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Cultures and Learner Behaviours: A Qualitative Investigation of a Thai Classroom

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for the degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the extent to which Thai national culture can be used to explain students' behaviour. In addition to exploring the cultural and social aspects of the classroom community, it also takes into account the importance of understanding the way students perceive their reality and as a consequence ethnographic research techniques are utilised. The research was carried out at a provincial university in Thailand, with a focal group of forty English major students. Two ethnographic research methods, namely classroom observation and interviews, were used in the research. While the classroom observations were carried out to describe the characteristics of the classroom and identify salient patterns of students' behaviours in the classroom, the interviews were conducted with the intention of allowing students to reflect on their own patterns of behaviours.

The classroom observation not only showed the physical characteristics of the classroom, but also identified the teacher-student and student-student patterns of behaviour. These social aspects of the classroom revealed that while some student behaviour coincided with Thai national cultural characteristics, other patterns of behaviour deviated from commonly held beliefs about Thai students' behaviour. Pair and group interviews were then conducted to give students a chance to reflect on their interactions and their disruptive behaviour in class. While students' interviews offered insights into several personal issues, such as students' reasons to study English at the University, their transitions from high-schools to university and their self-perception, their accounts really highlighted the importance of the social interactions and relationships on their behaviour in the classroom. Social interaction, in the form of relationships with teachers, peer pressure, or peer reaction had, from the perspective of the students, significant explanatory force; these were strategically viewed and evaluated by students as the factors guiding their behaviour.

Although this thesis aims to explore the influence of Thai culture on students' behaviour, it became clear during the research that unless students were made conscious of cultural influences, they were mostly unaware of the possibility that Thai culture might affect their behaviour. Because this thesis relies on the emic view of the students, the lack of students' verbal support for the influence of Thai culture on their behaviour makes the answer to the research question inconclusive. This leads to a discussion of the level of analysis students used when asked to interpret their behaviour and whether students viewed their behaviour at the social or cultural level.

The study both highlights the significance of social interaction and context, and also distinguishes between a large culture and small culture paradigm. While the large culture approach views culture as essentially a feature of ethnic, national, and international groups, the small culture approach views culture as part of any social grouping. By seeing the classroom as a small culture and allowing students to explain their own behaviour, the research gains deeper insights into the students' world and their construction of their realities, the significance of which is explained and developed.

1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the wake of the economic crisis in 1997, Thailand recognised the urgent need for reform in order to speed up its economic recovery and to keep pace with the rapid social, political and economic changes occurring as a result of globalisation. This resulted in a movement toward political reform and resulted in the 1997 new constitution, which mandated educational reform and decentralisation as part of the strategic path to economic recovery. Both before and after the economic crisis, education problems relating to equity and quality had long been recognised as plaguing the education system. According to the 1999 report by the Office of the National Education Commission:

Thailand's relatively weak human resource base has been pinpointed as one of the underlying factors in the cause of the economic and financial crisis that has hit the country. Many have highlighted the lack of Thai graduates capable of independent analytical thought as one factor responsible for the country's economic downfall. (O.N.E.C. 1999)

Prompted by the need to increase the quality of Thai education, the Thai government examined both immediate and long-term structural problems within the educational system as well as carrying out initial research into the successful experiences of other countries in order to judge their suitability for application to the Thai education system. This resulted in the 1999 and 2002 National Education Acts, which placed the interests of learners at the centre of the educational process by encompassing four main areas; school, curriculum, teacher and administrative reform. A compulsory twelve-year education would be provided free to all Thai students; schools and universities would be given more autonomy in terms of more flexible curricula and administration to suit their situations; there would be greater involvement by families and local communities in school policy and administration; an independent and learner-centred approach, encouraging analytical learning instead of rote learning, was to be encouraged in classrooms. The Acts

represented an unprecedented and long overdue attempt to break from traditional Thai educational norms, such as lecturing and rote learning and instead set the foundation for a more creative, questioning approach to studying. Although the Education Act (1999) did not specify learner-centred education as the only newly approved approach to teaching and learning, contemporaneous literature relating to education reform had identified it as a key concept.

Prior to the post-1997 reforms, many Thai classrooms, including language classrooms, were dominated by a traditional approach to education, where teachers 'knew best', learning materials were derived exclusively from pre-planned textbooks and, with regard to language learning, teachers followed a grammar-translation model of teaching. However, following swiftly on the heels of the reforms, the learner-centred approach became something of a buzzword. Given the very limited exposure of teachers, administrators and teacher-trainers to the new approach to learning, there was a need to develop a more in-depth understanding of many aspects of learner-centred learning. With support from the government, the concept of a learner-centred approach was formally introduced to classrooms in Thailand and it received a warm welcome from educators. Many educational organisations, from primary to tertiary, were quick to respond to the government's policy and eager to revolutionise the decades-old system of rote learning. The new concepts encompassed approaches such as learning by doing, encouraging class discussion and developing analytical thinking. Locally, workshops were organised to demonstrate these teaching techniques and to encourage teachers to adopt the learner-centred approach in their classrooms and, centrally, the government created an office of quality assurance to oversee the quality of learning. While it appeared that the implementation of change went very well at the early stages, problems soon emerged as there was confusion about the new roles of teachers and students. Furthermore, the disparity between educational institutes in terms of personnel, students' background, teaching conditions and learning facilities contributed in many places to difficulty in adopting a learner-centred approach.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

After a decade, education reform in Thailand has made mixed progress. While there has generally been praise for its aims and the intention to expand educational opportunities, to promote lifelong learning and to reform the curriculum and teaching methodology, the process received a fair share of criticism for its implementation and the implementation of change did not proceed as smoothly as might be hoped. As a Thai educator, I felt that the government's attempts to reform the educational system over the past ten years have overlooked the most important stakeholder. While a learner-centred approach values the contribution and participation of learners, the learning process should be centred on learners' goals and preferences, the Thai government did the opposite. Instead of asking students and engaging them in the planning and selecting of the learning contents or materials, a small number of people decided for the whole nation that the learner-centred method was the correct route for educational reform, assuming that the learner-centred approach could be applied successfully within the Thai classroom context. As the educational change was a national policy instigated and implemented as a top-down process, at first only school or institution leaders and high-ranking administrators were informed about the changes. Following this, the reforms spread out to include teachers other administrative staff and then students. As a result, students were asked to shoulder a new role in the dead-centre of learning without fully understanding what the learner-centred method involved.

Aside from problems with top-down processes of change, concerns were raised about the suitability of a learner-centred approach within Thailand. A number of studies suggested that insufficient knowledge transfer from Western teaching-learning situations to the Thai learning context and negligence by the Thai government in considering the influence of Thai culture on teachers' and students' behaviour were the main reasons for the unsuccessful application of the learner-centred approach in many educational institutions (Hallinger and Kantamara 2001a, Parivudhipongs 2001). These studies were not carried out with the intention of criticising the learner-centred approach. Rather, they attempted to show that any attempts to impose international standards on people with different cultural dimensions might cause problems as some cultural beliefs and norms (including, significantly, some which are tied up with learner-centred pedagogical concerns)

are not universal. As the learner-centred approach originated in Britain, Australasia, and North American (the BANA countries), 'there is a case of seeing learner-centeredness as a BANA invention and the realisation of a learner-centred approach to teaching tends to be associated with BANA type classroom conditions and organisation structure' (Tudor 1996). Thus, within one strand of the learner-centred approach, individuals are encouraged to think for themselves, have their opinions heard and define their own path to become autonomous individuals. This chimes with a belief in the primacy of individualism, which is part of the same cultural process which has given rise to the learner-centred approach. This, however, contrasts with Thai culture, in which the goal of socialisation is not to be defined as an individual in contrast to others but rather to become an integrated member of the group and thus sameness and conformity are the preferred cultural aspects. Moreover, within the context of Thai culture, there is a disparity in power between the high social status of teachers and the low social status of students and as a result students are taught to be grateful and to pay respect to their teachers. They are taught to conform to, not to confront, the teacher's views and attitudes. The requirement of a learner-centred approach, which expects students to be active, exploratory, and analytical in their learning, might well clash with preferred Thai cultural traits such as being modest, conforming, and submissive. As a result, some teachers and researchers (see, for example, Hallinger and Kantamara 2001a and 2001b) felt that what was required was the development of an indigenous knowledge base which aimed at understanding ways in which behaviours were shaped and influenced by these endogenous Thai cultural forces.

While I acknowledge the concern that some ideas and concepts inherent in the learner-centred approach run counter to the traditional cultural norms and values of Thai society, I am also aware that the view outlined above regards culture as a preference for certain characteristics or patterns of observable behaviour. Culture, thus, comes to be viewed simply as either behaviour or as fixed values and beliefs, separated from social interaction and reality (Roberts and Sarangi 1993). This view can be problematic as it reduces students to stereotypical representations of their national culture, suppressing individual differences and assumes that the categories of behaviour, value and characteristic could be sufficient explanation for culture differences. To address this critique, I decided to take a critical stance toward the idea that the categories and concepts of our cultural knowledge are based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world and instead deployed the analytical tools of the small culture approach in order to be more critical of the belief that culture is a set of fixed behaviours and shared belief. A small culture

approach suggests that it is through the daily interactions between people over the course of their life that their shared versions of knowledge are constructed. Within the classroom context, a small culture approach regards the social processes and interactions in which students are constantly engaged as influenced by different kinds of cultures, including the students' culture, the teachers' culture, the institutional culture, the culture of the subject area, the professional culture of the teachers, or by the national culture.

Since culture is usually described in terms of values or beliefs about what is or is not desirable, cultural knowledge can be used as motives which influence students' goal-directed behaviour. As students adapt to life in their society, they call upon this knowledge to guide their selection or evaluation of behaviour, people and events and to serve as standards or criteria to judge the relevance or importance of people, actions and events. Because this shared cultural knowledge affects both a person's decision to initiate a particular action and the degree of persistence in continuing that action, it can be an important source of motivation. Perceiving that cultural beliefs and values influence students' motivation, I found that it is necessary to uncover (through an understanding of students' interactions) what kinds of shared cultural knowledge students perceive as important and whether this knowledge supports or hinders their learning and social processes within the classroom.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study emphasises the importance of carrying out research in real learning situations as I feel that there is a gap between what teachers think about good classroom practices and what students actually do in class. As there is a problem in the application to the Thai classroom of teaching methodologies which originated in the West, this study suggests an alternative way to address educational issues by moving from an assumption that one or more theories (e.g. learner-centred approach or group-based activities) can lead to the solution of students' problems or to the raising of students' academic achievements. What this research has done is to look at theory in light of facts, instead of making assumptions. Looking at what really happened in the classroom and listening to students' viewpoints has shed light on the appropriacy of adopting wholesale a pedagogical theory without paying

attention to the context of the particular classroom in which it will be implemented. The study attempts to show that when it comes to educational research, researchers should try to understand social situations by investigating the intentions or meanings of the participants through social interactions within the particular social contexts and social rules. By immersing oneself in the context of learning and listening to those who are directly involved in the process of learning, we, as teachers and educators, can increase our understanding of learners' personal and social motivation.

With respect to students' motivation, this study shows that many aspects of classroom interactions between teachers and students have an impact on students' motivation and that students' beliefs and values correspond to various forms of their socialisation and affect the way they behave. Students use this shared cultural knowledge to justify their reasons for engaging in behaviours that are associated with their internalised values. Through the use of observational and interview data, the study uncovers both patterns of students' behaviour that appear to contradict commonly held opinions about Thai students and also a set of interrelated factors that students perceive as important within their immediate learning environment. It also discusses the effects of on students' self-perception and behaviour of students' informal relationships. These insights highlight the importance of looking at classrooms as having cultures on their own and so distinguishing between the large and small culture approach when attempting to understand students' intentions and actions.

With deeper insights from the real educational setting and using research methods that can be employed easily, I hope this study will encourage teachers to look critically at their classroom and to involve their students and other teachers in exploring their own situations in order to identify any aspects of the class environment that need to be improved. This will lead to a deeper understanding of one's own learning environment and will bring about real change that is based on the political, cultural and social contexts of the classroom itself, not from the fiat of high-ranking policy makers.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the background to the study and states the research problem, a result of Thai educational policy. Chapter 2 describes the relevance of sociocultural theory as the guiding framework for the research and reviews the relevant literature, showing the significance of social interaction and asserting the necessity of distinguishing between the small and large approach to the study of culture. Chapter 3 explains the research methods and the procedure for data analysis. The use of ethnographic research tools, including classroom observation and interview, is discussed in detail, along with the coding procedures used when analysing the data. Chapter 4 details the research findings and is based on data gleaned from the classroom observation, and student pair and group interviews. Chapter 5 discusses the findings with reference to the influence of social interaction and national culture on students' behaviour. Chapter 6 provides a concluding chapter in which the implications and the limitations of the study are discussed, along with recommendations for further study.

2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

It is clear and uncontentionous that the social life of the classroom is central to students' motivation. A classroom can be understood as a 'social arena in which learning is constructed as gradually increasing participation in the values and beliefs, and behaviours of a community practice' (Donato and MacCormick 1994: 454). From this perspective, classroom learning and motivation are inherently embedded in a fluid social context; classrooms are composed of a teacher and individual students who are likely to diverge in many ways and instructional groups are of varying sizes and informal interactions are ongoing. In all cases, teachers are continually interacting both with individuals and with groups of students. Within the school context, motivational processes are believed to develop out of students' social encounters and experiences with their peers and teachers. Two important issues emerge from this view. The first issue is the importance of social context and socialisation on students' motivational process. The second issue is the influence of culture knowledge, which students gain through their socialisation within their educational context. In the following sub-sections I shall deal with each of these in turn.

2.1 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT AND INTERACTION WITHIN THE SOCIOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Sociocultural theory, as developed by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky, emphasises the importance of social context and interpersonal relationships in the development of individual cognition. According to this view, cognitive development is 'a product of social interaction; in other words, the child, born into a sociocultural environment, is dependent on those around him or her for coming to know and learn about the world beyond features of the immediate environment'(McCafferty 1994: 118). Sociocultural theory argues for 'a reconceptualization of cognitive activity (and by extension, motivation) as a within-child, context-independent phenomenon towards a perspective that highlights the

interdependence of cognitive and sociocultural factors' (Rueda and Dembo 1995: 266). From this perspective, motivation is not viewed as a characteristic of the individual but of the individual-in-action within the specific context where individuals are mediated into full participation into the cultural practices and values of the community in which they live.

As stated by Lantolf and Appel (1994: 5), in the course of child development, the sociocultural setting serves as the primary factor in transforming the child's mental functions from *lower order* functions (that is, vision, hearing, tactile, olfactory systems, natural memory and involuntary attention) to *higher order* functions (logical memory, voluntary attention, conceptual thought, planning, perception, problem solving and voluntary inhibitory and disinhibitory faculties) through the mediating function of culturally constructed artefacts including material tools, a system of symbols as well as the behaviour of other human beings in social interactions. These mediators, in the form of objects, symbols or patterns of behaviour, are embedded in the social context and created by people under specific cultural and historical conditions. As such, they carry with them the characteristics of the culture which these mediators represent.

Vygotsky's fundamental claim is that higher order functions of human mental activity are mediated by the invention and use of tools and signs as auxiliary means. The auxiliary means arise as a consequence of participation in cultural activities in which cultural artefacts and cultural concepts interact in complex and dynamic ways with each other and with human physical and mental activity. Given that parents, as the conduit through which culture passes to the child, primarily use material and linguistic tools to interact with their children, they aid the organisation of the child's world by establishing constants in a state of flux and by pointing out salencies and patterns that are determined by the norms, values and motives of the respective sociocultural milieu that the parents represent. Once children begin to integrate symbols as auxiliary means of mediation into their activity, this activity takes on a markedly different, and culturally influenced, character. With maturation, a child will eventually internalise these salencies and patterns as part of his or her identity.

Since a child in the early stages of development is completely dependent on other people, usually the parents, it is the responsibility of the parents, as representatives of the particular culture, to instruct the child, acting through the use of physical (technical and mechanical) and symbolic tools (mnemonic devices, algebraic symbols, diagrams, schemes and language). Vygotsky proposed that 'while physical tools such as objects are outwardly

directed, symbolic tools such as language are inwardly and cognitively directed. Just as physical tools serve as auxiliary means to enhance the ability to control and change the physical world, symbolic tools serve as auxiliary means to control and reorganise our psychological processes' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 205). While children carry out specifically defined tasks under the guidance of other individuals who initially assume most of the responsibility for carrying out the task, the children begin to internalise what has been gained through interaction and over time assume increased responsibility for organising and deploying their own mental activity in tasks. Ultimately, children progress to the point that they attain the ability to resolve task-related difficulties independently. Thus, as Lantolf (1994: 419) states 'at the outset of ontogenesis, conscious mental activity is distributed and jointly constructed in the dialogic interactions that arise between children and representatives of the culture. As children participate in these collaborative interactions, they appropriate for themselves the patterns of planning, attending, thinking, remembering, etc. that the culture through its representatives values.' In other words, children gradually achieve cognitive growth through their social interaction, most prominently with more competent others, using all forms of mediational tools in meaningful activities.

Relevant to this view of cognitive growth is the role of mediation within the framework of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky emphasises the fact that social interactions are themselves mediated. The use of physical and symbolic tools allows individuals, in collaboration with other individuals, to shape the world according to their own motives and goals, and thus to alter processes that, without human intrusion, would have taken a different course (Lantolf and Appel 1994). These tools are created by human cultures over time and are made available to succeeding generations. Human cultures have multiple aspects, but clearly all of them are connected in some way with human action processes, whether they be artefacts, behaviours, or abstractions from the world. These human cultures are all social mediators which help to transform natural, spontaneous impulses into higher mental processes. Mediation is thus the instrument of cognitive change. Lantolf writes that 'as people participate in different culturally specified activities they enter into different social relations and come into contact with, and learn how to employ and ultimately appropriate, different mediational means' (Lantolf 2000: 13). From a Vygotskian perspective, a major role of schooling is to create social contexts for mastery of and conscious awareness of the use of these cultural tools. According to Donato and McCormick (1994), in the classroom context, mediations can take the form of the

textbook, visual materials, classroom discourse patterns, opportunities for interaction, types of direct instruction or various kinds of teacher assistance. Students use these mediational tools to assist their actions in order to achieve their goals. Although a student's decision to act is individualistic, as is the effort to attain his or her goal, these actions are heavily influenced by social and contextual factors.

Following a Vygotskian approach, Leontiev's activity theory similarly asserts that:

Human psychology is concerned with the activity of concrete individuals, which takes place either in a collective - i.e., jointly with other people - or in a situation in which the subjects deal directly with the surrounding world of objects [...] if we remove human activity from the system of social relationships and social life, it would not exist [...] the human individuals' activity is a system in the system of social relations. It doesn't exist without these relations. (Leontiev 1981:46)

For Leontiev, activity is defined in terms of sociocultural settings, in which collaborative interaction, intersubjectivity, and assisted performance occur. Within the classroom, students often exchange their ideas, ask questions or offer suggestions to one another. These social exchanges provide opportunities for teachers and students to work collaboratively to create the learning environment and to assist one another to acquire knowledge in a classroom setting. Activity, in Leontiev's theory, is not merely doing something, it is doing something that is motivated either by a biological need, such as hunger, or a culturally constructed need, such as the need in certain cultures to be literate. From this view, activity encompasses a subject, an object, actions and operations. Donato and McCormick (1994: 455) illustrate Leontiev's theory through the example of a classroom. A student (a subject) is engaged in an activity, for example, learning a new language. An object, in the sense of a goal, is held by the students and motivates his or her activity giving it a specific direction. In the case of language learning, the object can range from full participation in a new culture to passing a test. To achieve the objective, actions are taken by the student, and these actions are always goal-directed. Different actions may be taken to achieve the same goal or different goals may be fulfilled by the same actions. Finally, the operational level of activity is the way an action is carried out and depends on the conditions under which actions are executed. The model of human activity depicted in activity theory suggests that human minds come to exist, develop and can only be understood within the context of meaningful, goal-oriented, socially determined interaction

between human beings and their environment. If we view human motivation as the product of interaction between events and things in the social world and interpretations of those events and things in peoples' psyches, these interpretations usually involve cultural knowledge (Strauss 1992: 1).

Given that children acquire certain behaviour patterns and belief systems from their parents, children receive through their child-rearing both explicit and implicit knowledge that characterize their culture. This cultural knowledge is then built into children's mental programming, often without their conscious awareness, as they adapt to life in their society. When children enter schools, they also learn the culture of their schools. The contents of what they learn inevitably express certain basic elements in their culture. Education is thus seen as reinforcing certain sections of the culture, as the purpose of education is to pass on the accepted behaviours and values of society, along with 'general knowledge' and attitudes appropriate to an educated individual. This is in addition to providing the particular skills by which an individual will earn a living (Billington et al. 1991: 139). In the classroom, students use cultural knowledge, inherited from their early learning experiences, to interact with other students and teachers in their immediate learning environment. Some of their early learning experiences might conform to their recent experiences in the classroom context; others might not. Through the mediation of dialogic interactions, students learn to adopt and internalize culturally based knowledge and practices within their learning environment. Gradually, these culturally based practices and knowledge, in the form of a set of rules, values and beliefs, become part of students' cognition and so generate feelings and thoughts which influence actions indicative of motivation. As a result 'motivation is inseparable from the instructional process and the classroom environment. The culturally determined joint activity between students and social context results in an internal state of interest and cognitive and affective engagement, and motivated behaviours, both of which can be considered cultural norms' (Sivan 1986: 209). It can be said that cultural knowledge serves as a framework for shaping and guiding thoughts, actions and practices of students. Since students, as members of a particular culture, share both implicit and explicit cultural knowledge with other students who were exposed to similar learning situations, it is likely that their behaviour is not only inclined to be similar and specific to their social group but also reflects the characteristics of the culture of which they are members. In describing the rudiments of the sociocultural approach, several key elements appear to stand out: the role of social interactions, the relevance of significant others (parents and peers) and the influence of cultural based knowledge and practices. Within educational settings, the

sociocultural approach opens a discussion of the influence of context and cultural issues on students' motivation and suggests an examination of motivation through the analysis of the social interactions or social activities within which students are observed learning or not learning, motivated or otherwise (Rueda and Dembo 1995: 270). This emphasises the fact that when striving to explain students' behaviours, it is important to take the influence of culture into consideration.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

The notion of culture has multiple and variously inconclusive definitions. In 1963, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) identified more than 160 definitions of culture. Although there are many ways of defining the concept of culture, all are likely to face the same dilemma, and as such a definition will always be limited by the restricted view of our consciousness and our understanding. The definition of culture is continually negotiated, but some ideas are widely accepted. The following are some attempts to define the concept of culture.

For Kluckhohn (1951: 86):

Culture consists in patterns of ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and their attached values.

Geertz (1973: 89) claims that culture is:

A historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which individuals communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge of and attitudes toward life.

Wedejano and Sobo (1997: 162) state that:

Culture is knowledge that is shared or public. It includes language, symbols, values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, norms (rules and standards of behaviour), skills, customs, and world view. That is, virtually, everything we think or do

involves culture. And culture is essential for human survival. Perhaps, most important, it provides expectations for behaviour, which make social interaction predictable and enhance cooperation.

As Fennes and Hapgood (1997: 16) conclude, the above definitions of culture are related to everyday culture. It is this culture of daily life which:

Includes everything that determines daily life: the way we eat and what we eat, the way we dress, maintain body hygiene, behave, take decisions, solve problems, greet and relate to others, the physical distance we keep from each others, whether we show feeling or not, how we make love. Culture determines basic forms of social behaviour and actions. This includes everything from gestures and more complex actions to written rules and laws. Culture includes everything that determines interaction, relationships and social life within a society.

Given these multiple aspects of culture, we can reasonably assume that culture can have motivational force because it not only labels and describes the world but also because it sets forth goals for people and elicits desires which can lead to action. Given that there is culture, it can be assumed that culture is transmitted, shared and learned from generation to generation. Over the generations, culture will accumulate and can become so ingrained that people are not conscious of the cultural assumptions that they or others make. Although some portions of culture, such as food, music, fine arts or literature are easily detected through their material artefacts, other portions of culture (beliefs, patterns of behaviour and so forth) are located only inside the mind of those who are part of a particular culture.

This latter perspective of culture is taken by Hofstede (1991) who suggests that every person carries with him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling and acting which are learned throughout his or her lifetime. Hofstede refers to these patterns of thinking, feeling and acting as mental programs. Most of this mental programming is acquired in early childhood within the family but it continues in the social environment, in school, in the workplace and in the living community. Since the programming is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, it is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one's group or category of people from another as well as guiding group members in both their thinking and acting. Although these mental programs cannot be directly observed, they manifest themselves via

behaviour, words and deeds. Following this thesis, it can be assumed that the influence of culture is evident in behaviour. As a result, culture may be identified by coherent patterns of recurring behaviour in certain groups of people, and that seem to have some reason and purpose (Munro 1997).

Since there are both differences and similarities across cultures, an understanding of cultural differences is important when dealing with people from different cultures. Hofstede proposes that there must be mechanisms in societies that permit the maintenance of stability in culture patterns across many generations. He asserts that in the centre of these cultural patterns, there is a system of societal norms consisting of the value systems shared by major groups in the population. On this basis, Hofstede (1980, 1991) attempted to identify cultural differences in value systems by carrying out a large research project involving more than 100,000 IBM employees from 66 nations and three regions. Two surveys were undertaken, first in 1968 and 1969 and again between 1971 and 1973; these resulted in a combined figure of 117,000 completed questionnaires. A statistical analysis of the answers to questions concerning the values held by IBM employees in similar roles in different countries revealed that culture could be quantified on four basic axes which allowed a culture to be measured relative to other cultures. Hofstede defined these four cultural dimensions, which reflect the way members of a society typically cope with social problems, as follows:

- 1 *Power distance.* The degree to which individuals accept an unequal distribution of power in institutions as legitimate or illegitimate.

