes (Oberg, 1960; Adler, 1975; Klein, 1977; Berry, 1988), and patterns (e.g. Klein, 1979; Berry, 1988). Previous studies have deepened our understanding of adjustment and added value to the current research. This study's concept of a multi-layered system will, it is hoped, lead to an extension of this understanding.

This study argues that there is a system which can be used to interpret adjustment behaviour. As suggested by Senge (1990), from the structuralist viewpoint, there is a

structure which influences the observed behaviour patterns and events. It is of importance to understand this structure in order to interpret behaviour patterns and concrete events. The multi-layered system itself emphasises the pluralistic nature of adjustment. Accordingly, that system is abstracted from adjustment patterns/styles and embedded in the very nature of adjustment, including the perception of cultural diversity and the process towards adjustment.

The patterns/styles/stages/phases viewpoint is rather static. In this study, the multi-layered system provides a dynamic viewpoint of adjustment. As discussed in the previous section, the distinct adjustments are located on a continuum and can be presented hierarchically between the *explicit* and *tacit* poles, while the different types of adjustment have evolved to meet diverse circumstances. By associating two fundamental features of adjustment with loosely coupled stimulation, reaction and action interacting over time, a particular type of adjustment results. Indeed, there is a dramatic shift between the cognitive psychology (West and Pines, 1985) and the socio-cultural context (Searle and Ward, 1990). Moreover, adjustment behaviour itself leads to adjustment in diverse contexts (both psychological and socio-cultural). As with double-loop learning in learning theory, a double-loop adjustment takes place all the time, and therefore a dynamic viewpoint on the nature of adjustment is more appropriate.

This chapter has presented the framework of cross-cultural adjustment (CCA), a multi-layered system of CCA, a shifting curve of adjustment, and the developing paths of CCA. However, it has only focused on Taiwanese postgraduate students studying abroad (in England). Nevertheless, we believe that the findings may also

apply to other nations/cultures, and some of them are indeed supported by the previous literature.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the dynamics of cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) and has presented the framework of CCA in terms of three layers: surface, middle and deep, reflecting the personal perception of cultural diversity and the nature of adjustment. The three layers construct the hierarchy of CCA. It is argued that the personal perception of cultural diversity varies in consequence of different adjustments in terms of the cross-cultural phenomena encountered. Accordingly, the shifting curve of CCA has been employed to interpret this phenomenon. I have identified four types of responses in terms of CCA: type one -- surface layer; type two -- from surface layer to middle layer; type three -- from surface layer straight to deep layer; and type four -- from middle layer to deep layer. Using the collected data, the four types of CCA were illustrated.

This study employed the main principles of Grounded theory. It focused on developing a theory grounded in data from on CCA. The data were collected from interviews with 35 individuals (TPSs), and used to saturate categories and detail a theory. Using the open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, the narrative built up a theoretical framework. By means of this theoretical framework, I can elaborate the process of CCA not only for TPSs but also for students from other countries in England.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This dissertation has investigated the phenomenon of cross-cultural adjustment from a non-Western perspective through an analysis of the experiences of Taiwanese postgraduate students (TPSs) studying abroad in England. It has employed a qualitative inductive approach rooted in the grounded theory method, which provides an excellent apparatus for inductive theory-building. The starting-point was the popular version of this method formulated by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1994), but adaptations have been made in accordance with the nature of the topic of investigation and the data collected. The great virtue of the adapted grounded theory method described in this thesis is that it can accommodate the creativity and flexibility of interpretivism along with the rigours of systematic data collection (theoretical sampling), data analysis (open coding, axial coding and selective coding), and deductive codes/relationships. Throughout the study an effort has been made to maintain the norms of methodological rigour required in the academic discipline, within which the grounded theory-based inquiry has been conducted.

This chapter draws conclusions from the findings and discusses their implications, and also considers the research process and its limitations. It also makes some suggestions for further research.