- 2 *Individualism/Collectivism.* Valuing loosely knit social relations in which individuals are expected to care only for themselves and their immediate families versus tightly knit relations in which individuals can expect their wider in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

- 3 *Masculinity/Femininity.* Valuing achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success versus relationships, modesty, caring for the weak, and interpersonal harmony.

- 4 *Uncertainty Avoidance*. Feeling uncomfortable or comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity and therefore valuing or devaluing beliefs and institutions that provide certainty and conformity.

Hofstede maintained that these cultural dimensions broadly characterised national culture in terms of its average patterns of beliefs and values. He then used these cultural dimensions to explain cultural differences in the family, schools, workplace, and in politics and ideas. By characterising a national culture, Hofstede was aware that not everyone in the culture has all the characteristic dimensions. He characterises the sharedness of national culture in terms of an average tendency which emphasises the common characteristics of the inhabitants of a particular nation. As a result, these cultural dimensions will be most useful as a guide to understanding the difference in culture between countries and to highlight the potential problems that a non-native might experience in other countries, rather than to say that 'they are all like this'.

Although cultural differences have the advantage of making culture particularly visible and identifiable to outsiders, they can be problematic as categories of analysis. Guest (2002) has argued that any attempt to identify national characteristics for the purposes of comparing and contrasting cultures can lead to oversimplification and stereotyping of cultural characteristics, while at the same time ignoring the significance of the various sub-cultures to which every individual belongs. To avoid the trap of overgeneralization and stereotyping when describing and interacting with people from different cultures, the term 'culture' should be handled carefully. According to Holliday (1994: 21), one problem is that 'the most common use of the word – as national culture – is very broad and conjures vague notions about nations, races and sometimes whole continents which are too generalised to be useful.' This notion of national culture also incorporates elements which are essentialist and reductive. While the essentialist view presumes that there is a universal essence, homogeneity and unity in a particular culture, the reductive view reduces cultural behaviour to a simple causal explanation. These views can be misleading; Fay (1996) states that it is a mistake to speak as if culture consisted of a coherent set of behaviour, beliefs and values. Any culture complex enough to warrant the name will consist of conflicting beliefs and rules which offer mixed, contested and ambiguous messages to its followers. As a result, relying on national culture as a device to investigate what is happening between people in any given group might not be fruitful or useful. A different way to approach culture is needed and this will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 THE LARGE AND THE SMALL CULTURE APPROACHES

As an alternative, Holliday (1999) asserts a need to distinguish between the large culture paradigm, which focuses on an explanation of cultural differences based on the notions of ethnic, national or international culture, and the small culture paradigm, which regards any instance of cohesive behaviour within any social grouping as culture in its own right. According to Holliday (2005: 17), the large culture approach takes an essentialist view of culture in which 'cultures are coincidental with countries, regions and continents, implying that one can visit them while travelling and that they contain mutually exclusive type of behaviour so that people from or in one culture are essentially different from those from or in another culture.' As the large culture approach prioritises culture over the complexity of the individuals who are active participants in this same culture, it undermines the importance of the existence and complexity of small cultures by suggesting that small, non-ethnic or non-national cultures are contained within and subordinate to the large culture through 'onion-skin' relationships (Holliday 2005: 17). While there are small cultures that are subservient to large cultures, there are other small cultures that are not contained within a large culture or do not reflect the large culture at all.

The concept of small culture does not relate to the essence of ethnic, national or international entities. Instead, it takes a non-essentialist view of culture which 'focuses on the complexity of culture as a fluid, creative social force which binds different groupings and aspects of behaviour in different ways, both constructing and constructed by people in a piecemeal fashion to produce myriad combinations and configurations' (Holliday et al. 2004: 3). Small cultures can be any social grouping from a neighbourhood to a work group. A good example in the education setting is a classroom where a group of students interacts with one another to form a small classroom (or sub-classroom) culture when the group first meets. Each member carries within himself or herself cultural beliefs and uses his or her culture-making ability to form rules and meanings in collaboration with others. Small culture is thus 'a dynamic, ongoing group process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within those circumstances' (Holliday 1999: 248).

For Holliday (ibid: 240) 'the notion of small culture does not relate simply to something smaller in size than large ethnic, national or international cultures, but presents a different paradigm through which to look at social groupings.' As a result, a small culture approach is viewed as a heuristic means in the process of interpreting group behaviour. Within the small culture paradigm, any social group can have a small culture when there is a discernible set of behaviours and understandings connected with group cohesion. The dynamic aspect of small culture is 'central to its nature, having the capacity to exist, form and change as required' (ibid: 248). The small culture approach accepts that there are many ways by which what happens in the classroom can reflect the national culture, as this is from where students come; students bring with them to the class these already learned and internalised cultures. These cultures, alongside individual motivational factors, will determine the way in which the new classroom culture is approached and created. As a result, the influence of the students' national culture will be significant but it will not tell the whole story, due to the complexity of the social interactions within the classroom.

In order to justify my decision to employ a small cultural approach to this study, I would like to discuss two influential quantitative studies, one by Hofstede and one by Komin, which characterised national culture into different cultural dimensions and orientations. Both studies followed the essentialist view of culture in which the concept of national culture is believed to be territorially unique, nationally shared, and characteristically identifiable. The two studies showed how some characteristics of national culture affected individuals' motivation and behaviour. Although I acknowledge the issue of culture difference and the distinctive characteristics of national culture, I feel that relying on cultural difference potentially overrides other possible explanations or influences which could be equally or more significant and relevant in explaining individuals' behaviour.

2.4 APPLICATION OF HOFSTEDE'S STUDY TO THAI CULTURAL VALUES

Following his work on cultural dimensions, Hofstede described Thailand as a high power distance, strongly collectivist, highly feminine and mid-level uncertainty avoidance country. Using Hofstede's framework, the following section, a summary of studies by Burn and Thongprasert (2005), Hallinger and Kantamara (2000, 2001a), and Prpic and Kanjanapanyakorn (2004), will discuss the four cultural dimensions within the Thai context with the focus on the Thai educational system.

The first dimension, *power distance*, reflects social inequality, the relationship with authority, etc. In a culture with high power distance, the educational process is teacher-centred with the teacher initiating all communication and directing the learning. Students only speak when asked to. The teacher is treated with respect and is never criticised. The quality of one's learning is dependent on the excellence of one's teacher. In a culture with low power distance, the educational process is student-centred with a premium on student initiative. Students make interventions, ask questions, express criticism and disagreement. The quality of learning is based on the students' well-developed need for independence and on the excellence of the students.

In a power-oriented organisational or societal culture such as Thailand (Dimmock and Walker 2000), a person's power normally comes with his/her title, rank and status. The social construction of power has historical roots, where privilege and status are gained from position and title. As a result, being a teacher is not just a job, but a position in society which always comes with respect and power. In a Thai learning environment, students are trained to place their trust in their teachers and to believe without question what they are taught. (Parivudhiphongs 2000). Thai children are taught to feel respectful and grateful to their teachers for the benefit of knowledge, guidance, and advice. Because of this, teachers are highly respected and are considered to be authoritative and knowledgeable. In Thai classrooms, it can be assumed that the awareness of power-distance might manifest itself in terms of the patterns of behaviour. For example, a Thai student may not be willing to ask questions directly to the teacher in the classroom for fear of challenging the teacher's face and so causing offence. Since many Thai students are taught not to talk back and not to voice views which contrast those of the teacher, they tend to be quiet in the presence of

the teacher. The fact that many Thai students seldom disagree with their teachers, hardly express their opinions or ask questions can create the impression of passiveness in classroom discussions and can lead to the conclusion that Thai students are unable to think critically. In fact, the quietness in the classroom can be interpreted as students' attempts (1) to show respect to the teacher, (2) to avoid discomfort or inconvenience by refraining from asking questions or challenging the teacher's authority and (3) to allow the teacher to play his or her role effectively.

The second dimension, *individualism versus collectivism*, describes the relationship between the individual and the group. In collectivist cultures, the performance of the group is more important than the performance of the individual. Consequently, in a collective culture, students tend not to speak up if not directly addressed, confrontations and conflicts are avoided, and it is important not to lose face. The purpose of study is to learn how to do things in order to participate in society. Collectivist cultures often correlate with cultures with large power distance. In an individualist culture, students expect to be treated as individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, and confrontations and open discussion of conflicts are acceptable or even considered to be good. The purpose of study is to understand how to learn so that students can continue learning after school and university.

The highly collectivist nature of Thai culture shapes learning styles by emphasising the importance of the group. Thais usually hold views and opinions respecting the group; they look primarily to their referent social groups in order to make sense of their roles and behaviour and as a result they are likely to believe or behave in the same direction as the group does as fear of not meeting the group's expectation takes over the fear of personal failure. This can affect learning styles as Thai people often do not feel that their contribution as an individual is important. Instead, many Thai students prefer to sit silently in the classroom in order to avoid any actions that would make them stand out from the group or to avoid the risk of appearing to others that they think that they are better than others in the group. It often occurs that, although some students might not agree with the decision of the group, they would prefer not to voice their opinions as they do not want to disrupt group consensus. Another characteristic of group deference is the prevalence of knowledge sharing among students even if students are working on individual assignments or examinations. Hence, it is highly possible that students' homework or assignments will be similar to one another and any students who do not share knowledge with others tend to be branded as selfish. This type of sharing leads to the assumption that the performance

of Thai students will improve if they are assigned to do group work. According to Mulder (2000), the underlying idea behind these behaviours is the principle of mutual dependence and reciprocity.

The third dimension, *masculinity versus femininity*, describes the wider, more diffuse social aspects of the society. Masculinity refers to the extent to which the dominant values in a society tend towards assertiveness and the acquisition of things, and away from concern for people and the quality of life. In a culture with a high degree of masculinity, students try to make themselves visible in class and compete openly with each other. Failing in school is a disaster in a masculine culture. Schools are career-oriented. Teachers' brilliance and academic reputation and students' academic performance are the dominant factors. In a feminine culture, students do not want to appear too eager and mutual solidarity is seen as a goal. Schools are interested-orientated so students' intrinsic interest in the subject plays a bigger role. Teachers' friendliness and social skills and students' social adaptation are dominant factors.

Since Thais value friendship highly and tend to seek friendships of a permanent nature, they exhibit many feminine characteristics including politeness, quietness, caring for others and being helpful to name but a few. In Thai classrooms, the above characteristics are expected on the part of teachers. Apart from pleasant personalities, Thais also place great emphasis on living and working in a pleasurable atmosphere and on fostering a strong spirit of community through social relations. To support and maintain pleasant interpersonal interactions as well as to be productive in their work, Thais employ the concept of *sanuk* (to have fun, to enjoy oneself and to have a good time) in their social interactions. In so doing, most Thai social interactions are pleasant, light, possibly superficial, yet fun and humorous in nature. Thais tend to avoid any serious discussions or topic and when conversations are getting serious, they often resort to humour or jokes to reduce tension; for Thais, being serious shows bad character. Being *sanuk* provides a highly valued mechanism for maintaining harmonious, non-threatening social relations. Because having fun is an important part of the Thai lifestyle, a 'learning while having fun' approach can be very effective for most Thai students. This is often done by the use of activities and games as alternatives to merely lecturing, which – perversely – is the most used method of teaching in Thai classrooms. The fact that Thai students, even in tertiary education, enjoy playing games in their classroom can mislead observers into thinking that Thai students abhor hard work and will only learn if the subjects are fun-oriented. In fact many Thai

students are usually industrious and well-behaved. The fun elements are encouraged as they can potentially lead to better relationships among the students.

The fourth dimension, *uncertainty avoidance*, describes different ways of dealing with uncertainty. In cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance, students like open-ended learning situations with vague objectives, broad assignments and no timetables, while students with strong uncertainty avoidance prefer structured learning situations with precise objectives, detailed assignments, and strict timetables. Students from strong uncertainty avoidance cultures expect their teachers to be experts who have all the answers and such students tend not to disagree with teachers, as it is felt as personal disloyalty. On the other hand, students from weak uncertainty avoidance countries accept a teacher who says 'I don't know' and intellectual disagreement in academic matters can be seen as a stimulating experience.

Thais are characterised as having mid uncertainty avoidance and this can be seen in their being threatened by ambiguous situations and trying to avoid challenging experiences. In Thailand, people tend to avoid risks, place a high value on conformity of opinion and behaviour, and seek a high level of control over their environment. Thais are strongly socialised to conform to group norms, traditions, rules and regulations. This fostering of stability and continuity leads to the perception of any change as being undesirable and disruptive. An example of this can be seen in the reluctance of Thai students to embrace the student-centred learning, strongly supported, as shown above, by the National Education Commission of Thailand. This is because the reforms required students to adopt patterns of classroom behaviour which were exceedingly novel, that is to take initiatives in their own learning as well as to depart from the traditional learning style, where rote memorization is predominant. At the moment the dominant pedagogical model in Thai universities is premised on the teacher always being right. He/She is also an expert who is almost omniscient, organises the lesson content into appropriate learning units, gives all instructions and leads the classroom direction. Students, on the other hand, pay close attention and carry out all instructions given by the teachers. As a result, Thai students rarely take any initiative in the classroom; rather, they tend to wait to be told what to do. Even when asked to make a decision, they might simply ask the teacher to make the decision for them as they trust and rely on their teacher's experience.

2.5 THE NINE THAI VALUE ORIENTATIONS

Hofstede's four cultural dimensions offer a framework for discussion of Thai cultural values and within this analytic framework there is a degree of success in explaining Thai culture. There has also been an attempt by a Thai scholar to develop a less Western-biased value measurement instrument in order to characterise the Thai national character. In 1978 and again in 1981, Suntaree Komin conducted an extensive study regarding Thai cultural values (1990a, 1990b). Komin used Rokeach's (1973) theoretical framework, which classified values into two broad categories. According to Rokeach, terminal value reflects a person's preferences concerning the 'ends' to be achieved; they are the goals individuals would like to achieve during their lifetime. Instrumental value reflects the 'means' for achieving these important end states. Komin developed two value lists in accordance with Rokeach's framework. The terminal value items were derived from content analyses of (1) 219 subjects' open-ended responses to questions on goal values; (2) two major Thai newspapers over a period of two months; (3) literature on Thai culture and personality. This resulted in 20 terminal value items. The instrumental values were originally derived from Anderson's (1968) list of 555 personality traits, from which 146 traits were selected for the rating of likableness by 219 subjects. The final form of the two lists of values, together with a questionnaire designed to tap several social attitudes and behaviours, were administered to a total of 2,469 Thais from different geographical and occupational backgrounds in 1978 and again to a total of 2,149 subjects exclusively from the capital, Bangkok, in 1981. Analysis revealed the following nine value clusters, which are ranked according to their perceived importance:

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

In order fully to understand these cultural values, I have summarised Komin's description of each value within the Thai classroom context.

1. *Ego orientation.* For Thai people, preserving one another's ego is the basic rule for all social interactions. Violation of this ego-self can provoke emotional reactions. The preservation of another's ego is present in superior/inferior interactions as well as between social equals. Three key values underlie this principle.
 - i. *Face-saving.* The first criterion to consider in communicative action. To make someone lose face is to be avoided at all times.
 - ii. *Criticism-avoidance.* It is impossible to separate the ideas and opinions from the person holding them. Thus direct criticism is regarded as an insult and social affront, resulting in loss of face. Criticism is only ever indirect in nature.
 - iii. *Kreng jai.* This Thai concept underlies a significant portion of everyday Thai interpersonal behavioural patterns. *Kreng Jai* refers to an attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his/ her interest or desire in situations where there is the potential for discomfort or conflict, and when there is a need to maintain a pleasant and cooperative relationship.

In the classroom, it is mutually understood (on the part of teachers and students) that preservation of each other's face is of paramount importance. Each knows his/her role and the appropriate means to handle interactions when roles come into contact.

2. *Grateful relationship orientation.* This orientation is characterised by the quality of being grateful and by the consequent special bond between two persons. By this is meant the degree to which a person must remember the goodness done to him/her by another and also the injunction to reciprocate this. The quality incorporates the principle of *bunghun* (indebted goodness). For example, in a Thai classroom, the teacher is always regarded as one who renders help and gives knowledge out of kindness and the students are expected to remember the goodness and reciprocate the kindness by paying attention to their study and by working harder. Thus, it is likely that some students might be motivated to study because they feel that they are obliged to return the gratitude they feel (or at least ought to feel) for their teacher.

3. *Smooth interpersonal relationship orientation.* Thais place high value on a group of other-directed social interaction values. This orientation is characterised by the preference for non-assertive, polite, and humble types of personality as well as the preference for smooth, relaxed, pleasant, conflict free interpersonal interactions with an observable social harmony. In order for social interactions to proceed smoothly, it is important for persons to have such preferred characteristics as self-control, tolerance, restraint, manners and humility. These characteristics are believed to contribute to successful social interactions. It naturally follows that showing one's aggressiveness or overt self-confidence will only bring about negative perception of *man sai* (a mixture of jealousy and disgust). Although this orientation can predict what types of behaviour are acceptable or appropriate in social interactions, it restricts personality traits to a prescribed range and can be confused by people who come from different social environments.
4. *Flexibility and adjustment orientation.* This value shows that Thai people are situation- and person-oriented, not principle- or system-oriented; it is always the person and the situation over the principles and system. In general, for many Thais, there is nothing (within social milieux) that is so fixed and rigid that rules are unbendable or unchangeable. In practice, principles and rules are ever-adjustable to fit persons and situations. For example, it is not at all uncommon for some Thai students to approach a teacher to negotiate their grade or assignment deadline to suit their convenience. This flexibility value orientation is correlated with a laxness in principles, which results in Thai being labelled as non-committal, irresponsible or even selfish.
5. *Religio-psychical orientation.* Since Theravada Buddhism is the religion of the country and is professed by 95% of the total population, it has undoubtedly influenced the people's everyday lives. For example, many Thais believe in the unequal doctrine of karma. The concept of karma has been used to describe or attribute someone's success or failure with the differentiation between good and bad karma. Good karma suggests that each person is born with an unequal share of predestined goodness while bad karma suggests that the cause of mishaps or failures of each person is the result of actions in a previous life. This belief might influence one's determination or persistence to initiate or participate in any action, as well as one's sense of responsibility for one's action.

6. *Education and competence orientation.* The findings of the Thai value studies reveal that knowledge for knowledge's sake does not receive a high value for Thais in general. Rather, Thais are characterised by the perception of education as a means to climb the social ladder and of acquiring higher prestige or a higher salary, rather than as an end-value in itself. Education is valued in form-over-content in that decorative symbols and honours are more important than the education itself. Some companies in Thailand even have a range of salaries according to the prestige of the universities from which their employees graduate. This means that students who come from well known government universities will receive a higher salary than students who come from less well known or private universities, no matter what their major is. A similar concept also applies to the students' choices in subjects of study; there are students who choose their major because of its popularity and status rather than because of the student's own interest.
7. *Interdependence orientation.* As Thai culture is characterised by its collectivist temperament in which interdependent, co-operative relationships and tight social networks are more important than the individual, Thais' self-concept is inclined to an interdependent view of self, which reflects the community collaboration spirit through the value of co-existence and interdependence. This value places an importance on the group, not the individual. This entails seeing 'oneself as part of an all-encompassing social relationship and recognising that one's behaviour is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent, organised by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings and actions of others in the relationship' (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 227). Coupled with the higher order values of ego, smooth interpersonal relationships and flexibility, the interdependence value helps to facilitate social interaction among Thais.
8. *Fun-pleasure orientation.* This is characterised by the attitude of *sanuk*, (to enjoy oneself and to have a good time). Thais use *sanuk* to help maintain social relationships and to guarantee that one has time to relax. This attitude can be seen through seemingly easy-going, fun-loving, pleasant, and joyful interactions and behaviours, and a light approach toward things and events. This orientation functions as the imperative mechanism to support and maintain the more important smooth interpersonal value. However, the strength of this value orientation does not mean that Thais cannot be taken seriously. Rather, it means

that to be successful in social interactions with Thais, the aspects of *sanuk* should be taken into consideration.

9. *Achievement-task orientation.* This orientation is characterised by the achievement-motivation need, emphasising internal drive towards achievement through hard work. The fact that Thais score very low in this category, ranking ambition and hard work as less important than social relationship categories, means that maintaining good relationships is sometimes more important than work and that working hard alone is not sufficient to be marked as a success. The general low achievement value of Thais should not be interpreted as abhorrence of hard work, but that achievement in Thai society is more social in nature. Hence, it is very rare that work alone would lead to a sense of achievement among Thais.

The significance of Komin's study lies not only in its description and analysis of Thais' behaviour but also in its emphasis on the influence of national culture on shaping and guiding the thoughts, actions and practices of its members. Komin believed that these cultural orientations function like the cognitive blueprints of the motivational patterns of Thai people in general and could be used to predict or explain the individuals' behaviour in different social contexts.

2.6 CRITIQUES OF CHARACTERISING NATIONAL CULTURE

It can be seen that Hofstede's and Komin's work share similarities, as they both regard national culture as consisting of shared attitudes, beliefs, norms, roles, values, practices and other elements of subjective culture among people in the same culture. Cultural shared knowledge not only characterises a particular country, but also differentiates people from different cultures. The underlying message from both studies is that the differences in the behaviour of people can be distinguished by various elements in different cultures. When this view is applied to the educational setting, it suggests that both teachers' and students' attitudes and knowledge about their roles and relationships (which influence different aspects of classroom interactions) are partly derived from their shared national cultures. Understanding how national culture might influence behaviour in different countries is

essential if we are to determine what can be thought to be appropriate in terms of classroom behaviour and instruction. Although Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Komin's nine cultural orientations have been widely accepted and have been used extensively by Thai educational researchers to explain characteristics and behaviours of teachers and students in Thai settings, (Burn and Thongprasert 2005, Corbitt and Thanasankit 2000, Hallinger and Kantamara 2000 and 2001a, Prpic and Kanjanapanyakorn (nd), Rohitratana 1998, Shawyun and Tanchaisak (nd)), their respective approaches to characterising national culture are not immune to criticism.

The first drawback concerns generalisability. With regard to Hofstede's work, critics (McSweeney 2002, Triandis 1982) have questioned the generalisability of the research findings because the sample was drawn from one large multinational company, which can hardly be representative of the respondents' home nations. As a result, it has been argued that national differences may be confounded by the homogenising influence of a dominant corporate culture that traverses national boundaries. Although Komin's surveys were more various in terms of participants' geographical regions and covered occupations ranging from farmers, skilled workers, and university students to businessmen and government officials, the results might not pertain to the Thai educational system in general. The second drawback concerns research methods. It is claimed that Hofstede's surveys are not a reliable way of measuring cultural differences because the items used to measure the dimensions may have different rather than equivalent meanings in different cultures. Also as both studies were large-scale quantitative research projects, they were criticised for overlooking the subjective states of the individuals (McSweeney 2002, Triandis 1982). The presupposition that the individual questionnaire respondents are merely relays of national culture and that their answers are immune to their foreknowledge of the survey outcome and so were the pure outcomes of unconscious pre-programmed values appears to be an over-simplistic reduction of the individual to cultural type. The third drawback is that Hofstede's study may be relevant only to the period of time in which it was conducted; the IBM data might be too obsolete to depict the national character of modern nations over a generation later. Similarly, Komin's surveys were conducted between 1978 and 1981 – before Thailand entered an era of rapid economic development, followed by even more rapid economic collapse in the subsequent decade – and this could undermine their relevance to contemporary Thai society. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of global communication is causing the world to become increasingly multi-cultural, with the consequence that it is difficult to draw a boundary between different cultures and

countries. The fourth drawback concerns the elusiveness of the concept of culture. There is still no consensus about which 'units' or 'dimensions' should be used for describing culture; essentially cultures are still grasped (McSweeney 2002). Critics have argued that differences in culture cannot be explained by analysis of only four or five dimensions and as a result both studies led to stereotyping of behaviours and overgeneralization of cultures (McSweeney 2002, Munro 1997). The fifth drawback is Hofstede's depiction of cultural dimensions as bi-polar in the sense that each cultural dimension is composed of contrasting positions. For example, individualism and collectivism are treated as opposite poles. However, Triandis (1994: 42) argues that 'the two can coexist and are simply emphasised more or less...depending on the situation. All of us carry both individualist and collectivist tendencies' yet Hofstede's dimensions exclude such coexistence and conflict and thus ignore key cultural qualities. The last drawback is the absence of other influences. While Hofstede assumes the existence of a causal link between cultural dimensions of a particular national culture and a specific national action, Komin regards Thai cultural orientations as the cognitive blueprints that guide individuals' motivation and action. Both views presuppose the uniformity of national culture and that every member of a nation exhibits the national characteristics to the extent that it does not matter much which particular individual one studies. This not only overlooks individual differences, it also undermines the possible influence of other cultural or non-cultural factors.

Given these drawbacks, it seems that Hofstede's and Komin's models could be problematic because grouping individuals by ethnic, national or international traits can be seen to be confining, with members reduced to pre-defined characteristics which, once established, become relatively fixed in mind. This in turn can lead to the development of stereotypes and an attachment to the 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognised characteristics about a person, [which] reduce everything about that person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity' (Hall 1997: 268). In so doing, attention is focused on a few similar characteristics as opposed to the complexity of individual perspectives, social interactions, and the social context. Another problem from the emphasis of national characteristics is that it has continued a post-colonialist era with 'unequal narratives' creating an 'unreciprocal interpretation of other...non-Western cultures' (Holliday 1999: 243) Therefore, Hofstede's attempt to explain other cultures via the concrete, separate, behaviour-defining characteristics of ethnic, national and international groups is not exempted from the criticism of representing non-Western culture through the methodology and technology of

Western education. Similarly, while Komin tried to reduce the Western bias by conducting research based on the interpretation of her own culture, she was following the large culture approach in the sense that she was reducing her culture into different cultural value clusters. Also, if people's values and belief systems are culturally conditioned, the individual author of any given theory is of course not excepted from this condition. Komin's cultural orientations reflect to some extent the cultural environment in which they were written. It can be seen that Hofstede and Komin distinguish between West and East (almost as monolithic blocks), to group cultural differences into different elements, and to conceptualise them based on these elements. Both studies followed the large cultural approach which encouraged a prescribed, normative idea of cultural differences resulting in reductionism, overgeneralization and otherisation of foreign educators, students and societies. According to Holliday (ibid : 245), 'otherisation' can be defined as 'the process whereby the 'foreign' is reduced into a simplistic, easily digestible, exotic or degrading stereotype. The 'foreign' thus becomes a degraded or exotic 'them' or safely categorised 'other'.'

When the emphasis is on negative attribution of others' characteristics, the perception of individuals and their willingness to agree or disagree with these characteristics are often overlooked or ignored. This is when a non-essentialist view of a small culture becomes appropriate as this view stands against the hasty imposition of national characteristics as explanatory factors in understanding others' behaviour. Instead, it focuses on interpreting emergent behaviour within any social grouping with an emphasis on understanding meaning from the individual's point of view and viewing the social world as the product of individuals' interactions with and interpretations of their world.

As both paradigms see the world in different ways, the distinction between them undeniably has some effect on research orientation. While the large culture approach begins with a prescriptive desire to seek out and detail cultural differences with the aim of explaining behaviour in these terms, the small culture approach is concerned with social processes as they emerge. Small culture is thus 'the sum total of all the processes, happenings, or activities in which a given set or several sets of people habitually engage' (Beales et al. 1967: 9). In order to understand the social processes and behaviours of a particular group of people, the appropriate tool, within a small culture context, is through an interpretive ethnography which allows the researcher to immerse him or herself in a social setting for an extended period of time observing behaviours, listening to what was

said and asking questions. With respect to the interest in human interaction, it can be seen that the small culture approach and the sociocultural approach previously mentioned share some similarity in the sense that both approaches suggest the relevance of social context and cultural issues to human behaviour as well as the importance of interpersonal relationships which influence, shape and maintain human motivation and action.

2.7 RESEARCH GOALS

As I have made the initial assumption that Thai students' behaviour is partly influenced by national characteristics, as described in Hofstede's and Komin's work, I have located myself within the large culture approach. However, in order to investigate whether my assumption holds true, I aim (1) to observe students' interactions in the classroom in order to see if their behaviour manifests elements of Thai cultural characteristics and (2) to interview students in order to seek out an understanding of their behaviour, values, beliefs and so on within their educational setting. Because large-scale quantitative research does not allow this connection between the researcher and the participants, I have decided to follow the small culture approach by employing an ethnographic approach in which one spends a sufficient amount of time observing and studying students' behaviour to enable sound conclusions to be made on actual patterns of observed student classroom behaviour. These observational data will then be reported back to students so that students can interpret and reflect on their own behaviour. Through seeking out and responding to the thoughts and feelings of members of the classroom culture, I hope to test my assumption and answer my research question and goals as follow:

'To what extent can Thai culture be used to explain students' behaviour?'

In order to answer this question, this study attempts to:

1. Identify the patterns of behaviours that emerge from the classroom interaction between teacher-student and student-student.
2. Investigate whether Thai national characteristics manifest themselves in student behaviour.

3. Identify any cultural-based knowledge to which students adhere.
4. Identify whether there are any discernible sets of behaviour that are specific to the group and cannot be explained by – or which do not conform to – national culture.
5. Identify factors, other than culturally specific factors, that influence students' behaviour.

3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To avoid reducing research participants to prescribed stereotypes, I followed a small culture approach, which treats a classroom as a culture in itself and focuses on the patterns of interactions and behaviours of students and teachers within it. Making the reasonable assumption that students' actions and motivations are influenced by their beliefs and values, I hoped that the patterns of interaction and behaviour which emerge in the classroom may represent some aspects of underlying cultural knowledge to which students are attached and give us some insights into their world. In order to understand students' behaviour and thinking, it is necessary to engage with the students own accounts of their culture and learning experience. With this in mind, I employed two research methods. Firstly, classroom observation was conducted with the intention of seeing, from a third person perspective, how students interact both with one another and with teachers and so identify patterns of behaviour in class. Secondly, students were interviewed in order to explore first person reports of students' behaviour and some of its causal foundations.

3.1 INTERPRETIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Before describing in more detail interpretive ethnography, it is necessary to discuss briefly the difference between the normative and interpretive approaches to research into cultures. According to Holliday (1994: 181), a normative approach begins with theories about how reality ought to be and with definite plan as to which research instruments are going to be used. Within the scope of my study, if I were to follow the normative approach, I would begin my research with a checklist of Thai national characteristics and use them as research tools to explain students' behaviour. The interpretive approach, on the other hand, makes no such attempt to manipulate the social setting under investigation, to impose preconceptions or to define the social world of participants prior to the research being conducted. Instead, interpretive ethnography looks deeply into behaviour within specific

social settings so as to allow meaning to emerge from the situations with the aim of gaining an understanding of things in their own terms. The belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research is inherent in interpretive ethnography. (Holliday 2002) To achieve this, the researcher needs to look at the social settings through ethnographic eyes. This means that the researcher should stand at arm's length from any taken-for-granted knowledge which familiarity brings and try to see events from the perspective of an outsider as well as putting aside any assumptions or preconceptions about the social groupings or settings (Holliday et al 2004). The very basic tools of ethnographers are observation and writing descriptions of what is seen and heard in field notes or diaries. The strength of observational data is that the ethnographer can actually capture what people say and do in their social settings and try to grasp the meaning of people's behaviour. However, because the social world is composed of complex behaviour, it is often beyond the ability of one researcher to capture all aspects of social interactions in particular settings and as a result, only selected behaviours are chosen and presented through written accounts. In order to obtain a critical check on the validity of their interpretations of the social events, ethnographers can interview their research participants concerning their motivations, their interactions and the interpretation of the own behaviour or events in which they are engaged. The strength of the interview is that the ethnographer can delve into the participants' thinking about and reasoning for their behaviour, whereas observational data are opaque to this valuable source of information. The combination of observation and interview can be used to cross check what the participants say and what they actually do. By following this route, it is hoped that the research findings will be more reliable and trustworthy.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

3.2.1 Informants

The informants for this study were a class of 40 second year English majors at Lampang Rajabhat University, situated in the northern part of Thailand. Founded in 1972 as a teacher training college, in the 2004 Rajabhat University Act Lampang Rajabhat Institute

was upgraded to a university, along with the other 35 Rajabhat Institutes. With its location and its relatively low tuition fees, the University attracts mostly local students who either failed to pass the national entrance examination or who could not afford to go to a more prestigious private university. As I have been working as an English teacher at this university for 8 years, it was relatively straightforward to get approval from the University to carry out the research. The target class was chosen on the basis of their year and major and restrictions imposed by the teaching timetable. While the first year English majors were still adjusting to the new environment of the University, the fourth year students did not study on campus, being away on work placements, so limiting the choice to second and third years. Since the third year students studied fewer subjects and were, in addition, engaged in a larger amount of self-study, I decided that the second year's timetable allowed the greatest opportunity for observation of classroom interaction. There were 40 students in the class, 34 female students and 6 male students. After the classroom observation ended, all students were asked to volunteer for the interview process; 14 students volunteered, 11 of whom were female students and 3 were male.

3.2.2 Ethical Considerations

Before carrying out the research, I contacted the Head of the English Department to inform her of my research and to ask for her permission in gaining access to other teachers in the Department. Once permission was granted, I contacted all the teachers and students in the classroom which I had chosen as my focal group and asked for their permission to follow their classes for four weeks. Students and teachers were informed of the objectives of the study, the duration of classroom observation, and the research methods prior to the commencement of the research. The teachers and students were aware of my role as an observer and were informed that some classes would be recorded. They were informed that the identities of those involved would be concealed so the publication of research data would not result in suffering on the part of any participant. They were also given the opportunity to withhold their cooperation. Since my role as observer was made public, I was fortunate to gain access to all classes that I contacted.

With respect to the students' interviews, once I received the consent of the fourteen students who were to take part in the research interview, students were made fully aware that there would be no secret recording of discussions and that casual conversations would not be used as research data. They were informed that (1) their interviews (only)

were to be recorded, (2) the research data would be taken only from their pair interview and group discussion and (3) their identities would be concealed.

As can be seen, while the identities of the participants have been concealed, I have revealed the name of the University. Within the local (Thai) educational setting, it is acceptable to reveal the name and location of institutions where research is carried out, provided that the participants' identities are not. Using the real name not only confirms the authenticity of the research, but also shows respect and gratitude on the researcher's part to the benevolence of the institutions that allowed access for the research.

As far as influencing class activities were concerned, I tried to minimise the intrusion by ensuring that I arrived at the class before the teachers and students and always sat at the edges of the classroom. I would turn on my tape recorder before the start of the classroom and hid it discreetly so that teachers and students were not directly conscious that they were being recorded. With reference to video-taping of the class, as already stated, I informed both teachers and students beforehand so that they would be prepared for the use of a video-recorder.

3.2.3 Data Collection: Classroom Observation

As my aim was to understand the routine and normal aspects of teachers' and students' life in the classroom as well as the relationships that lie behind these surface events, I felt that the most suitable research method under the circumstances was to conduct detailed observation of classroom behaviour. After gaining formal permission, I joined the classroom in the role of a participant-as-observer. That is, the students were aware of my role as a researcher. Over the research period I remained in the classroom, making regular observations of students' behaviour and collecting documents. To this end I kept field notes and a diary. I also engaged in small talk with students before and after class with the intention of making students more at ease in my presence. However, I was not involved in any classroom management or learning activities and did not take part in either teachers' or students' daily lives outside the classroom setting. The only time that I engaged in extended discourse with the students was during formal interviews, after the period of observation had finished. The rationale for this was to try not to influence the naturally and normally occurring patterns of interaction with the aim of describing and understanding these

processes as neutrally and correctly as possible. The research approach thus follows a trajectory of data-then-theory rather than theory-then-data.

The aim of the classroom observation was to see how students interact in class, both with one another and with teachers. Since it would be impossible to uncover the full complexities of the students' behaviour in only one or two sittings, I planned to spend four weeks following the class. I started the classroom observation one month after the start of the first term. (There are two academic terms in Thailand. The first term begins around the middle of June and ends around the end of September. The second term starts at the beginning of November and runs until the middle of February.) Each week the students studied eight different modules, giving a total classroom time of 21 hours a week. Students met the teacher for each class only once a week. All the modules studied are related to language, as shown in the table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Student Timetable

Subject	Day/Time	Teacher
<i>Basic Chinese I</i> †	Tue 9 AM – 12 PM	Female, Thai
<i>Basic French I</i> †	Thurs 1 PM – 4 PM	Male, Thai
<i>Cultural Background of English Speaking Countries</i> *	Mon 1 PM – 3 PM	Male, Australian
<i>English for Mass Media</i>	Tue 4 PM – 7 PM	Female, Thai
<i>English Literature</i> *	Wed 10 AM – 12 PM	Male, American
<i>Introduction to Linguistics</i>	Thurs 9 AM – 12 PM	Female, Thai
<i>Listening and Speaking III</i>	Tue 1 PM – 4 PM	Male, Australian
<i>Reading Prose</i> *	Fri 10 AM – 12 PM	Male, American
<i>Writing I</i>	Mon 9 AM – 12 PM	Male, American

† These modules are optional; all others are core.

* These modules are taught for two hours per week; all others are three hours per week.

I decided to observe every module for which the students were registered for four weeks. This entailed arriving at least 15 minutes before each lesson started and sitting at the back of the classroom. The observation began as soon as the first student arrived in the class and ended when all had left the classroom. During the first few days of the observation, students seemed to be slightly self-conscious and aware of my presence and could often be seen turning around to check if I was in the class so at this early stage it was not yet possible to make any meaningful observation of students' behaviour. As a result, I

could only observe and record the more visible aspects of the class, for example seating arrangements, class atmosphere, teaching style, types of learning materials and activities, etc. During the period of class observation, I wrote down notes after hearing or seeing interesting interactions or behaviour. At the end of each class, I completed a more detailed record or diary of the class, including who had taught what and when, and the details of classroom interactions and practices which had occurred on that particular day. At the end of each week, I compared that week's diary with previous weeks to uncover similarities and differences between classes. If there were any points worth pursuing in the classroom observation, I also made a note of these. For example, of the eight modules studied, students were together as a group in every class except in *Listening and Speaking III*. In this case the teacher divided the class into four groups of ten students, each with one 45-minute slot per group. As I wanted to know students' opinions on the differences in class size, this prompted me to ask for the teachers' permission to record two classes with different seating arrangements. One was a listening and speaking classroom with an Australian teacher in which the class was divided into four small groups and students were seated in a semi-circle. The other was a Chinese classroom taught by a Thai teacher in which all students sat in rows and the teacher stood at the front of the classroom. The video recording began on the third week of the classroom observation, as I hoped that by that time, both the teachers and students would be sufficiently familiar with my presence to be unaffected by the presence of the camcorder. It should be noted that the camcorder was very small, hopefully reducing the students' feelings of intrusion. (See Appendix A for a facsimile and translation of a sample of my field notes.)

From the beginning of the second week onward, students seemed to be less self-conscious and more used to having an observer in the class. If met outside the class, students would greet me, ask when I would be in the class, or engage in other small talk. As a result, the students seemed to act more naturally in class and hence different kinds of behaviour, which were not obvious in the first weeks, became more evident. From this point on, I could observe and document social aspects of student behaviour in class, with the focus on teacher-student and peer interactions. With respect to teacher-student interactions, the emerging behaviours included how teachers conducted their lessons, how they engaged students in academic tasks and activities, how they helped students to learn or understand what was taught, and how they dealt with disruptive behaviour. As for peer interactions, this included both academic and non-academic activities. While the former showed how students behaved when learning was taking place (e.g. listening quietly to the

lecture, writing down what the teacher said, doing group work etc.), the latter showed another side of students' behaviour (e.g. putting on make-up, reading glossy magazines, answering the phone in class, etc.) During the third and fourth week, I also had a chance to observe students' class presentations in three different modules, namely *Basic Chinese I*, *Cultural Background of English Speaking Countries* and *Introduction to Linguistics*. As students seemed to spend substantial time engaged in group work outside formal study hours, this prompted me to include in the interview questions about students' group work in order to investigate the extent to which this helped with their learning and how students interacted with one another in completing these group tasks.

Since the mid-term examinations for all modules also took place during the second and third week, I had a chance to observe the examination process including the implementation of the University examination rules and regulations, the types of examination used to assess progress for each module, the administration of examinations, marking and so on. Although the students' learning can be assessed by a variety of different means, having a formal examination seemed to be the most popular assessment method in most modules. The degree of formality and flexibility depends on the type of examination. For small quizzes or mid-term examinations, the teachers of the module can set the date, time and place of the examination as they wanted and can invigilate the exam themselves. Teachers can have as many quizzes or small examinations and as often as they liked. Only the final examination is required to comply with the University guidelines, which are set by the University examinations committee. Apart from observing the examination in progress, I was also asked to be involved in the mid-term examinations by being an invigilator for the *Reading Prose* module. This was because the examination was divided into two parts, both parts running simultaneously. The bulk of the exam consisted of a written section, which lasted for two hours. At the same time an oral examination was conducted, with students called out from the written paper to have a five minute oral test with the class teacher. I was then asked to invigilate the written exam. The request to be an invigilator had thus shifted my role from being merely a researcher who sat quietly at the back of the classroom, to an exam invigilator with the power and responsibility to intervene, if necessary, in students' academic careers. This incident forced me to relinquish my role as researcher and I became, for a short while, a teacher. Although I did not notice any change of students' manner toward me after I resumed my role as a researcher, I was aware that this change of my status might have some effect on students' opinions as I had been considered, even temporarily, as a participant in the learning process. As a consequence,

students might become more conscious of what they said or did during my presence. This became apparent when a few students later told me during the interview that they initially had suspicions about me and that they were worried that I was sent by the University to check up on the students or to find fault with them.

3.2.4 Data Collection: Interviews

Before the end of the fourth week of the classroom observation, I asked students to volunteer to be interviewed. Students were told that they would be interviewed both in pairs and in group discussion and that they could choose their partners for the pair interview. They were all paid for their time. Because of their similar demographic background (local and provincial students), age group (18-21 years old) and educational backgrounds (high school graduates), each student shares a common social experience and geographical background and each student was therefore equally suitable as a research subject. Using volunteers also yields the obvious benefit that participants are willing to participate and are not under pressure to cooperate with the researcher. Because I noticed during the classroom observation that students were clearly more involved in class activities, as well as being more confident and talkative, when their friends were around, I told students that they could choose their own partners with whom to be interviewed in order to increase students' willingness to participate in the pair interviews. The original plan was to interview ten students. However, since more students volunteered for the interview than expected, the interviews were extended to fourteen students in seven pairs. I noticed that each pair of students who volunteered were from the same group or socially close to one another (as seen in class behaviour, e.g. arriving and leaving class together, sitting close to one another in class, being in the same group work, etc.) I considered that the intimacy of students may have been useful for the interview as students would feel less inhibition in expressing views in front of their close friends. After an announcement for volunteers was made in class, one female student suggested that I should pick the participants myself. The student argued that if only volunteers were used, only confident students would participate, leaving no chance for shier students. I reflected on this and explained to the student the importance of the willingness of the participants to be interviewed, partly because the interviews would be conducted during the students' own time; the student was asked if she would like to volunteer but she declined. This may seem

like a small incident but it provides an interesting insight into students' perceptions of the teacher's authority. This will be discussed more fully later.

The interviews were semi-structured; I had a list of questions and topics to be covered but was prepared to allow students to stray onto related areas if they arose or to develop new areas of enquiry in response to students' answers. The interview was divided into three parts.

The first part of the interview did not deal directly with observed behaviour. Rather, it involved within-self factors: students' beliefs and attitudes toward their learning experiences and situations. It consisted of five questions concerning (1) students' reasons for choosing English as their major; (2) their expectations of their four-year education at the University; (3) the differences between studying at high school and at university; (4) their views on the characteristics of good/bad students, and (5) the characteristics of good/bad teachers. Each question had its own purpose. This was, respectively, to uncover (1) students' attitudes towards learning English, factors that influenced their decision to learn English and their aims in learning English; (2 & 3) what students went through during the transition from high school to university and whether and to what extent the transition affected their determination and ability to reach their learning goals; (4 & 5) whether interviewees' beliefs about what students and teachers should or should not do in class had any influence on actual classroom behaviour. Each pair was asked all these questions, although the questions did not follow in the same order or have exactly the same wording for each pair.

The second part of the interview explored students' behaviours and interactions in class. The main aim of the earlier classroom observation was to identify the patterns of behaviour which emerged from interactions in class. These patterns were then used to form interview questions which comprised the second part of the interview. Recurrent behaviour patterns identified included (1) being late for classes, (2) answering the phone in class, (3) walking out of class, (4) cheating and sharing learning materials in the examination, (5) not participating in class, and (6) ways of structuring group work. I described what I saw in class and then asked students to reflect on why they behaved in such ways. For example, with reference to cheating, interviewees were asked if they had ever cheated in class, why they cheated, how they felt when their friends asked for help in the exam, whether they refused to help their friends cheat, and so on. If interviewees'

replies contained interesting, important or relevant material, this was further explored. Since the main aim was, as far as possible, to understand the interviewee's point of view and insights, interviewees were allowed and encouraged to discuss any new material or issues which cropped up. In many ways this part of the interview was central to the research because students were asked to explain behaviour which they sometimes took for granted or of which they were unaware.

The third part of the interview concerned class size and physical management. Since I believed that class size and seating arrangement are significant factors in determining the extent to which students engage in non-academic activities during class, I felt that this was an area which should be further explored. To do this, two separate classrooms were recorded, as mentioned in the observation section (see page 38). The aim of this interview was not only to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of learning in small and large classes, but also to understand students' views on learning foreign languages in a Thai setting and the benefits or drawbacks of learning from Thai and non-Thai teachers. Students were shown a video of themselves in class and asked to explain what was happening, to describe their feelings about the activities that they performed in both classes and to describe and discuss similarities and differences between learning English with Thai and foreign teachers.

Conducting all the interviews took about two weeks. Each interview was over an hour long and was audio recorded for data analysis both on tape and digitally. All interviews were conducted in Thai because students could express their thoughts and feelings more fully in their native language than they could in English.

After the pair-interviews were finished, all the interviewees were asked to come back together for a group interview. They were asked to watch a fifteen-minute video of a key stage 3 English language lesson, filmed in England and taken from <http://www.teachers.tv>. In the lesson an English teacher uses different techniques to extend his students' understanding of grammar and complex sentences. From the video, the interviewees could see how the teacher and students interacted with one another in a British class, how the teacher introduced different techniques (e.g. role plays or the use of picture books) and how students engaged in pair work. The video of this British grammar class was chosen as it shared some similarities with typical Thai English classes, which mainly focus on grammar. The rationale for asking the interviewees to watch the video was

that, unless attention is specifically drawn to the differences, students often take their own learning experience for granted, thinking that all classrooms are the same. By looking at a class from another culture and seeing the differences in terms of teaching and learning styles, classroom size and activities, the interviewees might be better able to reflect on their own classes and be prompted to reveal more revealing insights. In order to help students overcome the obvious language problems arising from watching a lesson conducted in English, I translated exchanges between the teacher and students in the video and produced hand-written subtitles. I showed the video clip in brief chunks with a short interval to explain what was said in the class. After making sure that all students understood the conversations in the video, students were left to watch the video again for approximately an hour, this time on their own. They were allowed to take notes and discuss with one another while watching. At the end of this time, students were asked to express their opinions on the teaching and learning styles of English teachers and students, discuss any similarities or differences between the Thai and English classroom, discuss teachers' and students' roles and interaction and so forth. The session was recorded both on audio cassette and on video.

Having seen the extent of students' disruptive behaviour, I wanted to know if teachers in other educational institutes shared similar experiences. I therefore conducted a focus group interview with three Thai teachers (two female and one male). All participants taught English at tertiary level in Thailand but, at the time of the interviews, were studying for higher degrees in England. I began the discussion by giving the background to the classroom I had observed and then describing the classroom practices and activities which I had witnessed. I then asked them to identify any similarities and differences between my and their classrooms. After that, I presented them with critical incidents and asked the interviewees what they would do if students walked out of class while they were teaching. I ended the discussion by asking their opinions on why students misbehaved in the class. The discussion lasted around 30 minutes.

To preserve student anonymity, all interviewees are referred to simply as student A, student B, etc. Pair interviews are referred to as the first interview and the group interview as the second interview. This gives a referencing system (A, 1), (A, 2), (B, 1) etc. which are interpreted as being respectively the responses in pair interview for student A, the group responses for student A, the pair interview for student B, and so on.

The following is a summary of research methods, participants and timeline of the data collection.

Table 3.2: Summary of Research Methods, Participants and Timeline

Methods	Participants	Timeline
Classroom observation	Second-year English majors and their teachers	Week 1: 24 – 28 July 2006 Week 2: 31 July – 4 August 2006 Week 3: 7 – 11 August 2006 Week 4: 14 – 18 August 2006
Pair interviews	1 st pair: Student A and B (female) 2 nd pair: Student C and D (female) 3 rd pair: Student E and F (female) 4 th pair: Student G and H (female) 5 th pair: Student I and J (female) 6 th pair: Student K and L (female and male) 7 th pair: Student M and N (male)	21 August 2006 23 August 2006 24 August 2006 28 August 2006 29 August 2006 30 August 2006 31 August 2006
Student group interview	All fourteen students	1 September 2006
Focus group with Thai teachers	Two female Thai teachers One male Thai teacher	22 June 2007

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

As the purpose of the classroom observation was to uncover what students did in class and identify patterns of behaviours that emerged from the events and interactions in the classroom, I entered the classroom with the initial aim of understanding the overall class situation. I began by observing and then recording class behaviour through transcriptions and field notes. Different aspects of the classroom were recorded over the weeks. For example, during the first week of the observation, I noticed that students were late in most

of their classes so I began to record how often students were late in subsequent weeks, what time they arrived, which group of students were late, and so on. At the end of each day, I typed up the field notes and compared the notes from different classes in order to identify patterns of behaviour which appeared to have particular significance, relevance, and interest to the topic of my study. It should be noted here that although I used the tape recorder to record the class interactions, the transcriptions only acted as an aide memoir, not as an analytical tool as it was not possible for one tape recorder to capture all verbal communication in the classroom.

During the period of observation, I moved from trying to record as many details as possible to focusing on only selected behaviour as I realised that it was impossible to capture all complex behaviour in the classroom and that my observation tools could only address some aspects of the reality of the classroom. However, by selecting only some salient behaviour, I may be presenting only well-chosen examples and using them to provide evidence of a particular research question. This problem is echoed by Bryman (1988: 117) who claimed that 'there is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relations to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews...are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed.'

During my observation, certain types of students' negative behaviour, such as being late, answering the phone in class, or walking out of class were very noticeable and disruptive to the process of learning. I thus decided to focus on these types of behaviour on the grounds that they affected the social interaction in the class and they were at odds with the characteristics of good classroom practices. This selective observation took me one step away from the social reality and was the first act of interpretation so I could not pretend that the data is a perfect representation of a the social reality. However, I argue that my observation data also expresses a reality which is different from the social world from which the data is taken. According to Holliday (2002: 100), 'it is essential that we are aware that the 'representation of reality', whether on note cards or in the chapter headings which is produced by the research should not be confused with the social reality that inspire the research.' Because some aspects of classroom interactions were more visible than others, such as seating arrangements, teaching styles, or disruptive behaviour, I decided to present these observational data in the research finding chapter (below) as

reconstructions of selected events and behaviours based on the chronological order of their occurrence in my field notes and diaries. These extracts of data would later be put under thematic headings and used as evidence for the ongoing discussion.