### **8.2 Summary and Discussion of the Key Research Questions**

#### ***8.2.1 Summary***

This study has explored the cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) of Taiwanese



postgraduate students on MA/MSc programmes in ten English universities. Information was collected on these students over a period of one and half years (from March 1999 to September 2000). Qualitative research methods were used. Unstructured interviews, further observation on four specific dimensions (self-identity, academic pursuit, affection, and sojourn-life experience adjustment), as well as e-mail and telephone contacts were used as the main instruments of the study in order to identify, explore and understand the informants' adjustment experiences in their own terms.

This study reveals many factors that are likely to influence the individual's pattern of adjustment (see Chapters 5 and 6). The factor of language is singled out for special attention, since there were significant negative consequences for general adjustment when language proficiency was limited. This confirms a pattern that is widely recognised in the literature (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, the importance of communication skills were strongly emphasised by the informants. Undoubtedly, fluency in speech and writing is very important in postgraduate study.

At the personal level, this study also tried to provide an understanding of how various factors interacted and influenced students' adjustment while they studied abroad. The findings show how the prior experiences of each informant (personal characteristics), together with situational factors (different contexts), combined to influence adjustment. The study explored how individuals were able to change their behaviours from what they perceived as a dysfunctional state to a functional state. A range of learning strategies was also identified.

When international postgraduate students become members of an institution of higher education, their learning is not restricted to the formal context. They continue to learn in a variety of contexts, both formal and informal, on and off campus. Most of the international students' efforts may be channeled into attaining an advanced degree in a formal learning environment, but it does not follow that the way in which an individual learns to cope academically, culturally, socially and personally can be neatly categorised according to certain labels. This study, using grounded theory, has been especially concerned to take care in analysing and labeling core categories. The three basic elements of grounded theory are the concepts, categories and propositions used to guide the procedures and develop the theoretical framework. Coding was carried out after each interview and, in parallel with this, a comparative analysis was made. Furthermore, comparing the background literature of CCA and my personal experience with the emerging theory valued the development of theoretical insights are developed.

Finally, the research findings indicate that what students involved followed are four paths (types one, two, three and four) of adjustment at three different levels (surface, middle and deep), a pattern which reflects the varying extent of the students' perception of cultural diversity (see Chapter 7). The longitudinal study also assessed how the students perceived English culture and how these perceptions and the students' self-perceptions changed over time. However, the conceptualisations that were obtained were by no means identical, supporting the multi-layered framework proposed in this study.

### *8.2.2 Answers to the Key Research Questions*

The following specific research questions were formulated, and the answers arising from the research are summarised below.

#### **Research Question 1: What are the main dimensions and their categories of cross-cultural adjustment?**

In Chapters 2, 5 and 6, the study reported the data analysis and research findings relating to the students' CCA in terms of four dimensions as follows.

- **Self-identity:** (1) awareness of cultural diversity, (2) experienced sense of failure, (3) self-regard.
- **Academic pursuit:** (1) instrumental diversities, (2) enhanced pressure undertaken, (3) logical conflict adjustment (being or doing).
- **Affection:** (1) separation (2) rootlessness, (3) anxiety.
- **Sojourn-life experience:** (1) behavioural diversity, (2) attitudinal diversity, (3) belief-system diversity.

The use of three core categories for each dimension helped to provide a clear, detailed picture of the nature of the cross-cultural adjustment of Taiwanese postgraduate students studying in England. The story line of each core category clearly depicts the causal condition(s), phenomenon/phenomena, context, strategy and consequence of each category and represents the developing theoretical insights of cross-cultural adjustment. In this way, the first research question is answered. A total of four dimensions and twelve core categories (three for each dimension) are identified.

## **Research Question 2: What is the nature of cross-cultural adjustment?**

As explained in Chapter 7, the core categories of the four dimensions are located on a continuum and can be categorised hierarchically as explicit and tacit. The perception of cultural diversity and the process toward adjustment are two antecedents which determine the actual patterns of adjustment in specific circumstances. The study concludes that the nature of cross-cultural adjustment depends on the degree of personal cultural diversity perception, with loosely coupled stimulations, reactions, and actions interacting over time to determine a particular pattern of adjustment. The perception of diversity can be overt or covert, and the process of adjustment can be strategic or psychologically oriented. Furthermore, this study goes further in proposing a multi-layered (surface, middle and deep) system of cross-cultural adjustment. This reveals the hierarchical and dynamic nature of adjustment.