With reference to the choice of my tools of analysis, after a few weeks of classroom observation, it was clear that communication in the classroom was very one-sided and almost entirely initiated by the teacher. There was hardly any student to teacher communication except the most basic confirmation of classroom procedures or the answering of display questions. Analysis of student-student communication was also made difficult as most students used the Northern Thai dialect when communicating with each other. This differs significantly from the Central Thai dialect spoken by Bangkok natives like myself and speakers of the two are not mutually comprehensible. The short timetable and limited resources of linguistic data made it difficult to analyse data through the use of conversation or discourse analysis. Although students' verbal communication in the classroom did not lend itself to close scrutiny, their non-verbal communication proved to be more useful as I noticed that a number of issues emerged from students' behaviour. This included the prevalence of disruptive behaviour, problems with punctuality, and problems with cheating. These salient behaviours along with other observational data were selected to form the interview questions. Using this information, I then narrowed the research focus and finalised the interview questions. The issues that were to be included in the interview were students' reasons for learning English, students' perceptions about themselves, their interactions with friends and teachers, and their perception of their learning environment.

After the interviews were completed, the interviews were transcribed into word-processed documents in their original language (Thai). The next step was to analyse these data. As there was a danger of allowing the research to be coloured by preconceived ideas, which could lead to misleading or premature claims of a causal link between Thai culture and students' behaviour, I borrowed the procedures of data analysis used in grounded theory, following its principles which emphasise that theories should be grounded in empirical reality and qualitative researchers should 'study an area without any preconceived theory that dictates, prior to the research, 'relevancies' in concepts and hypotheses' (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 33). This helps the relevant data to emerge without being influenced by preconceived ideas. With the aim of capturing a holistic picture of the students' life from

their own perspective, rather than basing my investigation upon Thai national characteristics, I aimed to provide a detailed account of the setting and allow the data to generate its own theses. To achieve this, I created a textual database (transcripts of interviews or field notes of observations) which I interrogated constantly, comparing data, and searching for key concepts until the data were extensively coded. According to Bryman (2004: 402), coding entails 'reviewing transcripts and/or field notes, and giving labels to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particular salient within the social worlds of those being studied.' Essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph, etc. is read in search of the answer to the repeated question 'What is this about? What is being referenced here?'

In order to code all the interview scripts, I employed both traditional and modern techniques for coding the data. While the former involves manually cutting, pasting and re-arranging the data to develop the categories, the latter involves the use of the computer-assisted qualitative data software NVivo 7 to refine the coding processes.

After reading through the field notes and interview transcripts, I began coding by breaking the printed interview scripts into three chunks of data, each of which encompassed one section of the interviews. Since each part of the interview had its own discrete purpose, it was necessary to treat each chunk separately.

The first data set consisted of all seven pairs of interview scripts from the first part of the interview. (This investigated students' beliefs and attitudes toward their learning experiences and situations.) Because the interview questions from this part were scripted, I decided to compile each question and its answer separately. For example, all answers from question one – students' reasons for choosing English as their major – were cut and grouped together. This gave five piles of interview scripts (i.e. one for each of the five interview questions and answers), with every separate student response on a separate slip of paper. The slips were laid out on the floor so that it was possible physically to group responses and so create the initial categories. In other words, at this early stage, I was analysing interview scripts sentence by sentence in order to identify themes and concepts emerging from students' responses. Following are a few answers to the first question, concerning reasons for studying English. These answers were translated from Thai into English.

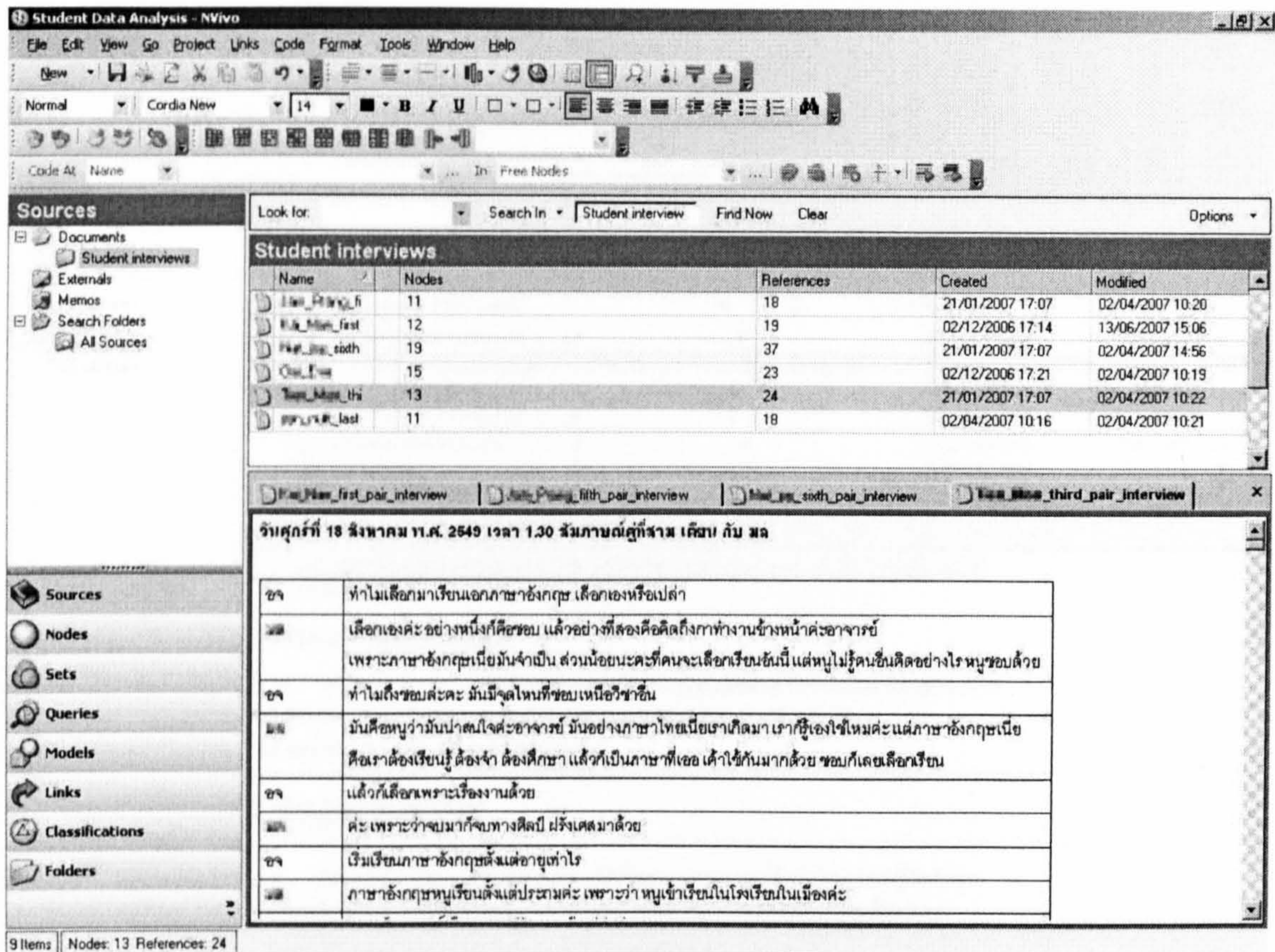
I chose English because I had studied French and English in high school before so I have some background knowledge in this major. (L, 1)

When I was in high school, I was very bad at Mathematics. So, I consulted with my sister about my future education. She suggested that I study English because she could not speak English and because of this found it difficult to get a job in Bangkok so she wanted me to be good in English. And, I knew that I could not study any major with Mathematics or numbers, so I decided to study English. (G, 1)

When I was in high school I got good grades in English so I thought that I should continue my study in English. Besides, I think that I might use English a lot more in the future. (H, 1)

From this data, I noted as many key words and concepts as possible. For example, from the responses above we have *learning English in high school, sister's suggestion, enjoy learning, good grades, bad grades, future use* and so on. Following this, I looked for connections within the key words and concepts and sorted them into different concepts in order to develop coding categories. After reviewing the data, the initial categories for reasons for learning English are *continuation and discontinuation of study, self-evaluation of their abilities, influence of family and friends, future career, past learning experience, interest in English, and status of English as an international language*. These categories were provisional; if later found to be problematic or unwieldy they were dropped. The same process was used for each interview question until all the initial categories were coded. Once finished, there were categories for each research question from the first part of the interview. As mentioned earlier, the data was separated into three parts and was thus fragmented. I was aware that by cutting and separating the interview transcripts in this way, it was inevitable that one risked losing context or data. To compensate for this, I used NVivo 7 to recombine all the word-processed texts for the first part of the interview, which could then be viewed at the same time (figure 3.1).

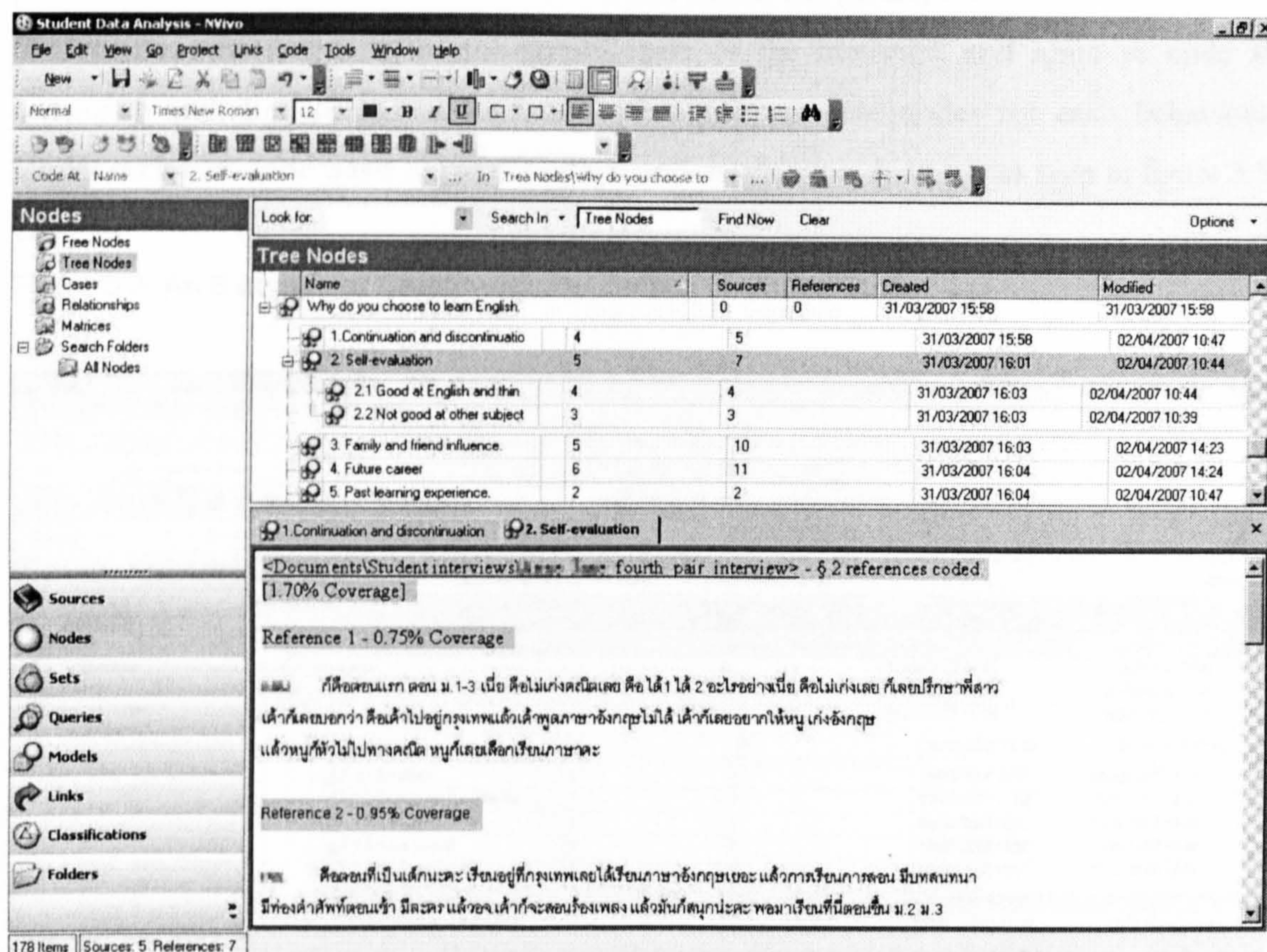
Figure 3.1: Documents Imported into NVivo



To preserve anonymity, names have been obscured in this and subsequent screenshots.

By looking at the data from the first part of the interview as a whole, I was able to compare responses, referring separate sections and responses back to each other in order to see if any further categories could be added or if any categories were repetitive and could thus be deleted. Once all the categories were thoroughly checked, I used NVivo to code the word-processed documents according to the manually formed categories. Thus, within NVivo, I created tree nodes and sub-nodes to reflect the coding categories created earlier. (NVivo allows the categories and coded texts to be held in a treelike structure, reflecting the hierarchical structure of the categories; NVivo’s tree nodes and sub-nodes are a way of formalising this hierarchy within the software.) This procedure resulted in a complete set of categories from the first part of the interview, as seen in figure 3.2. With all the relevant word-processed texts coded in NVivo, it was easy to retrieve all documents for further analysis.

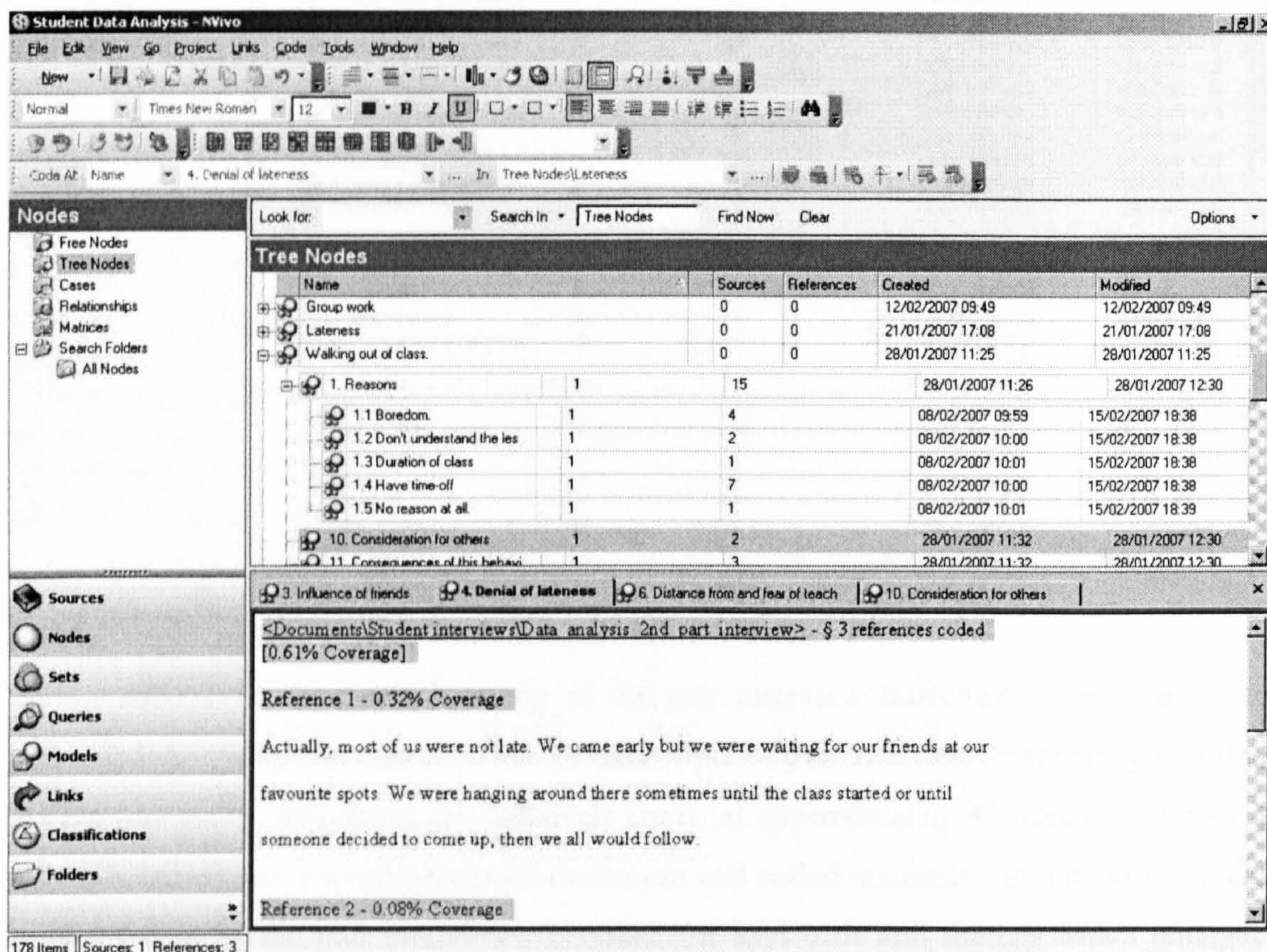
Figure 3.2: Creation of Tree Nodes and Sub-Nodes



The next step was to code the second chunk of data, which consisted of interviews exploring students' behaviour and interactions in class. In this section of the interview the questions were not pre-scripted. Rather, during the interview, I consulted a list of topics to be covered and introduced these at the appropriate time, giving students much more flexibility to elaborate on their replies which, if found relevant, were then used as follow-up questions. As a result, there was a greater quantity of data than from the first part of the interviews. To analyse and interpret this data, I printed out all interview transcripts and broke the data into separate piles, reflecting different patterns of behaviour. This could be done because I asked students about each behaviour and made sure that students had supplied extensive responses before moving on to discussions of the next type of behaviour, so giving a clear beginning and ending for each discussion of every pattern of behaviour. After physically cutting the word-processed texts, I was left with different piles of answers, each pile reflecting one pattern of behaviour; that is, there was one pile containing all interview scripts answering the question *why students answered the phone in class*, and another addressing the issue of *why students walked out of class*, and so on. I then started coding from the data manually in the same way as was done with the first part of the

interview until all the categories were fully listed. The same process was repeated with each pattern of behaviour. In order to double check all the categories, I used NVivo to look at all the interview scripts from the second part of the interview and again to code all categories and their details under nodes. This gave six tree nodes for each behaviour. Under each tree node was a list of categories and details of coded texts as seen in figure 3.3.

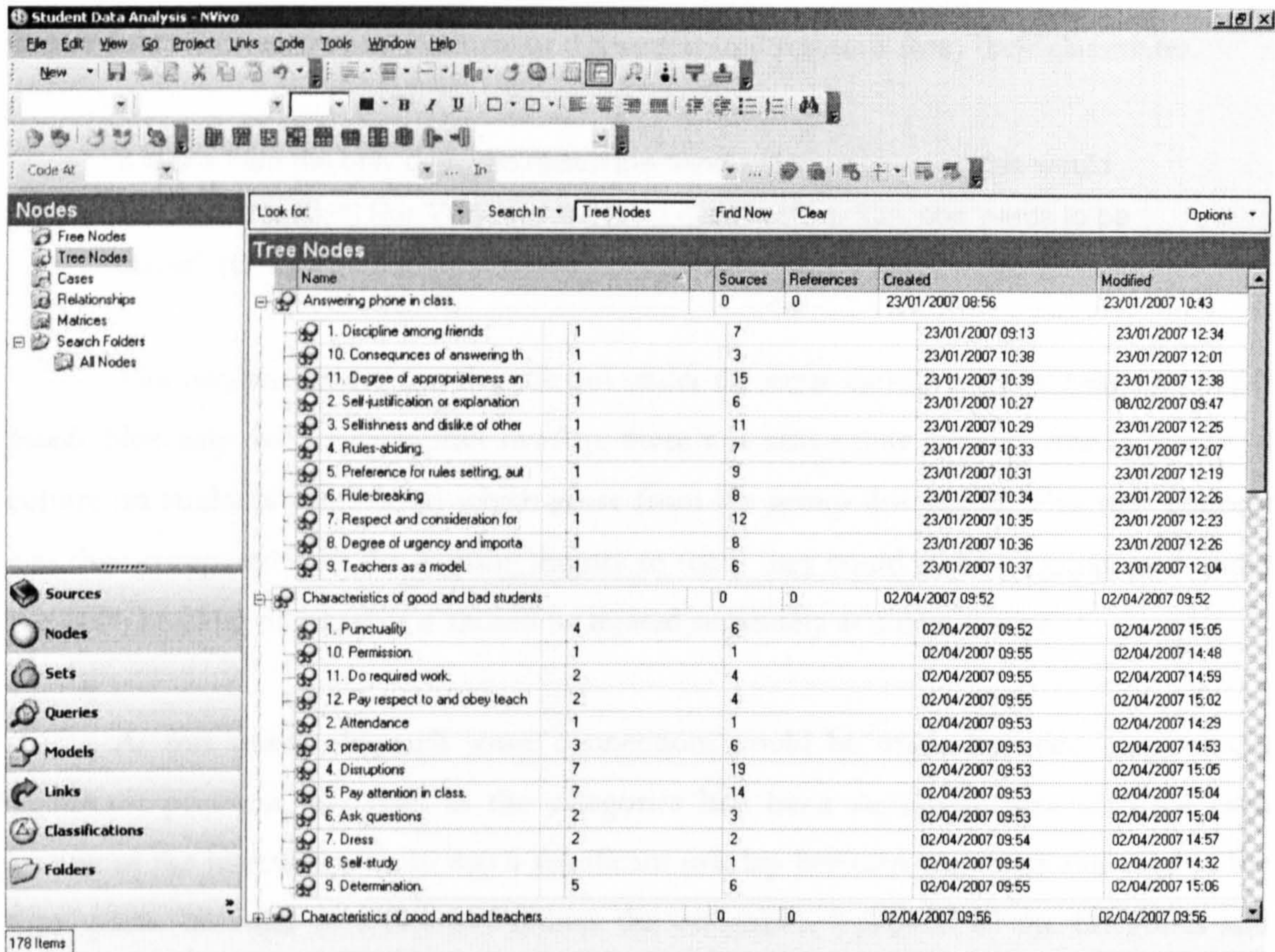
Figure 3.3: An Example of Categories and Details of Coded Texts



The texts have been translated from Thai into English to illustrate the data analysis process.

The coding of the third part of interview, which investigated views on class size, was carried out in a similar way to the previous two sections, using both manual and computer based methods. However, the interview scripts from this part could not be so easily separated into separate responses as the interviews were much more free-flowing and lacked clear markers showing where responses move from one question to another question. In light of this, I decided to code interview scripts as a whole (see Appendix B for a full list of codes). The categories were then rechecked using NVivo, as was done previously, with all categories placed under tree nodes (figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: List of Categories in NVivo



After I finished initial coding of the pair interview transcripts, I moved on to transcribe the group discussion. While all transcripts of pair interviews were analysed using NVivo, the group discussion was relatively short (at approximately 45 minutes) and so it was transcribed into a word-processed document and coded manually. In a manner similar to the coding of the pair interviews, I looked for keywords and themes which emerged from the data. Since students were asked to identify similarities to and differences from their own classroom and the English classroom shown in the video, they tended to refer to what they did or did not do in their own class when comparing themselves to the English students. As a result, some of their answers were similar to those in the pair interviews and could be put into existing pair interview categories. For example, some students mentioned in the pair interview that they did not participate in class because of pressure from their classmates.

If I volunteer to do activities in class (instead of waiting to be called) my friends might have the wrong idea that I want to show off. (F, 1)

Similarly, in the group discussion, while students said that English students participated in class to a much greater degree because they were confident, Thai students were reluctant to participate because of the anticipated reaction from their classmates.

It is like I am the only one who raised the hand...then people in class would look at me and act like 'Why is she asking question?' or 'Oh, she wants to be clever'. (G, 2)

The two statements can thus be put under the same category, *fear of being ostracised by friends*. Not only did the categories overlap, there was also a new concept (the influence of culture on students' behaviour) which arose from the group discussion. This new concept was then compared with the existing themes to see if they could all be encompassed under the same heading or whether it should be treated separately as a new theme.

At this point, although some connections could be made between categories, a significant problem was that, as the categories had been separately generated for each section of the interviews, there was a significant overlap between the categories used in the three parts. In order to refine and reduce the categories, I printed all the categories and their details. This allowed me to compare them with each other and to search for the 'main theme'. For example, under the topic of *answering phone in class* (seen in Figure 3.4), categories 4 (Rule-abiding), 5 (Preference for rules setting), and 6 (Rule-breaking) could be seen as sharing the same theme 'rules' and so, 'rules' could be the possible core category. I then looked at more data to see if this core category recurred elsewhere and if it could be related to other categories. During this process, any categories found to overlap or to be repetitive were grouped together and any categories found to be irrelevant to the research were omitted. The name of the core category was also only provisional until a better label could be formulated. The same process was carried with other categories in order to develop more core categories. According to Strauss (1987: 35) 'after several workable coded categories develop, the analyst attempts to theoretically saturate as much as possible those which seem to have explanatory power. Thus, relations among categories become more apparent and conceptually dense.' After comparing and referring all interview scripts back and forth, the first final set of core categories was developed and finalised.

However, as has been described, the initial coding of the categories was undertaken separately for each part of the interview, giving rise to the possible, or perhaps likely, problem of losing or obscuring the narrative flow of interviewees' statements and hiding the context of the responses. In order to minimise the loss of data, full interview scripts were printed out. I then referred each core category to the interview scripts to see if the core category still had descriptive power when being analysed in its full context. At the same time, I was aware of the possibility of new categories emerging from the interview scripts as I was analysing the data on my own. I therefore translated some samples of my data into English and consulted with my supervisors about my approach to data analysis and coding categories. The core categories were re-analysed several times until the process of saturating categories was completed. The analysis of these categories is presented in the following chapter.

4 : RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the four weeks of classroom observation, the chapter begins by describing the classrooms in which the research participants studied. Descriptions of the classroom environment, teaching styles, teacher-student and student-student interaction and patterns of behaviour give an exhaustive picture of classrooms dynamics which serves as the basis for the initial questions in the student interviews. Following this is an exploration of the factors that influence students' behaviour, based on an analysis of the students' interviews.

If learning is assumed to be social in nature, interactions and exchanges between teachers and students can promote a classroom climate that can in turn have an effect on student motivation. Students' socialisation can contribute to their adoption and internalisation of a set of interrelated cultural values and beliefs that influence their behaviour and motivation in class. In order to investigate students' shared cultural knowledge, it is essential to provide accurate descriptions of the classroom where the socialisation has taken place. The following themes emerged chronologically over the four weeks of observation. As was mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the period of classroom observation, students were aware of my presence and as a consequence were quite self-conscious and restrained, to the extent that it was quite difficult to detect any obvious patterns of behaviour, other than mundane acts such as the forms of greetings used with the teacher or the ways students asked permission in class. As a result, I begin by describing the physical appearances of the classroom, including the classroom seating and the teaching style.

4.1 THE CLASSROOM

4.1.1 Classroom Seating

For all eight modules, students studied together in every class except for *Listening and Speaking III*, where the teacher divided the class into four groups of ten students with a single 45-minute slot for each group. In most classes, teachers stood in front of the class

facing the students, who sat in several parallel rows of desks. The students all faced the teacher and could see the blackboard, overhead projector and screen. Although the students' desks did not touch each other, they tended to sit next to one another making it difficult for teachers to walk from one side of the classroom to the other – to monitor students' work – without making the students move their desks. This seating arrangement was also not the best when students were given group work or projects to work on. It was observed that students in the front or middle rows tended to interact more frequently with the teachers than did those in the back or corners of the room; these students were more likely to be engaged in non-academic activities and tended to be more disruptive. It can be said that the further students are from the teacher, the less participative they become. Although the seats in most classrooms were not fixed, students tended to have their own territory within the classroom. There was a group of students who always sat in the front row and also students who seemed to sit permanently in the back row. It appeared that, if given a preference, students would always sit together in their own group. Also, if students arrived at the class early, they were more likely to choose to sit at the back than at the front.

4.1.2 Teaching Style

The teaching style was predominantly teacher-centred, based on the giving of lectures. In all classes taught by Thai teachers, students have textbooks on which most teaching was based. The main purpose of the teaching was to cover the contents in the textbook as thoroughly as possible so that students were ready for their examination. Most of the time students sat in the class listening to lectures, doing exercises in the textbook and answering teachers' questions, which were derived mostly from the textbook. The class atmosphere was formal and the interaction between teachers and students was predominantly one way. The classes with non-Thai teachers (with the exception of *Listening and Speaking III*) were not greatly different in terms of seating. However, these classes offered more variety in terms of teaching methods and styles. In non-Thai teachers' classes, students were asked to do more activities, for example, role playing in a literature class or writing a card to friends in a writing class. When left to do these activities on their own, as in group work or individual work, students seemed to be engaged and interested in completing the activities at their own pace. Also, it was noticeable that non-Thai teachers, particularly in *Listening and Speaking III* and *Prose Writing*, tended to nominate students individually more than Thai teachers, who tended to ask questions to the whole class.

A striking similarity between classes with both Thai and non-Thai teachers was the students' extreme unwillingness to engage in any meaningful class discussion. Although both Thai and non-Thai teachers tried to ask referential questions and initiate discussions which required students to contribute their ideas, students seemed to prefer to answer questions based on their textbook to any questions that required them to give their opinions. This also included an unwillingness on the part of students to question any points which they did not understand and an almost total absence of challenges to the teacher; if a student did not agree with a statement made by a teacher, it seems inconceivable that the teacher would be challenged. Instead of asking teachers, students had a marked tendency to turn to their friends for help. If the teacher nominated any individual student to answer the question, the student would often first check the answer with his/her friends before answering the teacher. Sometimes friends would whisper the answer to the student without being asked. Furthermore, if the teacher asked for volunteers to perform in the classroom, no one was willing to do so. Not a single hand was raised to volunteer questions or answers during the first week of observation. The classroom environment described here seemed to coincide with literature and research about the characteristics of Thai classrooms.

While the classroom management and teaching style were quite static and easily observed, the patterns of students' behaviours turned out to be more complex. As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of classroom observation students seemed to be self-conscious and reserved and hence there was little to note during the first few days. However, as time passed, students seemed to drop their guard and their real behaviour became more apparent. The following observations were based on students' behaviour in class and their interaction with teachers and friends.

4.1.3 Teacher–Student Interaction

The relationship between teachers and students clearly affects how they interact in the classroom. Although most students seemed very confident when they were talking among themselves, their behaviour changed dramatically as soon as the class began, with most students very quickly becoming quiet, leaving the teacher to do a lot of talking in class. Most students spoke only when spoken to and there was hardly any input from the students in class. During the period of observation, it seemed that students were quieter in the class with native speakers of English than with Thai teachers. This is easily understood

given the language barrier between the two. However, when in non-Thai teachers' classes, students' behaviour seemed to be less disciplined and so tended to break the rules of good classroom conduct more often. For example, students talked on their phones in the class or walked in and out of the classroom more often than they did when being taught by Thai teachers; this behaviour was identified by students as inappropriate in the pair interviews so we can be sure that, from the students' perspective, this constituted class disruption. This may be due to students believing that non-Thai teachers are less authoritarian and more flexible than Thai teachers. However, it should also be noted here that the teacher's personality seems to be far more important than their mother tongue in explaining students' attention and participation. If the teacher adopted an authoritarian role, students tended to be more disciplined in class (e.g. the students arrived on time, brought their books etc.) but they were also less participative and would only participate when they were asked to or were nominated. Conversely, teachers who joked around with students tended to be more popular and students cooperated in their classes more fully.

4.1.4 Peer Interaction

Not only does the relationship with teachers have an influence on student's behaviour, the importance of friendship also manifests itself in students' behaviour. Students often clumped together into different groups and then undertook all or almost all activities together only with other members of their group. It was common during the four week observation to see as many as ten students arrive at the class together and, once the class had started, for two or more students ask for the teacher's permission to go to the toilet together. Students also tended to wait for one another before and after class, waiting to come to the class together and then leaving the class together. For example, if one student was questioned by the teacher at the end of the class, the rest of his or her group would invariably wait around patiently. In every examination that was observed, students who had finished the exam early waited outside the classroom for their friends. When the teachers assigned group work, students would ask if they could choose people in the group themselves. Also, students seemed to ask more questions when they were sitting in a group. While the act of engaging in activities together can – to a certain extent – boost students' learning in the class, it also has a negative influence. It can be assumed from their behaviour that some students are likely to misbehave as long as they have accomplices. For example, students are likely to turn up to class late together or to sneak out of class

together. These kinds of behaviour are more fully described below, under the section on class disruption.

4.1.5 Group Work

During the course of the classroom observation, it was clear that apart from giving students individual homework, the teachers (both Thai and non-Thai) also required students to do group work in their own time. This was predominantly in the form of writing a report and presenting it in class. Teachers who asked students to do group work taught the modules in *Basic Chinese I*, *Introduction to Linguistics* and *Cultural Background of English Speaking Countries*. Unlike group activities in class, where teacher supervision was still significant, this extra group work allowed students to have almost total control of their work. The format of the group work was similar in the classes taught by both Thais and non-Thais. To begin with, the teacher gave students objectives, instructions and details of the assignment and allowed students to ask clarifying questions. Students were then given a period of time (outside class) to finish the task. It is very noticeable that as soon as the teachers assigned group work, students would ask about the marks involved in the assignment (and how these would relate to their final grade) and also if they could choose the members of their group. In fact, all teachers allowed students to choose group members themselves. The teachers also told students that they were welcome to ask teachers questions after class. Unfortunately, as I did not join the students when they did their group work, I do not know how each group carried out their project, whether they sought advice from their teachers after class, whether they had any problems with the work, and so on.

Although, at this stage I had yet to interview the students so I was ignorant of how they worked as a group, their class performance revealed something interesting. In all three classes, there was an almost identical pattern of class presentation. At the beginning of the presentation, all members of the group (in all cases around seven to eight students) would walk to the front of the class together. Each student carried a piece of paper which was presumably a note or summary of his or her part of the presentation. The first student would then introduce the members of the group and start the presentation. Students might have an OHP worksheet or photo boards as supplementary aids for their presentation. It was not entirely clear if students really understood what they were presenting because they

simply took turns to read aloud from their notes, which were obviously copied from an original paper. Whether it was a short (5-10 minutes) or long (20-30 minute) presentation, everyone in the group had to read aloud in front of the class and present a portion of the paper. At the end of each presentation, students would ask their teachers and classmates if they had any questions. Almost every time, the class would be very quiet and the teacher would be the only person to ask questions. This pattern of behaviour was repeated in all three classes.

4.1.6 Class Disruption

For ease of analysis, classroom disruption is here treated separately from teacher-student interaction. Initially, students' behaviour appeared to conform to the national characteristics, as described by Hofstede and Komin. However, as time went by, I came to realise that there was another aspect to students' behaviour which could not be easily explained by these prescribed Thai characteristics. Contrary to my prior belief that Thai students are well-behaved in class, it emerged that behind the seemingly immaculate behaviour, students' behaviour is more disruptive than previously thought. While the class was in progress, there were a lot of non-academic activities quietly going on. This included putting on make-up, texting messages on mobile phones, reading magazines, doing homework or quietly chatting. Without the teacher's intervention, these activities can continue throughout the lesson as the large size of the classroom makes it difficult for teachers to monitor students. Although these on-going activities were happening during the lessons, they did not interfere with the teaching.

However, there were other kinds of activities that interfered with the class and happened often enough that they could not be ignored. Such activities included arriving late for class, answering phones in class, walking out of the class and cheating. Students' earliest class started at 9am but few students came on time and in fact most were at least 15 minutes late. This also occurred in afternoon classes. During the period of observation, it was common for teachers and those who came on time to wait for late comers before starting the lesson. On some occasions the teacher had to start the class with half the class missing and then stop the class so that the late comers could settle in. This not only delayed the class but it also disrupted the lesson, as the late comers tended to come in as a group. In fact, the problem with punctuality was such a big issue that some teachers set a deadline

for students. If students arrived later than the deadline, points were deducted from students' final mark or students were barred from the class. During the observation, the students' adviser (a member of staff who acts as personal tutor to the entire group) was asked by a non-Thai teacher to discipline students on account of their punctuality. This helped to ease the problem in some classes. However, one could not help but wonder whether, without the rule or teacher enforcement, students could manage to come on time on their own.

In addition to problems with lateness, a great many students did not seem to think that having their mobile phone on while the class was in progress constituted interfering with the lesson. This happened in most classes that were observed. Each time the phone rang, the teacher and students would look around to see whose phone it was. While some students would try to find the phone as quickly as possible and then to turn it off, other students would pick up the phone and walk out of the class to talk. Although the owner of the phone might be frowned upon by teachers and friends, the class seemed to tolerate this behaviour to the extent that no verbal criticism was directed by teachers to those responsible for this behaviour. This might suggest that culture around mobile use is evolving and still being negotiated.

Another type of behaviour that commonly occurred was students leaving while the class was still in progress. This normally began when a few students, usually at the back of the class, quietly walked out of class, possibly to go to the toilets. Then, more students followed. The number of students walking out varied from a few students to more than ten. The length of time that students left for ranged from relatively short (5-10 minutes) to over half an hour and sometimes students did not return to class at all. As with the problem with the use of mobile phones, there was no verbal warning or criticism directed to students who walked out of class.

Since I had a chance to observe both oral and written examinations, I was able to discover that cheating was widespread. There are many ways to cheat, including showing the exam papers to friends or whispering answers to one another. During an oral examination (in which the teacher called students out one by one to enable the listening and speaking test to be conducted outside the classroom and thus out of earshot of the other students) those who finished the exam before others would be asked what exam questions were asked. Most students appeared to be willing to share this information with

their friends, although it should be noted that it was difficult to be sure whether they were genuinely happy to share the information or whether they simply did not wish to appear selfish. Another type of behaviour relating to cheating was the sharing of worksheets or books in the classroom. While some students always had their notebooks, worksheet and books ready for the class, other students did not bring anything to the class and therefore it was quite common to see students sharing these materials in class. This habit of sharing also manifested itself during the examination, where students were observed sharing dictionaries or worksheets together. It is also noteworthy that students who failed to come to the exam were permitted to take it later. I observed a few students making arrangements with the teacher for a postponed examination.

Some of the behaviour described above appears directly to contradict the commonly held Thai belief in *kreng jai* (see Appendix D at end for a description of Thai terms), which exhorts individuals not to impose on others if doing so will make the others feel uncomfortable. Students who arrived late or who answered their phones in class did not, perhaps, realise that they disturbed the classroom. Possibly it could equally be said that students who cheated did not realize that they were taking advantage of their friends. From observations I made, some students appeared to have few qualms about imposing on others as long as it was beneficial for them. It is also uncertain whether, following the concept of *bunghun*, students felt gratitude to their teachers for giving them knowledge as some students were keener on walking out of class than paying attention to the lesson.

4.2 STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Over the period of classroom observation, I continuously compiled and sorted through my observational notes, diaries and visual materials in order to identify patterns of behaviour and interaction between teachers and students. These patterns of behaviour subsequently formed the basis of interview questions. The interview was divided into three parts, each with a separate purpose. I have decided to present the research findings in accordance with the topics and categories which emerged from the data. It should be noted that the data presented here represent only a small fraction of the total data recorded and have been selected to highlight the patterns, categories and themes relevant to the scope of this

research. Because of the large amount of information, a full list of topics and categories is contained in Appendix B. Also, the quotations from students' interviews presented in this chapter have been translated from Thai to English.

The following topics were derived from the first part of the interview, which consisted of five fixed questions: (1) students' reasons for choosing English as their major; (2) their expectations of their four-year education at the University; (3) the differences between studying at high school and at university; (4) their views on the characteristics of good/bad students, and (5) the characteristics of good/bad teachers. These questions aimed to identify the factors that influenced students' decisions to enrol for the English programme, to see whether the move to the University has any impact on their academic and social life and to see whether students behaved in a manner which was in accordance with their expectations and beliefs about the behaviour of good students.

4.2.1 Reasons for and Expectations of Learning English

More than half of the students said that they chose English because they liked English or were interested in the subject. However, their preference for English, when probed, was not only the result of an intrinsic interest in English (that is to engage in learning English for the satisfaction of fulfilling one's curiosity or understanding of something new as the students claimed):

I think studying English is challenging as it is not our language. There is a lot to learn. (F, 1) (See page 43 for an explanation of the referencing system.)

In fact, students' past learning experience, the influence of their families and friends and their potential future careers were significant factors in contributing to students' decisions to learn English at the tertiary level. Of all fourteen participants, half of the students studied English as their major in high school; the other half studied other majors including science, mathematics, computer science and industrial technology. Students, such as H and K, who studied English reported that they chose English as their major in high school not only because they liked the subject but also because they got better grades in English than in other subjects. They all said that their poor performance in non-English subjects had affected their decision to choose English:

I like English mainly because my grades in English subjects were better than other subjects. I also think that English is important for my future career. If I can speak English, I can find the job easily. (K, 1)

When I was in junior high-school, I always got good grades in English. So, I thought I should continue with this major. I also thought that English will be useful in the future. (H, 1)

Students D and J, whose majors in high school were not English said that they did not choose English as their school major mainly because it was for students with poor academic performance and so the quality of teaching and learning would be lower than in other majors. According to them, majors in high school were graded according to students' academic performance. Science was perceived to be for academically very successful students, followed by Applied Science for moderately successful students, and then languages (studying English and other foreign language is compulsory) for the least academically successful students. These views were widely accepted and were influential on students' choice of study:

In my opinion, [being a] language major is for stupid students, for students who do not have any other choice. (D, 1)

I studied in the science program because the language programme in my school is of poor quality when compared to the science program. (J, 1)

It can be seen from the statements above that Student D did not want to be seen as an academic failure in high school so she chose Applied Science while Student J opted for other majors because of her concern over the quality of teaching and learning in the language programme. This past learning experience could also lead to students' discovering their learning abilities and preferences. Two other non-English major students (B and E) reported that while studying in high school, they discovered that they did not like what they were studying at all and they found that they instead enjoyed learning English. Hence, when they left high school, they decided to study English at university:

I did not like my major [Science] at all. I put up with it for three years....I got a borderline pass in Physics and Chemistry. (B, 1)

The more I studied [Computer Science], the more I realised I hated it. I was struggling with it for three years. (E, 1)

Another important factor that influenced students' decisions to study English in the University is the influence of families and peers. Seven students reported that they talked and listened to the members of their family, as well as to friends, before they made their decision on their choice of study. Family influence is usually in the form of following parents' or more senior relatives' suggestions. According to G and J, family suggestions were based on what their relatives studied and how successful or unsuccessful they were. The distance of the University from the parental home was also another family-related influence:

My sister wanted me to study English because she could not speak English and found it difficult to progress at work when she moved to Bangkok. (G, 1)

I had got a place to study Computer Science in Bangkok but my dad wanted me to be near home. So, I decided to study here instead. (J, 1)

Apart from parents or relatives, friends played an important role in affecting students' choices. Student C said that the main reason that she chose English was because she wanted to be with her friends from high school even though she did not like English and now regretted her decision. Student M said that he was persuaded by a high school friend to join the English programme together but that after the first year his friend left the University:

I just followed my friends from high school. Actually, I wanted to study Social Studies. Now, I feel like I made a wrong decision. (C, 1)

My friend encouraged me to study English. I was then struggling with my study [Industrial Technology]. He kept telling me how good it would be to study English. (M, 1)

Future job prospects were another factor that was evident in almost all students' answers as ten students said that English is necessary as a qualification to guarantee their employment after graduation. Students' belief in the importance of English came from a regard for the status of English as an international language, the rising numbers of foreign tourists in Thailand and the invasion of their everyday life by English. (Throughout

Thailand English is widely used in advertising and the media as well as in a large and ever-growing number of loan words). Students seemed to have a clear idea of what kind of job they would like to get after they finished their degree. Their preferred jobs were either related to tourism, with jobs such as tour guide (D, K, M, and N), hotel personnel (J), and flight attendant (D, I, K, and M) mentioned a lot, or to education, with English teacher (B, and L) being cited as a possible job on a number of occasions. Since students viewed having a good command of English as essential to getting these jobs, they anticipated that being in the English programme would prepare them for such a job. For example, students D and M compared the advantages of knowing English with other fields of study and concluded that even with the little English they had at that time, their position was still better than if they were totally monolingual:

At least, having a degree in English is better than having a degree in Thai [...] If we get a job, it is better to be able to speak English as an addition to Thai.

(D, 1)

I thought that if I get an English degree, I can get a better job compared to the kind of job that I am likely to get with a degree in Mechanics. I don't want to be stuck in a factory for all my life. (M, 1)

Students' responses revealed that their interest in English as a means to achieve their future career goals was stronger than their desire to learn English to experience pleasure or satisfaction. They also revealed that most students have favourable beliefs about their English ability as opposed to their ability in other subjects such as Science or Mathematics. Students seemed to believe that when they made a decision to study English they would be able successfully to complete their four years of study. This was true even for students who admitted that they did not like English. Because getting a job is one of the students' reasons for studying English, their main expectation of their studies was to be able to use English correctly and so be assured of a satisfactory job. When students said that they wanted to use English correctly, they meant the ability to speak English fluently and to understand when talked to by foreigners; students linked listening and speaking skills to the likelihood of getting their desired jobs. The written skills, which are the focus of the Thai curriculum, were not viewed as being so important and only a few students mentioned the importance of learning to read and to understand English literature or English culture in depth. None of them mentioned any desire or wish to visit or to live in an English speaking country or to have friends from other countries.

4.2.2 Transition to University

Because students' reasons for enrolling for the four year English programme overlapped with their expectations about life at the University, I was interested in the extent to which, after over a year at the University, these expectations had been met and whether the move to the University had had any effect on their personal and social life. I began by asking the students to compare and contrast life in the University and in high school. Of all fourteen students, only student E thought that there was no difference between high-school and university. Student C, D, F, K, and L reported that life at high school involved many rules and fixed timetables and that most of their activities took place within the school gates and under the close supervision of teachers. This close supervision from teachers limited students' freedom to engage in activities other than studying. However, when students moved to university, they found themselves with a lot of more free time as well as a lot more freedom. They did not have classes every day and they did not often have to get up early to come to school. If they did not come to class, they did not have to worry that the school would send a letter to their parents and inquire about their absence. At the University, they also had fewer subjects to study but more extra activities and a wider social circle. This freedom was experienced as a double-edged sword, as, while ten students agreed that they became more responsible and showed more initiative in their study, some students, such as G and K, raised concerns that some of their friends could easily become lazy if they were not careful:

We were late because there was no rule to force us. If you were in high school, the teacher would remind or warn you about the school's rule. No one did it here [at the University]. We have a lot more freedom. (G, 1)

I thought it depends on each person. If you want to study, you will do without anyone nagging you to do. You will be active in your study. But if you are lazy, you move to university where there is more freedom, you don't have to come to class everyday, you don't have to check attendance all the time. It is more relaxing. You can easily become lazy (K, 1)

Another important difference at university was the teaching styles which students encounter. Students G, H, J, K and L reported that in high school there were textbooks for every subject and that the scope of what they studied was guided by the national

curriculum. At the university level, there were a greater variety of teaching materials and styles, as not every lesson was based on a textbook and students often had to follow the teacher's lecture without a book, handouts or other guidance. The lectures and worksheets tended to be open-ended, leaving students to engage in more self-directed study, which often took the form of a presentation and a written report. Also university teachers tended to treat students more as adults, meaning that there was less interference in students' life, unlike in high school where teachers would remind students to do homework, finish assignments on time, monitor their behaviour, or tell them what would be covered in examinations. In contrast, university teachers expected students to be more independent and to take more control of their own learning. As a result, ten students said they became more responsible for their own study as they could not wait for the teacher to tell them what to do or to learn as student F and H said below:

It was better in high school because the teachers would remind us about the deadline for work or force us to finish a report so that we can get the marks. But here the teachers do not follow your work for you. They give you freedom as well as responsibility. It was entirely up to you if you would like to do homework or not. In hindsight, it made you become more responsible for your work. (F, 1)

In high school, the teacher spoon fed us knowledge. We were just the recipient. Here, the lessons are getting more and more difficult...the teacher will not give you everything. You have to find out for yourself. In high school, if you did not know the answer, the teacher would eventually tell you anyway. At the University, if you do not make any effort to study for yourself, you will be in trouble. (H, 1)

Prior to coming to the University, students learnt English mainly from their textbooks, most of which were devoted exclusively to grammar and reading practice, leaving little class time to be spent on the development of listening and speaking skills. Eight students also reported that hitherto they had never studied with non-Thai teachers and even for those who had, this was only a short period of time as most of the native speaking English teachers worked only part-time. As a consequence, they felt considerable excitement as well as shock when, for the first time, they had to study with an English, American or Australian teacher. However, some students (C, E, I, and M) said that it took time for them to understand what the non-Thai teachers said and that they were still struggling to communicate with them. Although most students felt that they had gradually

improved through their course of study, their English ability had still not matched their learning goals and expectations. The areas that they found improving were listening and speaking, as evidenced by the response that all the respondents had a greater understanding of native speaking English teachers than when they first started at the University and were more confident in speaking English with these teachers:

When I was in high school, when the foreign teachers or students came to school, I was so afraid to talk to them but after studying here, I have studied with foreign teachers for every semester. I have become familiar with them and I'm more confident talking. (L, 1)

Here (at the University), we have more chances to talk to foreign teachers, both in and outside of classes. When you understand what the teacher has said to you, you become more confident to talk to them. (K, 1)

However, students were well aware that their level of English was still far from what they hoped to achieve. They felt that the more they learnt, the more difficult each subject became. They found that their subject areas had broadened widely, from merely remembering different tenses to now studying the IPA or discussing theories of language acquisition. This sudden jump in the level of difficulty affected students' determination in both positive and negative ways. While some students (A, B, E, and F) vowed to study harder to reach their goals, others (C, D, I and J) reported that they have lowered their expectation from getting a good job to merely passing the finals.

After the first three questions, I was now better informed about students' backgrounds, expectations and experiences of university life. This information was useful as it showed an instance of students bringing with them their own generalised belief about themselves which developed out of past learning and social experience. Through students' accounts of their transition to the University, I learnt that students' perceptions about themselves and their expectations changed as they participated in different social settings. These changes potentially constituted an influence on changes to the small culture of the classroom. However, I still did not appreciate fully the extent to which their social interaction affected their behaviour in class and lead to the making of small classroom culture. The next two questions concerned students' perceptions of the characteristics of good and bad students and teachers. The two questions aimed to compare and contrast what students believed good students should do and whether they – the students being

questioned – behaved according to these beliefs. With reference to the characteristics of the teachers, I wanted to investigate what kinds of qualifications or personalities students rated as being important in idealised teachers.