## **Research Question 3: Why do foreign students exhibit different processes and patterns of cross-cultural adjustment?**

The study shows that international students' cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) involves acquiring a sense of competence, re-aligning oneself to the new environment, and developing the ability to be functional in everyday life. In other words, the process of CCA requires individuals to change their behaviour, improve their knowledge and skills, and this influences their attitudes, values, aspirations, perceptions and understandings.

There is also a structure that influences the observed behaviour patterns and events. Again, the proposed multi-layered system represents the underpinning structure in order to interpret the behavioural patterns and concrete events. The multi-layered

system itself emphasises the pluralistic nature of adjustment. Accordingly, it abstracts from adjustment patterns/styles and embeds the very nature of adjustment. Furthermore, our analysis proceeds to discuss *how* the students changed their adjustment along certain paths. In fact, this depends on what has to be adjusted. Unavoidably, the individual's personal tendency towards strategic or psychological adjustment must be taken into account. This study suggests that, depending on the students' personal perception of cultural diversity and the events encountered, adjustment can involve (1) type 1: minor change, still at the surface layer; (2) type 2: change from the surface to the middle layer; (3) type 3: substantial change (culture shock): from the surface layer to the middle layer, then straight to the deep layer; and (4) type 4: from the middle layer to the deep layer.

As Bunz (1997) observes, the lack of interaction between the host country and international students has been attributed to the host country's tendency towards ethnocentrism, i.e. the habitual disposition to judge people from other cultures by the standards and practices of one's own culture or ethnic group. This phenomenon has also been discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of the present study.

#### **Research Question 4: How does the dynamic view of cross-cultural adjustment look like?**

The analysis of CCA in terms of patterns/styles/stages/phases is rather static. This study asserts that a double-loop adjustment takes place all the time, and adjustment behaviour itself leads to adjustment in diverse contexts (both psychological and socio-cultural). Therefore, a dynamic viewpoint is needed. As discussed in the previous section, the various adjustments are located on a continuum and can be listed

hierarchically between the *explicit* and *tacit* poles (discussed in Chapter 7), while the different types of adjustment have evolved to meet diverse circumstances. According to the data analysis and research findings, there are four paths of CCA, but these form a continuous process. The tendency of adjustment refers to the *why* and *how* of people's behaviour rather than to the *what*. When informants were asked about the problems they had encountered or their most memorable experiences, the tendency was to describe *what* had happened. For Brislin (1981), it is more important to pay attention to *why* people behave as they do and *how* their actions solve problems and lead to favourable outcomes. Accordingly, the dynamic viewpoint extends the current thinking on cross-cultural adult learning. This should be deemed as an important issue and a basis for further study.

### **8.3 Reflections: Contributions to the Conceptualisation of Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

The modified grounded theory approach and longitudinal research design have succeeded in identifying the nature and scope of cross-cultural adjustment. Thus, the research makes a contribution to the larger body of professional literature that deals with the 12 story lines, the multi-layered system and the paths of adjustment. This study is one of the few qualitative studies with a longitudinal analysis currently available in the professional literature on this topic. The extensive literature on international students' adjustment (see Chapter 2) has generally been based on the process school of thought, and seeks to identify and analyse the various stages of and patterns of adjustment. On the basis of an investigation of the experiences of TPSs in England, this study concludes that international students' CCA involved a multi-layered system with different paths of adjustment according to four dimensions: self-

identity, academic pursuit, affection, and sojourn life-experience.

As discussed in the previous section, this study uses the concept of the perception of cultural diversity (overt or covert) and the distinction between strategic and psychological orientation to adjustment to present a multi-layered system framework of cross-cultural adjustment (CCA). The nature of CCA is clearly hierarchical. However, it is not necessary to follow a strict pathway from the surface layer to the middle layer to the deep layer, since individuals exhibit different degrees of perception of cultural diversity and encounter different events. Above all, CCA is a dynamic process, which means that the position of an individual student can change over time. Furthermore, the study also discusses CCA as a shifting curve. This further reinforces the view of CCA as a dynamic multi-layered system with a continuum of responses.