4.2.3 Perceptions of Good/Bad Students

The students seemed to have clear ideas about what constituted good and bad behaviour. According to eleven respondents, good students should ‘pay attention’ in class. This means that good students should listen carefully and attentively to what the teacher says, pay attention to what is taught, and write down what the teacher says in his/her book. Other characteristics mentioned during the interview included the following: be diligent, do homework, read before classes and review after classes, discuss the lessons with friends in their free time, ask questions if in doubt, come to class on time, bring textbooks and other learning materials to class, dress properly and pay respect to rules and to teachers:

Be on time, do not walk out of the class, pay attention, and do not answer your phone in class. (B, 1)

Read before class or ask the teacher what he or she is going to teach so that we could prepare in advance so we can understand the lesson better in class and review the lesson later. (G, 1)

While the passive roles of students, such as listening attentively or writing down what the teacher said, were highlighted in the students’ responses, the characteristics of students’ active roles, such as showing initiative in their own learning, asserting their opinions and sharing their ideas with the class, were hardly mentioned. Only two students (K and N) mentioned that good students should ask questions when they don’t understand the lesson.

In terms of inappropriate class behaviour, students based their answers not only on their own behaviour but also on what they saw other students do in the classroom. As a result, students’ accounts seemed to mirror what happened in their class as students reported that good students should not skip classes, violate the rules, walk in and out of class while the teacher is still teaching, answer the phone in class, chat with other students

in class, copy others' homework or assignments, eat food in class, put on makeup or cut nails in class, or come to class late:

Putting-on make up in class, walking out of class. These are very rude. I saw some of my friends walking around in class. They did not respect the teacher at all. (F, 1)

Chatting in class, putting on makeup or just walking out of class when they were bored. Some people disappeared to the toilet for ages and came back just to get the attendance mark. Some people turned on the phone in class and walked out to answer the phone. But I have to tell you I sometimes sneaked out too. (I, 1)

When asked to assess critically their classmates, student K and F thought that their class featured more characteristics of a bad classroom than a good classroom:

This class is a real mess. If you look only at the surface, you would think that the class is ok. Students seemed to pay attention. But in fact, they don't...they talked to one another; they picked up the phone [...] or slept in the class. The more the teacher refrained from complaining or telling them off, the more students continued with these behaviours. (K, 1)

In this room, out of 40 students, I think only a few students really want to study. The rest just turn up to see their friends or get the attendance points. Only a few people study before the class, most of them don't. So, when there is an exam, they always cheat or copy one another's work. (F, 1)

Students' responses to questions concerning the characteristics of good or bad students showed that they were fully aware of the disruptive behaviour in the class. Some students even admitted that they took part in these disruptive activities themselves.

4.2.4 Students' Perceptions of and Interactions with Teachers

When asked to discuss the positive and negative characteristics of teachers, students based their answer on behaviour, rather than on beliefs, morality, or other factors. Interviewee responses were restricted to quotations of what the teachers said to them and examples of what the teachers did in class. Most students viewed teachers as authority figures who have

responsibilities not only to provide knowledge to students, but also to manage the classroom. Students' accounts revealed that their interactions with teachers tended to be one-way and that these were initiated mainly by teachers. Their interactions were likely to be formal and limited to academic-related issues. Even though most students said that they respected their teachers, there were different reasons underlying this respect; students respected teachers because the teachers are older, teachers have more power, teachers give knowledge to them, teachers are kind and helpful, and so on. According to students, how they interacted with teachers was a consequence of their evaluation of two main factors: the teacher's teaching ability and the teacher's personal relationship with students. In order to understand teacher-students interaction in this class, it is necessary to contemplate students' attitudes toward these two factors.

With reference to the teacher's ability to teach, students expect the teachers to know what to teach and how to teach. Teachers should be knowledgeable, well-prepared and be ready to teach with full knowledge of the subject. Good teachers should give clear instructions and/or objectives of the study so that students understand or anticipate what they are going to learn. Good teachers should know the students' ability and give a lesson that is suitable for the students' level. During class, teachers should involve students in the lesson, use several teaching techniques to make the class enjoyable and interesting, give extra and interesting information, and make sure that students understand and follow the lesson well. Students should be allowed to share their ideas in class. Students also feel that it is the teacher's job to make students understand the lesson as well as to see when students have learning problems and try to help students overcome these:

I like Teacher (name deleted) because he makes sure that we all understand his lesson. If we don't understand, he tries to explain so that we all eventually understand the lesson. (B, 1)

I like to study with Teacher (name deleted) because of his teaching style. He would give us a worksheet to read in advance so that we could read and try to understand it before the lesson. When in class, he always asked us to share ideas with one another. I prefer to share ideas to just write from the blackboard. (E, 1)

When asked if their current teachers provided what they needed in class, students J, K, and L claimed that most teachers seemed to have high expectations of them without

understanding students' actual abilities. According to these students, the more the teachers expected them to reach the level expected by the teacher, the more the students became frustrated. Although they were aware that the teacher had good intentions, they felt under considerable pressure to perform:

Some teachers always made decisions for us, thinking that by this year, you should understand what I have taught you. The fact is no student is the same, we have different levels of abilities. There are smart and not so smart students in the class. It is not right to expect every student to understand in the same way. (J, 1)

Students A, B, H, M, and N also reported that some teachers did not give clear objectives or explain the purposes of the lesson and could not link what they taught in class to real-life use of English outside class and as a result students questioned why they had to study certain subjects. Although some students said that they would like to understand the lesson more, they insisted that it was the teacher's job to make sure that students understood the lesson and to know in what areas of study students were having problems:

A good example [of a good teacher] was last week. We were studying how to write the news headlines and we had to use passive sentences to write the headline. Teacher (name deleted) could see that we were struggling with it so she decided to explain everything all over again. We did not have to go and tell her that we did not understand. (K, 1)

With respect to teaching style, most students commented that their classes were predominantly content-based and teacher-centred but that they would like the teachers to use more variety in their teaching methods and encourage students to involve more in class. However, it is still unclear what they meant by 'being involved' as during the observation when given a chance to share more responsibility and ideas in class, they seemed reluctant to participate. In light of the discussion of volunteering or asking questions in class (see below, page 84 **Error! Bookmark not defined.**) this is perhaps understandable. Given that showing enthusiasm in class might elicit negative reactions from friends, one would think that students might opt to seek advice or suggestions from teachers outside class. However, more than half of the students reported that unless they had a query about the teacher's instructions for doing homework or group work, they rarely attempted to see teachers after class. Students C and D said that after one and a half years,

they had never sought the teacher's advice after class. Students A and B thought that the teacher's responsibility ended when the class finished and if students would like to know more or if they did not understand the lesson, they should either discuss this with the teacher immediately or search for information themselves. Students A and B said that they felt that they were imposing on the teacher if they asked the teacher to explain or teach them again outside the class. They were also afraid that the teachers might accuse them of not paying enough attention in class. Most students said that they would turn to their friends first if they had any questions about the lesson and sometimes they even asked their friends to ask the teachers on their behalf. Ultimately, whether students were going to approach teachers depended very much on the teacher's personality. Students were likely to approach teachers more if they felt positively about the teacher's personality:

I once prepared the question to ask Teacher (name deleted). When I asked him, he told me to ask in correct sentence and then asked me back. It was me who came to ask the question because I did not understand. But when he asked me back, I did not want to ask him any longer. I tend to go to the library.
(B, 1)

I am afraid to ask questions because I might be told off by the teachers for not paying attention to what the teacher just said. (I, 1)

A good teacher should also have a positive social relationship with students and this can be achieved if the teacher has the following characteristics. Good teachers should communicate with students in class and not only focus on teaching. They should have a sense of humour, which means that they should be able to joke around with students and make students laugh. Good teachers should have a pleasant personality; they should be approachable, kind, nice, friendly, sympathetic, fair, and reasonable. Teachers who possessed these characteristics were likely to be popular and close to students as mentioned below:

I like to study with teachers who teach as if they enjoy themselves [...] smile with students, joke around with students. Not just concentrating on teaching.
(H, 1)

I like to study *The Truth about Life* with Teacher (name deleted) because he is friendly and approachable. He likes to share jokes with students. I also like the

way he teaches. He likes to link what he talks in class to outside world so we can see his points clearly. (M, 1)

This intimacy between teachers and students can have a considerable effect on student motivation. If the teacher has a pleasant personality, students felt relaxed and comfortable, which helped students to be more involved in the classroom. Students B, I, and N said that they pay attention to the lesson or behave well in class because they would like to please their teachers. However, this does not mean that being nice and kind can always give teachers an upper hand in running the class. Students A, F, and L said that their classmates sometimes took the teacher's kindness and good nature for granted and used this as a way to break class rules or misbehave in the class, as they knew that some teachers were too kind or too polite to tell them off or to punish them:

I don't think they select which class they are going to walk out of but I notice that if the teacher is kind, students are likely to walk out. (A, 1)

They [classmates] also behaved like this in other subjects, like in Economics class last year. They walked in and out, answered their phones in class. They knew that the teacher was very kind and friendly. (F, 1)

In contrast, while teachers who are serious, hot-tempered, unfriendly or strict are – unsurprisingly – unpopular among students, students seemed to be more reluctant to misbehave in these classes. Just as they labelled their friends according to their personality, students also labelled their teachers. Teachers were described variously as 'boring', 'kind', 'strict', or 'cruel'. Students expressed their fear of teachers who were 'serious', 'strict', 'unfriendly' and 'authoritative' and would be reserved and well-behaved in front of these teachers. Students reported that teachers' facial expressions really affected their motivation to learn. If teachers had a serious, solemn face, students were likely to feel anxious and nervous, which negatively affected their participation in class:

If the teachers look as if they do not welcome us in the class, for example walking into class, folding their arms and having a serious face...who would want to study with them? (C, 1)

Some teachers are emotionless. The thing is I want to enjoy my study but you see the face of the teachers and they look so lifeless. They looked like they were very moody. It put me off from approaching or asking them any questions.

Although I might have some questions to ask, I won't. I ask my friends instead.

(H, 1)

During the course of the research interviews, all the interviewees – unprompted – recalled problems with one teacher. Although students admitted that he/she was a good teacher in the sense that he/she took his/her teaching seriously, his/her personality caused a conflict with the class. Students said that the teacher constantly lost temper, made sarcastic comments, rarely gave students compliments or good feedback and that generally his/her personality made it impossible for students to tolerate him/her. The conflict went beyond a simple clash of personalities and was perceived to reflect an abuse of authority by the teacher as he/she was very controlling and made extensive use of his/her power, such as on one occasion ordering all students to resubmit their written reports. As a result, more than half of the class decided to approach their supervisor and ask for a change of teacher, saying that otherwise they would withdraw from this subject. After the supervisor was made aware of the conflict, she talked to the teacher on the students' behalf. Later, the teacher and the students sat together and talked through the problem and by doing so both parties resolved the situation. It is important to note that even though at the beginning, students were very upset with the teacher, they did not go and talk to the teacher face to face. Instead, they asked their supervisor, who was also the head of the department, to do so on their behalf. Students reported that the reason for this was that as students, they felt that they did not have any power to negotiate with the teacher. Knowing that their supervisor has a senior position to the teacher, they thought that she could act as a mediator for them.

The information gleaned from the first part of the interviews has supplied part of the students' stories about themselves – students carried with them their self-efficacy beliefs, their expectations about their life at university, and their perceptions of their roles as students and those of their teachers. However, I was still ignorant of how students interacted with each other or whether students' behaviour was influenced by Thai culture. At this juncture, observational data became very useful as they could be used to form interview questions to ask students why they behaved (or did not) in class, what caused them to behave in certain ways and what influenced their behaviour. The following section explores the results of the analysis of the second part of the interview. Questions asked of the students called on them to reflect on the following behaviour: (1) being late for classes, (2) answering phones in class, (3) walking out of class, (4) cheating and sharing learning

materials in an examination, (5) not participating in class, and (6) ways of structuring group work.

4.3 EXAMINATION OF CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

According to eight students (B, C, G, I, J, L, M, and N), change over time was an important factor in explaining change in behaviour. These students said that when they were first year students, they were better behaved and disciplined, as they were still at the stage of adjusting to a new environment. The novelty of new classes, new friends and new teachers not only excited them, but also confused them as they did not know what to do or how to behave as at this point students were still grappling with the novelty of the experience as N and L rightly said:

When we were in the first year, we were hardly late. We were very enthusiastic and willing to learn. (N, 1)

When we were in the first year, we did not know one another very well. We did not know what kind of people they (the other students) are. We were not familiar with one another. The solidarity of the group was not very strong. We did not have to wait for one another. When we became closer, we tended to rely on one another, waiting for one another...sometimes the teacher was already in the class but we were still talking. (I, 1)

Students believed that, to be safe, it was better for them to be on their best behaviour at the beginning of their university career. As a result, they behaved well and followed the rules in order to impress their new friends and teachers. However, once the novelty of this wore off, students reported a change in their behaviour. Factors such as growing independence, diminishing fear of punishment or the teachers, and stronger bonds between friends contributed to this.

Deviations from the students' idealised behaviour were caused by both internal and external factors. Internal factors included students' evaluation of their own ability and effort, their learning strategies, their mood, lack of consideration for others and a denial of

self-responsibility. Most students believed that their learning abilities ranged from moderately high to relatively low; this has a direct effect on their effort. Students (A, B, E, and F,) who thought that they were coping with the increasing difficulty of their study, said that they tried harder and exercised greater discipline over their study. These students reported that they never missed class and studied hard because they did not want to be left behind. However, students with a low sense of self-efficacy such as C and D felt that no matter how hard they tried, they would not understand their lessons or that they would fail anyway and so could not see the point of making an effort to behave well or to try hard to study. Consequently, some students seemed to lose faith in their own abilities and as a result disengaged from study activities more easily as C recalled her experience:

I don't understand his subject; I don't know what he was saying. I could not translate anything. So why bother listening? I did not understand anyway.

(C,1)

Seven students also reported problems with time management and self-study which in turn caused them difficulties with study. Student H's reason for cheating in the exam and student L's reason for presenting other people's work as his own were explained by students as being caused by either a lack of time or a lack of understanding as shown below:

I thought some subjects are getting more and more difficult like (name deleted) subject. Before, I could understand the lesson very well, but ,now, no matter how much I read, I still don't understand the meaning of this poem. When we have an exam, I have to check with my friends (in the exam) if my answer is right. I don't know if my friends are right, but if the answer is similar. At least, I feel safe. (H, 1)

If I have time, I might have changed the information using my own words because I want to get good grade. But I did not have time, so I just did what I could. (L, 1)

By their own admission, the factors mentioned so far were the responsibility of the students. However, a lack of consideration for others and the denial of self-responsibility offered a somewhat different perspective, where students seemed to shift responsibility for learning (or a lack of it) to the shoulders of others. While some students accepted that it was their responsibility as students to behave according to the class rules, others offered

the explanation that misbehaviour in class was caused by external factors such as others' ignorance of rules (A, B, C, D, E, F, I, K, and N), disrespect and disobedience towards teachers (A, B, C, D, I, L, and N), teachers' negligence in disciplining students (D, F, G, and L) , a lack of rule enforcement (D, G, I, J, L, and N), the flexibility of rules and regulations (G, H, K, L, and M) , a lack of incentives (B, C, D, K, and N) and the occurrence of opportunities to misbehave (C, D, F, G, H, and N). These factors highlighted both students' tendency to rely on their friends' behaviour in order to set the benchmark for their own behaviour and their tendency to rely on the teacher's power to solve class problems. With reference to the former, some students considered friends who walked out of the class or arrived late as irresponsible and inconsiderate. These poorly behaved students were irresponsible for violating the class rules and did not consider the feelings of their teachers and friends:

I have never complained to any of them (misbehaving students). I was quite sensitive about the phone ringing. I thought some people just don't have any manners. (F, 1)

Students who answered the phone in class did not respect the teacher. (N, 1)

While student N and F expressed disapproval of their friends' behaviour, it was unlikely that they would voice these concerns out loud, either to the teacher or to their friends, thinking that it was not their responsibility to discipline their friends and fearing that it might affect the friendship if they criticise their friends directly. Student C's and F's statements suggest that it is an unspoken rule that each group will not cross the line by directly criticising people from different groups:

I have never done that (telling classmates off for answering the phone in class). It is up to members of each group to tell their friends off or to warn one another. (C, 1)

If the phone of my friend is ringing, I might tell her (her friend in the group) to turn it off. But if it belongs to the classmates that I am not close with, I would not do it. There used to be case in this class when some people told other off, then there was a conflict between the groups. (F, 1)

Instead some students relied on the teacher being an authority figure to bring discipline to class. Apart from enforcing them, the teachers should make sure that rules and

regulations were exercised regularly, as a lack of consistency in enforcing the rules could result in students' total ignorance or abandonment of them. Students reported that if their friends could, with impunity, engage in disruptive behaviour, there was a high chance that they might follow the same route. For example, although there was a ban on the use of mobile phones in class, no one seemed to enforce it seriously so students saw this as an opportunity to continue using them in class:

When we were in the first year, I think we were aware that the mobile should be switched off in class. But as the time passed, no one said anything and we could see that others also answer the phone in class, so why not? If they can turn the phone on, why do we have to turn it off. (D, 1)

The extreme measure should be used like [...] any students who are late will not be allowed in class. But this rule has to be enforced regularly otherwise people will be late again. (G, 1)

Whether deliberately or not students sometimes twisted the rules to their benefit, for example with the problems of cheating and punctuality. Three students (A, F, and J) and I initially had difficulty agreeing on a definition of cheating. For me, providing and receiving information in an exam is cheating. However, these students held a different view; for them, only receiving information constituted cheating. Holding this view of cheating, students who acted only to provide their friends with answers in the exam did not believe that they committed an act of cheating or that they were wrong for doing so. In the case of punctuality, most teachers allowed students to arrive for class at least 15 minutes after the actual start of the class. Student G, I and K thought that when they arrived at the class within this 15 minute window they were therefore not late:

The teacher said that we could be no later than 15 minutes after the class started. So, about 10 of us were eating and chatting until 10 minutes past (9 am, the start of the class). Then we went up but we did not get any attendance point because we were late. I mean the teacher did nothing wrong but at the same time we did nothing wrong either. We were still in class within the deadline. (G, 1)

Fifteen minutes late is acceptable but half an hour late is not. (K, 1)

Teachers also relied on incentives to encourage students to come to class. Some students (C and D) admitted that getting marks for class attendance was a (sometimes significant) motivating factor. These students knew what time each teacher checked the attendance. If the teacher called the class roll at the beginning of the class, students would arrive early. Once their attendance was recorded, if they found that the class was not fun or that the lesson was difficult, they would leave. Similarly, if the teacher checked the attendance at the end of the lesson, some students would sneak out during the class and come back later at almost the end of the class in order to get the points:

Teacher (name deleted) did not call a roll. One of my friends came to his class all the time but she failed even if she never missed the class. That made some people not come to class, knowing that they would fail anyway no matter how often they came. (A, 1)

That subject must be very boring so they walked out and hung around somewhere else in order to come back later to get an attendance mark. If the teacher checked the mark at the beginning of the class, they would sneak out later when the teacher did not notice. (B, 1)

I walked back to class to get the attendance point. (C, 1)

It was clear from this that students were fully aware of the disruptive effect of their behaviour. Students' actions in class seemed to develop out of an evaluation of the situation, that is whether or not they would benefit from certain behaviour. In order to double check whether this misbehaviour occurred in other educational settings and to hear other teachers' points of view, I interviewed three Thai English teachers and asked them to reflect on their own teaching experiences. The teachers all agreed that unless students were familiar with them or had been learning with them for a long time, it was difficult to elicit responses or voluntary participation from the majority. With respect to students' disruptive behaviour, although both a male and a female teacher (from different government universities) said that they experienced disruptive behaviour, it was on small scale and was controllable by regularly enforcing rules and punishments. Only the female teacher from the private university said that her experiences were similar to mine. In her case, student disruption ranged from minor incidents such as texting to major incidents such as the total absence of the students from the class and regular problems with punctuality. All teachers agreed that disruptive behaviour was caused by internal and external factors. The internal

factors included students' lack of self-efficacy in English, their attitudes towards the usefulness of English, and the feeling of intimacy between teachers and students. In a manner similar to students' views on their self-efficacy, the teachers believed that the level of students' ability in English and their attitudes towards the usefulness of English had a direct impact on their behaviour. The teachers reported that students would pay more attention and behave better in classes for students' majors or subjects that they thought would be useful for their future career.

In terms of external factors, the teachers reported that a lack of consideration for others' well-being, the use of teacher's authority, the size of the classroom, and the particular university's policy for dealing with students' disruptive behaviour were the main factors contributing to students' misbehaviour. The lack of consideration for others and the lack of teacher's use of authority were factors which were also given by students' in their interviews. All teachers agreed that the use of authority, such as rule setting and score deduction, and the constant reminder of these rules and regulations seemed to be effective in keeping the class in order. As each teacher had experience teaching English in both small classes (fewer than 20 students) and in large classes (from 50 to 200 students), they said that small classes were easier to control as the teachers could spot any wrongdoers. The teachers also emphasised each university's policy for keeping students' attendance and discipline in class. The female teacher from the private university pointed out that as her university is privately run, its policy is to keep as many students as possible by allowing them to withdraw from any class as late as two weeks before an examination without having this record registered in their transcripts. This meant that providing that students have enough fees to re-register, those who failed to turn up, or who missed a lot of classes, could start again whenever they wanted. This policy was different from the government universities, where students who missed more than a fifth of their classes would automatically be failed and this would be recorded on their transcripts.

I thus learnt that there was some similarity between teachers' and students' accounts of disruptive behaviour and that both parties agreed that factors directing students' behaviour were both internal and external. As a result, I decided to focus on both within-individual aspects of the students' self-perception and between-individual aspects of their interactions with their peers in general and in group work.

4.4 STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEPTION

Students bring with them to class their individual characteristics, their goals and their beliefs about what they should or should not do. For the students, the transition to university marked a time of change from being dependent on adults to being increasingly dependent on peer relationships. Students reported that when they entered the University, they made more friends, these being from a wider social circle, and participated in a range of clubs and extra-curriculum activities. However, while their social network was expanding at the University, some students felt that group cohesion and friendships were stronger in high schools than in the University, partly because of the length of time that they knew one another and also because of their educational background. Student D and E felt that the gap between academically successful students and less successful students was greater than in high school, where students were grouped according to their GPA and hence the academic abilities of students in the same class in high school were closer. Students referred to other's educational background in order to explain why some students were more successful in learning than others:

Sometimes, I felt like giving it all up, I tried so hard to improve myself but it did not seem to get better. I thought educational background really contributed to this because some of them came from city schools like (school name deleted) and (school name deleted), while I was from an upcountry school. (D, 1)

Because I did not study English in high school, I was quite intimidated by others who were English or Science majors. (E, 1)

Student B, D and L pointed out that their class in the University was divided into small groups. Each group had its own members, who tended to share similar values and characteristics. As a result, students differentiated and labelled themselves according to their affiliation with their peer group. For example, one group was called 'bookworms' and another was referred to as 'fashionistas'. Students within a group have a marked tendency to do things together and among themselves:

There are different groups in the class [such as the] group of hard-working students or the group of fashion-crazed students. (B, 1)

If you looked carefully, you would see that we divided into different groups. We just concentrated on our group and could not care less about others. I don't know what they are doing, they did not know what we are doing either. We have different ways of life. (D, 1)

While the relationship between members of the same group is relatively close, its relationship with the other groups in the same class can range from moderately close to very distant. Although the various groups seemed to get on well at a superficial level, student G and H felt that their classmates were not as united or helpful as in high school, where helping and sharing of knowledge were more evident; university classmates tended to share knowledge or help only people within their own group:

Some classmates knew from the teachers about what would be included in the exam but they didn't tell us. When I asked them, they became silent or just told me half of what they knew. (G, 1)

My relationship with my high-school friends was much closer than with friends here. May be because we spend a lot of years together. Here, people were not very helpful. (H, 1)

The gap in academic abilities and the social distance between class groups could have had a detrimental effect on students' self-confidence. Although some students (E, F, K and L) claimed that they were in general confident, their confidence dropped when they had to perform in English in class because they had a low sense of self-efficacy as regards carrying out tasks in English. While students' self-efficacy beliefs and anxiety about their capabilities were individually specific, students' concerns over their friends' judgements were caused externally as a result of direct contact with friends. Students seemed to have a clear idea which behaviour would elicit positive or negative reactions from their friends. In the class, academic-related behaviour, such as asking questions in class or volunteering to perform class tasks, were subject to negative comments such as 'being nerdy', 'showing off', and 'wasting the time of others'. Given that, it is not surprising that students E, F, H, K, L, and M reported they did not want to show their enthusiasm for learning overtly in class, fearing that they might be the subject of gossip by their classmates. This resulted in students' being reluctant to become the centre of attention or to initiate task-related actions. They also reported that they feared appearing too eager or, if they made any mistakes, of being too stupid in front of the class:

The person who volunteered to go first must be so confident because if you go first and make a mistake, the whole class will laugh at you. I think this is the reason; no one would like to go first. (K, 1)

Even if it was a small mistake, they [other students] would not let it go. They would laugh and talk about it all the time. When this happens, it does not encourage us to speak out. I was once in the situation like that. [Giving presentation in front of the whole class] I was so confident that I was not going to make a mistake but when I did make a mistake, I could hear my friends laughing and talking. Afterwards, I did not want to speak again. (L, 1)

Students' concern over their self-image had an effect on their behaviour, as they seemed to rely on their peer group as the source of their behavioural standards, especially when students – as a group – are held responsible for the behaviour of the group's other members. Because of the strong allegiance to peer group norms, students reported that they were motivated to behave according to these group norms by the feelings of relatedness and belongingness to the group, as well as the fear of rejection and ridicule if they behaved or acted in a way which ran counter to the group's expectations. Students A, B, E, F, I, and J claimed that their cheating behaviour was the result of their fear of not belonging to the group or the fear of being ostracised by friends, although they were fully aware that this behaviour was also inappropriate:

Even if I am not so close with some friends, I will let them copy me anyway, otherwise they might tell me off for not helping them. And then the friendship will not be the same. I feel sorry for some of them. Some of them got F (fail) or had already dropped other subjects. I am afraid that their GPA might be too low and that they might be expelled from the university. (B, 1)

I have never cheated in the exam, but I helped my friends in the exam very often. They are friends. I helped not because I loved them but because if I did not help them, they would go out and gossip about me. (F, 1)

While some students admitted that they did not participate because they were taken aback by their friends' reaction, others, such as A and D, merely said they did not want to ask or that they did not know what to ask. The 'don't know' and 'don't want' attitude could be explained by students' lack of understanding of their subjects.

Sometimes I understand the content but many times, I don't. But I don't know where to ask because if you don't understand, how can you ask a question while you still don't know what to ask. I can't ask the teacher to explain everything all over again. It is too much. And the more the teacher is trying to explain, the more confused I become. (A, 1)

I did not ask because I did not have any questions. It was like I did not understand this lesson for a long time for example in (name deleted)'s class, I had no idea what the lesson was about or why we had to learn to produce sound. (D, 1)

This problem could also be related to the current pedagogical model in Thailand, where students are trained to place their trust in their teachers and to believe what they are taught without question. Students are not trained to be inquisitive or articulate and most students do not believe that their contribution as an individual is important. According to student B and G, when they were not actively engaged in the learning process, they reported a lack of perseverance or concentration in their learning. If they felt that they studied too much or that the lesson was getting more difficult, they would stop listening and started talking to one another or do something else quietly in class:

If I don't understand the lesson, I will pretend to be listening. I act as if I am listening and understanding. I thought that I would go back and study the lesson later. Sometimes, I started talking to my friends. (B, 1)

When the class is getting more serious and I feel that I could not take it any longer. I will switch off and start talking to my friends or do something else to make me relax. (G, 1)

Students seemed to look at the classroom culture as the benchmark for their behaviour. If the majority of the class valued academic achievement highly, it was likely that students would be motivated to learn in order to achieve their academic goals. Unfortunately, students from this particular class seemed to hold a different view, as mentioned earlier. The predominant stance seemed to be that any academic ambitions were viewed negatively. Furthermore, while academic-related behaviour was suppressed by the class's reaction, students seemed to be more tolerant of and sometimes ignored disruptive behaviours.

4.5 INTERACTIONS WITH FRIENDS

Many aspects of peer interaction emerged from the student interviews. Some aspects are related to academic orientation, others are linked to social orientation. Of interest to the present discussion is how academic and social orientations interact and whether the outcomes of these interactions lead to academic or social success. In the domains of social goals, the outcomes of peer interactions could be related to orientation towards group norms and others (A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I, J, K, and L), peer rejection and acceptance (A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I, and J), avoidance of conflicts and aggression (B, E, F, G, H, I, and K), discipline among friends (B, F, K, and L), and joint hardship and interdependence (A, B, C, D, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, and N).

As mentioned, students in this class divided themselves into different groups. Just as in the broader class, where teachers and students would agree on certain rules of conduct in class to make learning possible, each group has its own norms and rules. As long as the class and group norms moved in the same direction, students could adopt both sets of rules without conflict. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. When the class productive norm clashed with group unproductive norm, there was always a problem. For example, the group norm, in which friends are expected to go to class together, made it difficult for students to comply with the class norm of arriving on time. In fact, student J and N claimed that they arrived at the University quite early. However, because they were expected to wait for their friends in order to go to class together, they ended up being late. Most students recounted that if they did not wait for their friends, their friends would tell them off or be upset:

Actually, most of us were not late. We came early but we were waiting for our friends at our favourite spot. We were hanging around there sometimes until the class started or until someone decided to turn up, then we all would follow.

(J, 1)

We just wait until all of us in the group turn up and then we could go [to the class]. (N, 1)

Because of students' concerns over the status of friendships, students' behaviour developed out of a fear of peer rejection and, conversely, the desire for peer acceptance. Students showed their allegiance to the group through physical proximity (i.e. sitting next to one another), social contact (i.e. doing things together in and outside class), and the quantity and quality of interaction with one another. Group members were well aware what kind of behaviour would be accepted or rejected within their own group and as a result, they would avoid any behaviour that did not conform to the group norm. For example, student G said that she hardly ever initiated discussion of any topics related to study with her peer group, knowing that her friends would tell her off for being a 'swot' or tell her to change the topic. Similarly, student J said that the group's attitudes to learning could result in a lack of competitiveness and perseverance in studying among her group's members:

My problem is that I hardly talked about study with my friends. I sometimes wanted to talk about what we studied but I was concerned that my friends would think that it was too serious to talk about because we had just finished the class. When we were outside class or when we had a meal together, we should talk about lighter topics, like what everybody did on the weekend. If I started talking about studying, some of my friends would not like to talk about it.
(G, 1)

I found that my friends in other universities were very enthusiastic to study and were quite competitive, but here, it was different. We were expected by our friends to go together, to be at the same pace, to help one another to finish our degree. (J, 1)

The cohesiveness of the group also affected the individual. While group members felt that the cohesiveness of their own group was high, the cohesiveness of the class as a whole was relatively low. The lack of intimacy between the groups made some students very conscious of their self-image when dealing with members of other groups. As a result, students reported their reluctance to ask questions or assert their ideas in class discussion as they feared that they might be ridiculed or laughed at by their classmates as mentioned previously. Students did not feel that they had to work so hard to maintain their self-image within their group as they reported that being laughed at or ridiculed by people from within their group was less significant.

During the class observation and interview, the issues of these negative class reactions were invariably mentioned and thus these reactions could be problematic for some students. However, no matter how upset students were, they tended to suppress or channel their anger by means of gossiping or complaining to people in their groups rather than expressing their anger openly. Students reported that by directly criticising or shouting at their friends, they ran the risk of losing the friendship as well as looking like a bully. Instead, personal antipathies between classmates could be (and were) avoided by not talking to one another.

When it came to students misbehaving in class and disrupting learning activities, students knew that due to the strong bonds of the inner group, they were unlikely to have conflicts among the members of the same group. However, if the person was not in their group or they were not close to him or her, they would let people in the misbehaving student's 'home' group tell that person themselves or, alternatively, wait for the teacher to say something. Other techniques for negotiating problems with members of other groups were again indirect, such as using humour or telling the whole class to behave and not specifically targeting any one person. By these means students could achieve their goal without causing loss of face or generating negative feelings which might affect the class dynamic:

Our class is divided into different groups. Each group is not really close to the others. There are some students in the class who have never talked to one another. As a result, if I am not close enough with any of them, I am not going to tell them off if they misbehave. (L, 1)

If my friends want to go out but I don't want to, I will tell them indirectly...I mean you won't tell them something like 'don't go out, stay and study' because it might upset them. Instead, you would say that 'I don't quite understand this lesson and there is an exam next week, we should stay and learn'. (H, 1)

Students also strengthened their relationship through joint hardship and helping. Students' common hardships ranged from minor incidents, such as being told off for being late, to major situations, like difficult tests or exams. In most cases, each group underwent the difficulties separately from other groups. However, there was a consensus from all interviewees that there was a special case of joint hardship for their class when the whole class had a conflict with one teacher (described below on pages 118 and 123).

According to all the students, it was the one time that almost everyone in the class became unified due to a mass feeling of intolerance of this teacher's behaviour. As a consequence, the class united in agreeing to solve this conflict together. At this time, the class met and discussed together what to do and as a result students felt that during that period, the whole class became united and relations between all members became better. However, after the problem was solved, the class cohesion fell back to the level it was at before the conflict with the teacher. This conflict will be explored later when discussing interactions with teachers.

Entwined with the issues of joint hardship is students' orientation towards interdependence and their empathy for each other. Most students were ready and willing to help if their friends were in trouble and expected the same in return. If their friends failed to reciprocate, this resulted in disappointment and frustration. These interdependent behaviours could be seen through in-class behaviours, such as sharing books and materials, and out-of-class behaviours, such as group tutoring before the exam. In many cases, instead of asking their teachers, students turned to their friends as a source of knowledge. Seven students (B, C, G, H, I, M, and N) reported that when they were confused with the lessons or teachers' instructions, they would ask their friends to explain to them before they asked the teacher. There is also a hierarchy of help giving in which students who were academically successful were expected to help those who were academically inferior. Some students took it upon themselves to help others who were academically inferior by doing a greater share of group work or by providing answers in exams to friends:

If my friends asked me [for answers in an exam], I would tell them because I would like them to pass. Sometimes, they asked me the meaning of the words, [but] I did not know how to tell them. I wrote on the table or on their hands. There was a time when I did not hear that my friends were calling my name in the exam, so I did not help them. They might have been angry, I think. There are also some friends who know the answers but don't tell anyone. (A, 1)

I thought [if] we are friends, we should help one another. I help her if she asks me. (I, 1)

However, some students reported that they were obliged to help their friends because they did not want to upset them and that they were concerned about how they were viewed by others, so although some students knew that cheating was wrong and were

unwilling to cooperate with their friends, they would eventually give in and help because they did not want to be thought selfish. In some cases, there was considerable peer pressure to cooperate in this manner:

If (name deleted) did not help me in the exam, I would be upset it was like 'why don't you help me, we are friends, you know the answer, why don't you tell me'.
(J, 1)

If you don't help, then no one would like to be friend with you. (E, 1)

Friends were not only a source of social relationships, but were also viewed as instrumental in achieving academic goals. This was done through encouragement among friends to study and inter-group competition. Student A and B reported attempts within their own groups to encourage one another to study via group tutoring. As most students rarely consulted with or sought out knowledge from teachers outside class, they had a tendency to rely on their friends as a source of knowledge. As previously stated, academic achievers would be expected to share knowledge with their friends. Although some students did not show a great deal of enthusiasm for learning when in the class, they seemed universally to be concerned about their grades. While student L constantly checked his marks and grades with his teachers, calculating how many more points he needed in order to achieve his desired grades, student B compared her performance with friends in the same group because she needed the assurance that she was learning at the same pace as friends. However, the comparison with other groups tended to be more competitive. This inter-group competition was obvious when students were engaged in group work. When doing group work, it is common for each group to constantly check to see if the other groups had better content or more material for presentations and when there was a game in the class students would cheerfully compete with the others. To some extent, this interdependence engaged students with their learning as well as helping to increase their motivation.

As students reported this interdependence in class, one would assume that being engaged in group work might be a suitable and effective pedagogical device. However, students' reflection on their experience of group work revealed the opposite.

4.6 WORKING WITH OTHERS DURING GROUP WORK

My interest in students' group work originated in the classroom observation. In class the students were assigned to do a considerable amount of group work, in the form of group presentations, written reports or both. As I mentioned previously, most students' presentations amounted to little more than reading from an original source without the addition of students' own ideas or insights.

According to the students, group work formed a part of class learning activities in most modules they studied, regardless of whether they liked it. Most of the group work took the form of written reports and class presentations. The topics of the presentations were largely chosen by teachers. As the preparations for the oral or written reports were carried out in the students' own time, I asked all fourteen interviewees to reflect on their group work. As soon as the teacher assigned the group work, the students' first priority (C, E, K, L, M, and N) was to make sure that they were in the same group as their friends. Understandably, these students said that it was easier to work with their close friends. The degree of closeness between the group members clearly affected the group work as students reported reluctance or discomfort when arguing with people from other groups; they said that because of the strong bond within the group members, it was easier to have an argument with friends from the inner group than those from outer groups. Additionally, as students were very concerned about their friends' feelings, they voluntarily refrained from sharing or asserting their ideas in order to avoid conflict among group members. However, even when students were working with their close friends, group work was by no means free from problems:

If the teacher picked the people in the group for us, we might end up being with some students who we are not really close with. Then, if they don't do the work, or do it badly, we don't dare to deal with them or tell them off. If we choose the group by ourselves, we can force or tell people in our group to help easier.

(L, 1)

Because we were quite close to one another, it is always easier to talk to your close friends. If you were put into a group with other classmates, you will feel like...they don't want you to take part in the group work. (N, 1)

When conducting the interviews, it was striking how similar were the reports of how the group activities were divided between members of the group. Students A, D, E, H, J, and N stated that they would have a group meeting once or twice to discuss the topic of their study and decide the work allocations so that each student knew exactly what his or her responsibilities were. Although different members may have different tasks, if the group work consisted of an oral presentation, it was universally considered important that everyone in the group spoke in front of the class. This was because most students felt that giving oral presentations in front of teachers and fellow students was a harrowing experience and so group members needed to share this hardship together:

Even if you are not good at giving a presentation, you have to go out and talk like the others do. Otherwise, it is like you are taking advantage of other people in the group. Some people in the group would slag you off if you are not going out to give a presentation. (J, 1)

After the jobs were distributed, students would carry out their work separately. Later – shortly before the group work was due to be completed – they would meet with each other. It should be noted here that during this period of individual work, even though they might occasionally ask one another about the progress of each person's work, students did not really ask to see their friends' actual work and did not know what other students did until near the due date or on the due date. The fact that most students rarely communicated the content of their share of the group work was intriguing, especially given that the members of the groups seemed to be very close to one another. Students instead seemed to trust that their friends would do the jobs as planned. If everything went according to plan, students would have a final meeting shortly before the submission date to share their section of the work and to decide the final content or presentation style. However, it was often not the case that everything went so smoothly. All students reported considerable problems with non-contributors. In most groups, there were members who did less work than others, who paid money for supplies and photocopying but who did nothing, who promised to do the work but never did, who waited to be told what to do, who did the work badly, or who never turned up for the group meeting but insisted that their names should be included on the cover of the report paper:

When the group met, we agreed to divide the work but some people just did not do it. They listened but they did not do anything. (A, 1)

Two people in the group [of five] did not help. One went home; the other said that her hands were painful. Actually, only (name deleted) and I did this report. We hardly slept the night before the due date. (E, 1)

It [people not helping in group work] happens all the time. They did not tell us their reason. They sometimes call and ask about the work but that is it.

Whenever we have a meeting to talk about work, they never turn up and we can't contact them. But when we finish the report, they will turn up just to check if their name is on the cover of the report. I did not know why they did not help. (L, 1)

When asked how they dealt with non-contributors, some students such as J and L reported that they reprimanded the person, ignored him/her, complained to others, or barred him/her from the group in the future. However, the majority of students (A, B, D, F, I, K, M, and N) said that they did nothing. They did not report this problem to the teacher fearing that it might affect their friendship. Although they were not happy with the situation where help was not rendered, they accepted the consequences caused by the non-contributors and carried on with the work with the inevitable consequence that some students ended up doing the majority of the work themselves. Because of these problems, some students (A, F, and K) reported that they preferred to do individual work:

I prefer an individual work than group work. Although it is group work, I have to do it alone anyway. (A, 1)

The more people we have in the group, the more problems we have. Because we have different ideas, it takes time to reach agreement especially when we don't have enough time. I prefer pair work or individual work. (F, 1)

I did not say anything [if friends did not help with group work]. I just do the work myself. They are the one who lost, not me. I did the work, I read, I get the knowledge. So, when there is an exam, I can do it. If they can't do the exam, don't complain. (K, 1)

Apart from the problem of non-contributors, students A, D, H, J, L, M, and N reported that a lack of understanding or time led to poor quality group work. They claimed that because the teacher always decided both whether or not to do group work and, more importantly, its content, students often found themselves searching for information the subject, relevance, or purpose of which they did not understand. Even though students

occasionally consulted the teachers about their group work, this tended to be restricted to administrative questions such as understanding instructions, the length of the report, and so on. Students rarely discussed with the teacher whether they really understood the purpose or the content of the report, fearing that the teacher might reprimand them for not paying sufficient attention. As students had to do extra group work in most modules, in addition to individually marked homework, they also reported that they could not find enough time to plan the work, review the contents or rehearse their presentations:

We do not rehearse before the presentation. Each person was given two to three pages of their parts to read for the presentation. We never read together before the presentation. (D, 1)

We don't have time to rehearse before the presentation. If the presentation is for today, we will be given the contents or information yesterday. We don't have time. We just shared what we found to one another and divided the work. There is no time to rehearse. This is why we tend to read when we have a group presentation. (L, 1)

Coupled with a lack of understanding, students A, D, J, K, L, M, and N solved the problem of work overload by searching for and copying verbatim from an original source of information. These students would copy from the original source word for word and present the paper as their own, without referring to the source. Students said that they did not have enough time to change the source material into their own words (A, K, L, and M), did not know how to change the contents (D), were afraid that their own interpretation might be wrong (N), or thought of copying as sharing knowledge from the source (J). The concept of plagiarism was not commonly known among students:

I don't feel that we copy other people's work and claim that they are our work. It was like we find their work and share it with our friends in class. (J, 1)

I am afraid that if I used my own words, the meaning might be different or wrong. (N, 1)

Students' insights into their classroom behaviour revealed not only the characteristics of individual students but also the influence of peer pressure on individuals' self-perception and behaviour. Students' accounts frequently showed that peer pressure, in the form of peer acceptance, rejection and expectations, was sufficiently influential that

students changed or adjusted their behaviour in order to keep friendships running smoothly and to maintain their identity as significant members of their group. While students' desire to avoid conflicts among friends could help strengthen their friendship, this might also have a detrimental affect on their academic orientation, and, in fact, this appeared to be the case amongst some students when they carried out group work. However, the fact that students did not mention Thai culture as one of the factors influencing their behaviour made it difficult to reach firm conclusions as to whether their behaviour was influenced by cultural factors. For example, although students' preference for smooth interpersonal relationships coincides with Hofstede's feminine culture value, this social aspect, according to students, developed out of the influence of peer pressure. As a result, while students' behaviour resembled in some aspects the national culture characteristics, it would be premature to conclude that there existed a relationship between Thai culture and the students' behaviour.

In order to investigate further the influence of culture on students' behaviour and social interaction, I had previously recorded two classes where students studied with a Thai teacher in a large class and a non-Thai teacher in a small class. Students were then asked to give opinions on the size of the classroom and the differences between studying with Thai and non-Thai teachers. The following findings are taken from the third part of the pair interviews.

4.7 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THAI AND NON-THAI TEACHERS

Most students agreed that there are differences in terms of teaching style and personality between Thai and non-Thai teachers. Students in this class studied with three native speakers of English. (Personal information on these teachers can be found on page 37) While some students had some experience of learning with native speaking teachers before, most students had never previously studied with non-Thai teachers. All students commented on the novelty of learning with these teachers. Students E and F mentioned that learning English with native speakers helped them to expand their range of opinions and that this highlighted differences between Thai and non-Thai teachers, in terms of teaching styles and cultural differences:

I was very excited [to learn English with foreign teachers] because it is not just learning the language, it is like we are also learning their culture. It makes me want to know and study more and more. I can see that each teacher has his/her own characters. American teachers are different from Australian teachers or Thai teachers. (E, 1)

When asked to identify differences between Thai and native speaking English teachers, students pointed out the following factors: authenticity, communication problems, the use of authority, and teaching styles.

All students believed that the major benefits of learning English with native speakers were that these teachers had better pronunciation, and that they used 'authentic' and 'correct' English and thus, by talking to and studying with non-Thai teachers, students could learn correct pronunciation as well as be prepared for the real usage of English outside the classroom. Since students thought that listening and speaking skills were important for their future career, they believed that they could best improve their English by learning with native speaking English teachers:

It might be better [studying with foreign teachers] because we learn from the native speakers. We learn to pronounce words properly, or say something correctly with them. As native speakers, they are unlikely to make a mistake. Thai teachers are likely to make a mistake in teaching English. (L, 1)

If you study English with foreign teachers, you will learn the real accents.
(N, 1)

Judging from the students' answers, it seemed that Thai teachers' ability to teach English was, at least in part, negatively judged on the grounds that they were not native speakers of English. The issues of accent and authenticity gave the unfavourable impression that Thai teachers were less qualified and less effective than their American or Australian colleagues. Lippi-Green (1997) refers to this questioning of teachers' ability and credibility based on their accent as a form of linguistic discrimination. According to Phillipson (1996), this native speaker ideal has remained as a central part of the conventional wisdom of the ELT profession and has perpetuated the dominance of the native speaker in the ELT profession. Maum (2002) stated that this native speaker ideal emphasised the importance of who the teachers are (i.e., native or non-native speakers of

English) over what they are (i.e., qualified English teachers). As a consequence, non-native speakers' teaching credentials are often undermined and compared unfairly with the native speakers as witnessed from students' account in their interview.

When asked about the downside of learning with foreign teachers, the issue of accent was also mentioned by students as a problem. Even though students thought that their listening and speaking skills had improved since they started learning with foreign teachers, the majority still had difficulty understanding what the teachers said and continued to experience problems with the foreign teachers' accents:

I like both [studying with Thai and foreign teachers]. With Thai teachers, you can ask questions whenever you have problems. With foreign teachers, you learn better pronunciation, but it is quite difficult to ask them questions or to understand when the teacher is explaining something to us. We also need to use a lot of gestures or facial expressions to talk to them. (C, 1)

If the foreign teachers did not use gestures to help with their communication, I might not be able to understand what they want to say. (M, 1)

As a result, some students struggled to respond to teachers or correctly to interpret what the teachers were saying with the consequence that students used a much greater range of non-grammatical/non-verbal communication with the non-Thai teachers than with Thai teachers. The fact that students had to concentrate on the lesson more if they would like to understand the non-Thai teacher's lesson had a direct effect on their motivation. While some students (A, B, E, and F) said that they studied harder – by paying attention to the lesson and studying in their own time – to understand the teacher, others (C, D, G, and M) reported that they lost concentration and interest as soon as they started to experience problems with the teacher. When students lost interest in class, it is likely that they became more disruptive.

While the lack of understanding and communication problem could potentially lead to disruptive behaviour, the teacher's use of authority in class also had an effect on students' behaviour. Students found that Thai teachers exercised their authority in class more than did non-Thai teachers. This included a tendency for Thai teachers to punish, criticise and set rules more than non-Thai teachers. By contrast, these teachers criticised or punished students much less frequently when they violated class rules. Some students took

advantages of the lack of criticism or punishment in order further to misbehave or violate class rules. This might help to explain why students seemed to be less disciplined in non-Thai teachers' classes:

They [students] don't know how to ask for permission in English. So, they decided to walk out of the room without saying anything. The foreign teachers are quite kind, they did not say anything. However, sometimes, I wish they told these students off. (L, 1)

We tended to be late in the foreign teachers' classes because they never told us off even when we turned up late. If it happened in the Thai teachers' classes, we would be told off or punished. The foreign teachers just looked at us and said nothing. We were not really afraid of them. Some of them even allowed us to get attendance point even though we were late. (C, 1)

Students (A, B, E, and F) also reported that non-Thai teachers' lack of knowledge about customary classroom protocol was sometimes problematic for classroom management. A few students mentioned an incident when a newly arrived non-Thai teacher tried, when faced with a disruptive classroom, to control it by banging on his desk. As far as students were concerned, this behaviour was inappropriate in the sense that it broke a cultural norm, that is anger should not be expressed openly. According to the students, if the teacher wanted students to be quiet, the teacher should tell them discreetly. As a result of the teacher's action, some students reported this incident to their supervisor, who later reprimanded the teacher for losing his temper in class. This incident showed that some students viewed cultural difference as a cause of misunderstanding between themselves and the teacher, although it should be pointed out that this was the first time that students reported to me a link between culture and behavioural difference.

After almost two years of studying with non-Thai teachers, students could see a significant difference in terms of teaching style. Students E, F, K, L, M, and N agreed that foreign teachers focused more on students' understanding than did Thai teachers. This meant that instead of trying to cover as much ground as possible, as Thai teachers did, the pace of non-Thai teachers' lessons was slower and focused more on students' understanding. Non-Thai teachers also utilised a greater variety of teaching techniques. This included dividing students into small groups, asking students to do more activities such as role plays or games, and encouraging students to share ideas in class. Thai teachers,

on the other hand, focused more on the contents of the textbooks. According to students, Thai teachers taught very rapidly and did not often check whether students understood the lesson. When asked if they preferred to learn with Thai or non-Thai teachers, students' answers depended on the nature of the subject. For skill subjects, such as listening and speaking, all students would prefer to learn with native speaking English teachers but for content subjects, like linguistics, some students preferred to learn with Thai teachers because they could understand the teacher's explanations and lectures more easily:

Foreign teachers like (name deleted) and (name deleted) divide the class into small groups so that we can learn better. Thai teachers do not do this, may be they don't want to waste their time doing this. (M, 1)

I found that foreign teachers have more teaching styles than Thai teachers, for example, in (name deleted)'s class, he does not rely on the book. He always comes up with different things like introducing us to a novel or poem, asking to do a role play, organising activities in class. On the other hand, Thai teachers will follow from the textbook or the lesson guidance strictly. They are not flexible at all. (L, 1)

Students' main concern when thinking about the differences between Thai and native speaking English teachers seemed to be with the authenticity of the English to which students would be exposed along with differences in teaching style, rather than the teachers' personalities. This might be due to the communication problems which students reported as preventing their knowing the native speaking teachers well. As a result, students could not make comments on non-Thai teachers' personalities and cultural backgrounds to the extent that they could when describing their interaction with Thai teachers.

4.8 STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR LEARNING CONTEXT

Apart from the difference between Thai and non-Thai teachers, students were asked to discuss the differences between studying in large and small classes. While analysing the data on students' views on large and small classrooms, I found that students' opinions on

classroom rules, subjects and types of examination were equally important, so these are grouped together under this heading.