Previous research has yielded little understanding of the paths of CCA that international students follow in different cultural contexts. By enhancing our understanding of these paths, we can hope to improve instructional practice in higher education, because the international dimension of universities' activities is more extensive than ever (Maxwell et al., 2000; Cushner and Brislin, 1996; Forster, 2000). This study identifies four paths of CCA (see Chapter 7). The paths form a continuous process and involve different levels of personal cultural diversity perception. This also implies the importance of individual growth and development.

## **8.4 Implications for Practice**

Certain research issues concerning the cross-cultural adjustment of international students were discussed in Chapter 2. These issues will now be reviewed as they relate to the findings of this study. Furthermore, this section will suggest how the information gleaned from this study can help us to understand the nature of CCA.

Previous research and the present study suggest that certain traumas are inherent in students' efforts to adjust when they leave their home countries to study in foreign universities. They encounter various problems and difficulties and need to establish appropriate ways of adjusting and coping. Immersion in a new culture often challenges one's beliefs, values, self-view (self-identity), and worldview. For example, in this study, the students were confronted by new information and patterns of behaviour, and had to learn new ways of thinking and behaving.

Most foreign students have high and positive expectations of the host countries before going to study abroad. However, the reality they face in the host country university may have a negative effect on them. As a result of these and other aspects of cultural change (e.g. language difficulties, loss of friends and family, and the need to learn appropriate new social skills and academic behaviours), international students may experience psychological stress ("culture shock").

Some of the Taiwanese students brought their families to England while they pursued their studies. Even though they all said that they valued the opportunity to spend time abroad with their families, they found the experience very stressful. The main



problem was having to focus on academic work and family life at the same time. However, the spouse's adjustment is another issue to overcome.

This study suggests that CCA is oriented strategically or psychologically depending on the extent of the individual's perception of cultural diversity. Researchers (Weisz et al., 1984; Yang, 1986; Cross, 1995) state that individuals who prefer close alignment or harmony with others attempt to adjust to social situations through strategies that focus on changing the self rather than changing the situation. Here, "strategies" refers to indirect strategies (Weisz et al. 1984; Cross, 1995). Weisz et al. (1984) give the label "secondary control" to these indirect attempts to regulate the self and psychological responses. Cross (1995) states that examples of these indirect strategies include: reinterpreting a situation so as to derive meaning from it, accepting the situation and changing one's own expectations or desires, or vicariously experiencing control by closely identifying with a more powerful other. However, he also argues that although secondary or indirect coping strategies may be adaptive or effective in a collectivistic culture, they may be ineffective when an international student employs them in an individualistic culture that values and rewards direct coping strategies.

In this study, Taiwanese students from a collectivist culture may to some extent depend on learning and using direct coping strategies, e.g. attracting the attention of faculty and class members, gaining recognition of one's work by putting oneself forward, distinguishing oneself from others, or speaking out on one's own behalf. These examples can be seen to express the Taiwanese students' experienced sense of failure and pressure-enhanced adjustment.

Relationships with host nationals have been found to predict successful adjustment for international students in many studies (e.g. Church, 1982; Furnham, 1988; Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). It is generally believed that friendships with host-country nationals provide international students with opportunities to learn more about the host culture, to gain practical information, and to develop social skills. As Furnham and Alibhai (1985) point out, some researchers have attempted to discover who is likely to develop these relationships. In this study, also, some informants tended to develop these kinds of relationships with host nationals, while others did not. In a multi-layered system of cross-cultural adjustment (as proposed in Chapter 7), the first group belong to the middle layer.

According to the data collected in this study, developing friendships with the British may be difficult for most Taiwanese postgraduate students. Some informants belonged to a few stable in-groups and had intense relationships within them. This kind of intense relationship may be seen as a pseudo-family relationship, and it was not necessary to keep this relationship after the informants went back to Taiwan. In Western culture in-group membership is viewed as voluntary, and responsibilities and attachments to most others within those groups are less intense than they are in a collectivist culture (Triandis, 1989; Cross, 1995). Some informants who valued interdependence appeared to be dissatisfied with British and other international students' apparently superficial friendships, and this is perhaps why they avoided developing friendships with British and other international students. By contrast, informants who regarded themselves as independent could perceive more similarity between themselves and British colleagues, and were therefore more likely to seek out British friends.

However, following Cross's (1995) argument, Taiwanese students who choose to leave their friends and family and venture abroad are probably more likely to view themselves as particularly independent or individualistic compared with the students who do not choose to study abroad. What must be stressed is that in both the host and parent cultures there are varying degrees of independence and collectivism.

Brislin (1981) suggests that "acceptance by hosts" is a condition of adjustment. However, my study suggests that CCA does not necessarily entail conformity to the dominant culture's norms and values. These informants were able to adjust on their own terms rather than according to the host culture's perception of their behaviour. In this study, due to the individuals' characters and personalities, their perception of cultural diversity and their attitude and behaviour toward adjustment were different. Thus, this study concluded there were four patterns of CCA of TPSs in England.

Significant differences in CCA were found in terms of age, gender and married status. For the married TPSs, the men seemed to receive more support from their family than the women. Furthermore, in the working experience contributed to their adjustment to the academic pursuit. TPSs with more confidence with their English language skills and ability seemed to be able to handle their affection adjustment much easier. For some thoughtful TPSs, the shift in their self-identity could be huge. TPSs who received more support and built social connections were found it much easier to cope with the sojourn life-experience adjustment.

## **8.5 Recommendations for Further Study**

Inevitably, this study has certain limitations which need to be considered when evaluating its results.

1. The cultural adjustment of international graduate students may vary from nationality to nationality and among students of the same national group even though the diversity between groups should be larger than within groups. It may also vary according to the host country in question. Thus, a larger survey is needed in the future.
2. Furthermore, researchers should use samples of international students to compare the characteristics of CCA for different Asian countries, e.g. Mainland China, Korea, Japan, etc.
3. Furthermore, this study provides a framework of cross-cultural adjustment following four paths (types 1, 2, 3 and 4) within three layers (surface, middle and deep) according to the individual's perception of cultural diversity. Even though this study has concentrated on Taiwanese students in English universities, the research findings could be applied with care to other contexts, e.g. Western students in Eastern universities. In the future, more work is needed on different cultural contexts.

As a double-function insider ( I am a TPS in England and I was a professional worker in an agency which facilitates international study), the modified grounded theory approach (involving two stages of data collection) has enabled a particularly rich analysis. In the first stage, a post hoc research design was employed to develop an idea or framework. The second stage can be seen as a validation and elucidation of the procedure for the first stage. Further research could usefully replicate this study in other contexts using the modified grounded theory approach.

The focus of this study is on the adjustment of TPSs in English universities. The findings are not, however, deemed to be idiosyncratic to these students alone. They may also be applicable to graduate students from England or other countries or to undergraduate international students. Although little empirical evidence of other international students' experience of CCA is at hand, it can be speculated that the multi-layered framework developed from this study may provide a holistic picture as a guide to understanding the nature of international students' CCA more generally.

## 8.6 Epilogue

All international students have to adjust not only to new task-related circumstances but also to the demands of learning across cultures. This conclusion has some clear implications for international students' cross-cultural adjustment and for the administration of postgraduate programmes in terms of their ability to address effectively the CCA problems that these international students experience once they arrive on campus. The idea that international students should be seen primarily as customers does not seem alien for educational, political, commercial and developmental reasons. Understanding the cultural diversity and learning experiences of international students should provide a valuable opportunity to elaborate the importance of multicultural education for higher education, as the expansion of the education of international students at the postgraduate level has now become a major trend in the USA and the UK (Wan et al., 1992; Xu, 1991; Senyshyn et al, 2000; Maxwell et al., 2000). This does not, of course, just affect USA and the UK. In Taiwan, other countries also promote their higher education programmes, including

Australia, Japan, Germany, Canada, South Africa, France, Philippines, and New Zealand (MOE, 2001).

The process of research was a good way for me to explore and make sense of my own experience of CCA. It made sense to go “into the field” and openly explore some of the questions that concerned me. As an unexpected benefit, the role of researcher helped me learn more about myself. In particular, it helped me to create a meaningful narrative of how I experienced the process of CCA and the personal introspection that accompanied it.

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