4.8.1 Spatial Organisation

In most classes, the seating arrangement is traditional; the class is teacher-fronted with the teacher facing the students, who are sitting in rows. With regard to group dynamics, Dörnyei and Murphey (2003: 80) pointed out two main disadvantages with this seating structure. First 'it creates inequality among students as differences in classroom locations are associated with different status. Second, it enforced teacher-dependency as the teacher is the centre of the communication network.' This was also the case in the class under observation as the students separated and labelled themselves according to their seating location. While the ones who were sitting in the front row were often thought of as the 'brains' or 'teacher's favourite', those who were at the back rows were seen as 'the underachievers'. Because students tended to sit in the same spots with the same friends, they were aware of each other's territory and rarely crossed into the territory of other groups. As a result, students only interacted with those who were sitting next to or close to them. The lack of interaction between students at the front and the back of the class could be one of the reasons for the lack of cohesiveness in the whole class. Also, students who were sitting in more conspicuous places were likely to get more interaction and attention from the teachers and hence became more involved in the learning process. In contrast, students in a marginal seating position will inevitably receive less attention from the teacher. This, Schmuck and Schmuck (1983: 255) argued, could lead to a feeling of being unimportant and peripheral, and so to a reduction of motivation or communication with others. When students are no longer engaged in the learning process, there is a higher possibility of misbehaviour occurring.

The issue of being in a large class is also of interest here as student M and N pointed out that unless students were asked to do group work, Thai teachers only very rarely attempted to change the seating arrangements in the class. On the other hand, non-Thai teachers tended to divide students into small groups with different seating arrangements. This may be the result of the fact that most Thai teachers were familiar with being the centre of the interaction and that their main method of teaching was lecture-based. Non-Thai teachers, on the other hand, were given more skill-based subjects and

thus could have been more concerned that seating arrangements should allow students to have visual contact with each other in order to increase communication.

When asked whether the size of the class affected their motivation or involvement in class, students said that the quality and quantity of teaching could vary depending on the class size. With small classes, as in the *Listening and Speaking III* module, the class was more focused and the teacher was more attentive to students' needs or problems. Eight students (B, D, E, F, G, H, J, and M) reported that they understood the lesson better and paid more attention in class as they had to exchange ideas with each other and discuss the class content with the teacher more under this arrangement. Students also revealed that they needed to rely on themselves more as there were fewer friends to assist them in class:

I would like to study in the class with 10 students [as in the *Listening and Speaking III* module] because it is very focused. If I can't pronounce the word properly, the teacher will repeat until everyone in the class gets it. The teacher will make sure that everyone in the class understands the lesson. It is like I am in a private class. With a big class like in *Basic Chinese I*, the teacher did not have time to focus on everyone. She only showed how to pronounce the words a couple of times, then she moved on to the new words. We have to practice by ourselves later at home. (G, 1)

I think studying in small class will help more with my understanding of the lesson because with large class, students tend to talk or do other activities. You can't do that if your class is small, so, you concentrate more. Also, it is more difficult to follow the lesson in a large class. (M, 1)

With only a small number of students in *Listening and Speaking III* class, it was difficult for students to misbehave as it was easy to spot any wrongdoers. Students were likely to behave better and the class atmosphere was more supportive and suitable for learning. In contrast, students D, L, and M said that large classes tended to be noisier and more difficult for the teacher to control; students said that sometimes they could not hear what the teachers said because of the noise that the other students made. There was less chance for direct communication between teachers and students and the lesson was taught very rapidly. In fact some students took advantage of the large class size to disengage from the learning process. On the other hand, students H, J, K, and L said that they felt more comfortable and secure when there were a lot of people in the class because they could ask

for help from their classmates much more easily. Large classes were also more suited to generating ideas as more students could contribute to this process:

The problem with small classes is you get fewer ideas from people in class. When you have a discussion in large class, you can generate more ideas from people than in a small class. However, students pay more attention to study in a small class. (J, 1)

With a big class, you feel safer and warmer. (K, 1)

Although most students agreed that the small class of 15-20 students was more suitable for learning than their actual class of 40 students, they had mixed responses on whether all classes should be reduced in size, as this depended on the personality of the teacher. Students E, H, I, J, K, and L reported that they would prefer to learn in a big class (regardless of the subject) if the teacher is strict or controlling but if the teacher is kind and relaxed, students would prefer to learn in a small class. Also, students valued being with their friends more than being in a small class so this factor took priority:

It depends on the subjects. If it is *Introduction to Linguistics*, I prefer a big class because I am afraid that the teacher might ask questions. If I make a mistake, I am afraid that the teacher will tell me off for not paying attention to her lecture. (I, 1)

You mean [...] studying in a small class in every subject. In that case, I'd rather select subjects to study in a small class. I mean it is not necessary that every English subject has to be in a small class. Some subjects require a lot more students to share ideas like in (name deleted)'s class [*English Literature*] that requires students to share their ideas. If there are fewer students, we might not get enough ideas. In a big class, if everyone shares his/her idea, it will be very interesting. (E, 1)

4.8.2 Rules

Most students seemed to be aware of the explicit rules imposed by the teachers or mandated by the University. They know that attendance is required in most classes, that mobile phones must be switched off before the class, that permission is required to leave class, and so on. They also know what kinds of punishment are administered for violating

the rules. However, whether students followed or violated the rules did not depend on the rules or the punishment. Rather, it depended more on factors such as the influence of friends, the fear or lack of fear of teachers and the opportunities to break the rules. For some students, rules can be bent or distorted under varying circumstances. As mentioned earlier, students were likely to follow the rules if the teacher was very strict or enforced the rules regularly. In contrast, if the teacher was kind or neglected to reinforce the rule, students would assume that the rule is not important. With reference to friends, students were likely to violate the rule, if they had an accomplice. It is clear that students' lack of adherence to the class rules contradicted their stated preference for having clear rules and regulations.

Apart from the explicit rules, students seemed to be aware of the implicit or unofficial rules that governed their classroom practices. For example, students F and N reported that they were unlikely to ask teachers any question if it was near lunch time because the class might end late and their classmates might complain that they have lose their break time:

I won't dare to ask anything as others might be annoyed [and think] 'Does she have to ask a question now?' as most students would like to finish class and have lunch. (F, 1)

If the teacher asked near lunchtime if we have any question. I won't ask as I know that most of us would like to finish as soon as possible. If I have question, I will leave it and ask later. (N, 1)

Clearly, students had learnt this unofficial norm from their interactions with others in the class. Another unofficial norm that most students agreed on was the tendency to wait for their friends in order to come to class together. Most students did not know when or how these norms started and it seemed that these unofficial rules evolved unconsciously during interactions with other group members. While students often ignored the official rules in class, they seemed to take these unofficial rules more seriously. Consequently, the unofficial rules were likely to be more powerful than their official counterparts. This could be problematic if the unofficial rules hinder rather than promote students' learning as when students reported that they would rather be late than leave their friends to walk to class alone.

4.8.3 Subjects

Students' perceptions of each subject could either be an inhibiting or a contributing factor to their determination to learn. The determination or motivation felt toward each subject depended very much on its relevance to future career prospects, the perceived difficulty of the subject, the balance between theory and practice, the teaching materials and the novelty of the subject. The value attainment that students had toward each subject can be used as an indicator of their willingness and determination to learn. Because most students' main aim was to get a job that allows them to use English after they graduate, they valued the subject extrinsically, that is how effectively it related to their current or future goals so students have a tendency to invest their time and effort in subjects or topics that they found relevant to their future career. As a result, the skill subjects, such as *Listening and Speaking III* and *Writing I* were reported as useful, interesting and relevant. In contrast, students expressed doubts about or boredom with content subjects (*Introduction to Linguistics* and *English Literature*), which did not allow them to practice their desired skills:

If I could design my own curriculum, I would like to have more listening and speaking classes as they helped to build our English competence. Then, we can later learn other content subjects. (J, 1)

I still could not understand the purpose of studying Linguistics. I mean the contents are not only extensive, they are also very complex. I don't understand the benefits of studying phonetics and phonology. I don't understand how to use the phonetic alphabet and how it can be related to my future. (H, 1)

The perceived difficulty of the subject could also affect students' efforts as well as students' judgement of their own ability. When students think that the task difficulty is beyond their control, it is likely that they would withdraw some or all of their effort because they could not see any chance of success. However, the perceived difficulty could also be used as an excuse for some students who may believe that an objectively easy subject was difficult and that they had expended a great deal of effort on the subject, when in fact, they had not. They may then conclude that the subject was too difficult and that therefore there was nothing that they could do about it. This happened during the course of my interviews, when students had mixed views on the module in *English Literature*, which was taught by an American teacher. While two students (E and F) reported that, because of the variety of content and learning activities, this subject was their favourite, other students

(C, D, M, and N) claimed that this subject was too difficult and no matter how much they tried, they never understood the lesson. Unfortunately, it is hard to know on the basis of one interview the extent of students' diligence or just how difficult the subject really was.

While some students were quite satisfied with the numbers of subjects that they were studying, they were not fully satisfied with the amount of extra work that was assigned by their teachers. Students expressed their concern that their extra work did not make them understand the lesson better and instead simply ate up their free time and prevented them from reviewing their lessons.

The novelty of a particular subject appeared to be a contributory factor in students' motivation as most students reported that they enjoyed *Basic Chinese I*. Some students (H, I, and J) compared the excitement felt learning Chinese with their excitement when they first started learning English. Because none of the students had previously studied Chinese, the students started the subject at the same time and at the same level. As a result, students reported that they did not feel intimidated by their classmates' abilities as happened when they were studying English. The fact that the subject was still at the beginner's level could also have contributed to students' preference for this subject:

I like to study Chinese not only because of the teacher, but also because I have never studied Chinese before. If you don't pay attention, don't practice, you will not be able to pass the exam, you will fall behind. (I, 1)

I enjoy studying Chinese because I could ask the [Thai] teacher when I don't understand the lesson. Students are interested in this subject because it is new language. It was like when we first started learning English. (H, 1)

Students also believed the duration of each class was important. Interviewees complained that it was quite common for teachers to teach for two hours without any break and that this had an adverse effect on their attention; most students said that they could not concentrate for more than one hour. However, when asked if they had ever requested to have a break, the students (C and D) were reluctant to make such a request as they felt that this would be inappropriate and instead, some students simply decided to walk out of the class or engage in other non-academic activities when they could no longer pay any attention to the lesson.

4.8.4 Examinations

One of many changes students encountered at the tertiary level was in the type of examinations which they faced. Due to the large numbers of students and to the teachers' workloads, most Thai high schools assess students' performance by means solely of multiple choice examinations. Most students were not trained to write for examinations and as a result, students had a distinct preference for multiple choice exams over written exams. Some students (A, M, and N) were also confused by the different types of assessment, such as open-book exams or tests before teaching, when the teacher would distribute handouts to students to read and to prepare for a small quiz before the teacher actually explained the subject being tested. Later, the teacher who used this technique explained that he was concerned that the majority of the class did not prepare before the lesson even if the handouts or books were readily available so he decided to use the test as a mean to encourage students to read before classes. However, there was a conflict here as while the teacher would like students to at least have a background understanding of what they were about to study, the students felt that there was no point in studying after they had had a test and that the teacher had failed in his duty as he did not teach anything before the exam.

Because most exams at the university level were written, the criteria used to evaluate each piece of writing were different from the multiple choice exams students were used to at school. Students (A, B, M, and N) expressed their concern over the criteria teachers used when grading as well as the process of assessment. For example, students wanted to know why their answers received lower scores than classmates who produced similar answers. Some students also thought that if a student achieved only a low score in an exam, the teachers should accept a measure of responsibility for this as it meant that the teacher had failed to bring the student up to a satisfactory level:

The teacher did not give away grade A easily – only 3-4 people got it.

Sometimes, I got confused where the teacher got our grade from. My friends and I have similar scores. What is the criterion that the teacher uses? (A, 1)

I think the teacher should know his or her ability of teaching from students' exam results. If he/she teaches well, the majority of students should pass the exam because they understood the lesson. (M, 1)

Although students expressed their doubts about each teacher's grading system, they again very rarely quizzed teachers about this. For example student A and B asked the teachers to see their scores or to see their exam papers as well as to ask why they got certain scores but they would not give any comments or challenge teachers on how each teacher calculated the final grade; students seemed to accept the teacher's absolute authority over their grade:

The thing is our score depended on the tip of the teacher's pen. It could change from an A to an F with one mark. Some teachers made us feel that our grade really depended on them no matter how hard-working we were [...] it could mean nothing. Sometimes, when we asked to see our exam papers, we were flatly refused. If the teacher said no, that was it [...] no more talking. (L, 1)

I was confused by some teachers' criteria of giving a grade, for example I got 96/100 in this particular subject but I got B while my friend who got 94/100 got A. [...] He [the teacher] has already submitted the grade so how could I talk to him. (B, 1)

Students' concerns over the exam score clearly showed their preference for the product of learning over learning itself. This was, according to B and L, because their grade could determine their future career and, as grades are so important to students, they were very competitive over this. As mentioned earlier, students would constantly check in class if learning activities carried any extra points for them and if grades were involved, students were likely to put in more effort.

Thus far, I have presented the analysis of the pair interviews. Shortly after the end of the pair interviews, a group discussion was scheduled and carried out with the aim of allowing students to give their opinions and comments on an English language classroom from another culture. By looking at a context different from their familiar learning environment, I hoped that students would not only be able to explain the behaviour of English students, but also be able to look back at their own behaviour and understand what made them behave differently from or similarly to their English counterparts.

4.9 COMPARISON WITH AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

After all the interviews were finished, students were asked to come back together for a group discussion and were shown a fifteen-minute video of a key stage 3 English language lesson, filmed in England and taken from <http://www.teachers.tv>. Students were later asked to reflect on any differences from or similarities to their own class and the class shown in the video; students pointed out differences with classroom atmosphere, the teaching style, the interactions between teachers and students and the personalities of the teacher and students.

Most students said (1) that the classroom atmosphere from the video was relaxed and that students were clearly involved in the learning process; (2) that the teacher explained the objectives of the lesson clearly and always, during the class, made sure that students really understood the lesson; (3) that there was a balance between theory and practice as the teacher explained the usage of the grammar points (compound and complex sentences) thoroughly before applying them to the activities (role playing and letter writing); (4) that through these activities, the English students could see how the grammar structure could be used in different contexts.

When contrasting the English students with their own classroom experience, the interviewees reported that (1) Thai teachers did not often use the same types of activities in class and that (2) when Thai teachers asked students to engage in learning activities, they did not really assist students in completing these. Interactions between the teacher and students were different from those of Thai teachers and their students in the sense that although the teacher in the video initiated the topics of conversation and led the class, the students responded eagerly and did not hesitate to answer or ask questions. When asked to give a reason why they thought English students were enthusiastic in answering questions or sharing their opinions in class, most interviewees suggested that culture was a significant factor. While English children were brought up to be confident, to be competitive in class, to speak their mind and to assert their ideas, Thai children were brought up to pay respect to their elders, to follow what the elders asked them to do, and to believe what was said to them:

I guess it was the way we were brought up. Western children were brought up to be confident. (C, 2)

It is cultural difference. We are Asian. We were brought up to pay respect to adults, not to challenge their opinion and not to express our own needs or beliefs. (E, 2)

Thai values suggest that we should pay respect to elders, consider their feelings and behave when we are with them. (J, 2)

Students also thought that cultural differences applied to the teacher's behaviour. Students thought that the English teacher in the video was far more relaxed and approachable than Thai teachers, who tended to be serious, strict and distant from students. Thai teachers divided the roles of teachers and students clearly, making students feel inferior to teachers. This reduced the possibility of students sharing their ideas or asserting their opinions in class:

I would not dare to tell my teacher what I wanted to study. I just don't dare to. (A, 2)

If we were the first one to approach the teacher and ask for a change [in teaching style] [...] It felt like we were telling the teacher what to do, which was a bit odd. It should be the other way round. We should pay respect to them and listen to what they say. (H, 2)

While the issue of culture emerged from the discussion as a factor in restricting student input into classes, students still referred to peer pressure as the main reason for not participating in class:

If I am the only person who raised my hand to answer in class, my friends might look at me and think that I want to show off. (G, 2)

If none of my friends participated, I would not do it either. (I, 2)

While students clearly believed that in some ways the English class featured in the video was preferable to their own, they expressed doubts as to whether it would be

possible for such a class to work in the University, due to cultural difference and the power gap between teachers and students.

It was within the group discussion that the influence of national culture explicitly became a topic of discussion. Without prompting, students talked about the influence of their culture on their behaviour and differentiated themselves from their English counterparts by referring to their culturally grounded differences. However, it remained clear that students were still adamant that peer pressure was the overriding explanatory factor in explaining their classroom behaviour. Although data analysis, this far, has not clarified whether or not national culture has any influence on students' behaviour, it clearly shows that (1) there are non-cultural factors that are significant motivational factors, and that (2) students play an active role in deciding their behaviour. In many ways, the findings highlighted the importance of social context and socialisation, which are the key to the small culture approach and to sociocultural theory. The next chapter will analyse whether these findings are sufficient to answer my research question and to confirm my initial research assumption.

5 : RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Before proceeding to a discussion of the research findings, it will be valuable to review beliefs commonly held by researchers on Thai classrooms and students (Adamson 2003, Deveney 2005, Hallinger and Kantamara 2001a, 2001b, Nguyen (nd), Prpic and Kanjanapanyakorn 2004, and Wallace 2003):

1. *Status.* As Thai culture places a high value on status and power, teachers are highly respected and are considered to be knowledgeable and authoritative. As a result, students rarely challenge teachers' ideas or authority.
2. *Passivity.* Due to the respect accorded to teachers, Thai students are well-behaved and industrious. They listen attentively and take notes very carefully. Thai students are used to rote learning and are not familiar with student-centred learning. Students rely heavily on their teacher's guidance and suggestions and are unwilling to participate in class discussion so Thai students are viewed as passive learners who are not trained to think critically and are not prepared to initiate their own learning.
3. *Collectivism.* Because of the influence of collectivism, Thai students highly value friendships and rely on group decisions to guide action. They have a strong preference for group work over individual work. It is common for students to share knowledge with one another and Thai students prefer classes to be fun and relaxing; teachers wishing to have a successful class are advised to follow this pattern.

During the period of classroom observation, some student behaviour, such as being quiet in class, a reticence in participating in class, and a ready acceptance of the teachers' authority, coincided with behaviour suggested by the literature. Some students' accounts, such as their tendency to avoid conflicts or their reluctance to impose on their

teachers and friends, could also be understood to demonstrate the influence of Thai culture on behaviour. However, it is clear that, both from the classroom observation and from the student interviews, students' lack of reference to Thai culture when explaining their behaviour, the constant misbehaviour, the social distance between classmates, and the apparent dislike of group work demonstrate a flaw in the original thesis. It became clear from the research findings that there were multiple explanations for students' behaviour in the classroom, so while some observed behaviour did not contradict the research literature, it was not always possible to explain classroom behaviour with reference to Thai cultural values. Some of this unexplained behaviour could only be understood by listening to what participants in the class actually said and by setting aside concerns with larger cultural topics and looking instead at the group dynamics within the class and sub-class groups. Through the use of a small culture approach, one gains a far better understanding of students' personal meanings and interpretations of their world. The small culture approach thus seemed to be more appropriate than trying to describe behaviour only in terms of cultural influences. Given that the students' classroom also has its own culture, involving specific activities, rules and norms, an understanding of how this classroom works can reveal not only the dynamics of classroom interaction but also the students' perception of their classroom environment, which could in turn be of considerable value as a route to better classroom practices and management.

5.1 MERITS OF A SMALL CULTURE AND SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

APPROACH

An important implication of seeing the classroom as a culture is that it follows that more is going on between individuals in a class than the transfer of knowledge and skills between the members of the group. According to Holliday (1994: 64):

Within one particular classroom culture, students will be members of one group with one culture for one type of activity, and another for another activity. Each pair and group organised by the teacher will have its own culture; and there will also be informal groups within the classroom with non-pedagogic functions – playing, passing messages, taunting or supporting teachers, forming relationships and so on.

These statements suggest that every day at university 'students work to maintain and establish their interpersonal relationships, strive to develop social identities, and a sense of belongingness, observe and model standards for performance displayed by others, and are rewarded for behaving in ways that are valued by teachers and peers' (Wentzel 1999: 76). By moving away from the concept of large culture and looking critically at the social interactions in the classroom, I found that the social worlds of students influence their motivation and that students are indeed active interpreters of the classroom reality, as of any social reality, and not simply passive recipients of instruction. Through participation in these interactions, individual students construct a sense of self, as students, classmates, and friends, within the context of their classroom and act according to what is expected of them in each role.

With reference to the present study, after spending sufficient time observing the interactions and activities in the classroom, I found that the small culture of the classroom worked in a similar fashion to the national culture, in the sense that teachers and students collaboratively constructed understandings of the nature of their classroom, including the teaching methods, rules, classroom etiquette, and ways that individuals and groups interacted. These tacit understandings of what kinds of behaviour are appropriate are transmitted, shared, and learned by members of the culture-group. Both teachers and students have to learn and share the cultures of their classroom if they are to be fully accepted into the classroom group. The values and rules attached to the classroom culture will then be called upon and used to guide individuals' behaviour. Also, through seeking out and responding to students' thoughts and feelings, I found that some patterns of behaviour, which at first sight could be explained with reference to Thai culture, were actually the result of contextualised social interactions and therefore could be equally – or better – explained by the small culture of the classroom group.

The significance of social interaction and context can also be related to the sociocultural perspective, which emphasises the role of mediation. Within the sociocultural approach, the concept of mediation suggests that the individuals' interaction is culturally organized and socially mediated via social interactions in meaningful activities with more competent others. Through social interaction, individuals learn to use cultural signs and tools to communicate with one another and to mediate contact with their social world. In the classroom, apart from material tools and a system of symbols, students also rely on others to guide their behaviour. Simply stated, the behaviour of other students or teachers

can be viewed as a mediator or facilitator of the transmission of goals and provision of contexts that support the adoption and internalisation of a certain set of values and behaviour.

However, although social behaviour can be observed directly, it is not possible to determine motives and goals of particular patterns of behaviour solely from the level of concrete action, since some observable activity can be linked to different goals and motives and different concrete activities can be linked to the same activities and goals (Lantolf 2000: 8). In order to understand the motives behind the activities and behaviour in class, it is important to understand the shared sociocultural knowledge to which teachers and students adhere. Only by listening to students was it possible to learn that as they entered into different social relations and came into contact with others, they mutually constructed forms of mediation into their interactional activities. As outsiders to the classroom, we might not be aware of this shared knowledge or might find that some classroom practices are unacceptable or disturbing. Only by trying to understand students' behaviour through their own perspectives and their socialisation processes, can we begin to grasp their world.

There are many different and overlapping factors that could explain patterns of behaviours in the class. For example the lack of students' participation could be explained by both the power-distance between teachers and students and the fear of peer rejection as a consequence of showing academic enthusiasm. This discussion will attempt to identify both cultural values pertaining to the national culture and small classroom cultures that teachers and students consciously and unconsciously built and adopted within their immediate learning environment.

5.2 TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION

The teacher-student interaction gave evidence of the fact that while cultural characteristics could be used to explain some patterns of behaviour in the class, non-cultural factors were predominant. The following discussion will begin by describing sets of behaviour that seemed to coincide with Thai national culture. This will be followed by a different set of behaviours, which stemmed from non-cultural factors.

5.2.1 Culture-Specific Explanations of Students' Behaviour

The interactions between teachers and students showed that both parties were fully aware of their roles and status in the class and were acting according to their understanding and expectations of these roles. This mutual understanding of their expected roles exposed the classroom protocols and practices. The teaching style and classroom practices witnessed during the first week of the observation coincided with those anticipated by the literature and research on the characteristics of Thai classrooms where, as said, the teacher-centred style is dominant and students' participation in the class is rare. Students in this class seemed to wait for teachers to lead the class, to tell them what to do, to help them pass the examination, and so on. This passive learning could be explained by a deep-rooted classroom culture where Thai students are taught to be passive, obedient and respectful to teachers. This attitude creates a compliance culture where the absence of questions or disagreement is the norm and where there is considerable dependence on teachers. Because students acknowledged that the teacher was more senior, and had more experience and greater knowledge, they expected the teacher to pass on to them knowledge so they could pass the module examination, as well as to make decisions for them in terms of the content of study, topics of reports written by students, or topics of the exam. Teachers who tried to encourage students to direct their own learning or to think critically tended to receive negative feedback from the students as students believed that such teachers failed to satisfy their job requirements and that this type of learning was too serious and difficult. Without the teacher's supervision and guidance, students expressed frustrations when they were expected to manage and direct their learning for themselves.

The students' respect and deference to teachers highlighted the superior-inferior relationship which is dominant in Thai society. The acceptance of teacher's power could be seen vividly when students had conversations with the teachers. Students always called the teachers by the titles *kru* or *ajarn*. The former is the Thai equivalent of teacher and the latter is perhaps closer in this context to professor but both words carry far greater connotations of respect and authority than their English counterparts. Students used these terms in and outside class and used appropriate, polite Thai particles when talking with teachers, but reverted to rough, highly colloquial and, in some contexts, vulgar Thai when speaking with each other, for example by using the first person pronouns *meung* and *gu*. Similarly, when the teachers walked into the class, the head of the class would ask all students to greet the teachers with a *wai*. This is a Thai greeting with hands raised to chest height, palms pressed

together and fingers extended. It is very roughly equivalent to hand shaking but again, depending on how it is performed, it carries nuances of power and social distance utterly lacking in handshakes, so in Thai culture, the young will *wai* the old but not the other way around. Through these displays, the students showed their understanding and acceptance of the hierarchy of status and respect.

However, students' deference to teachers' power went beyond straightforward manners and the observation of social niceties to the use of authority in class. All students accepted the consensus that because of the teacher's position, it was then his or her responsibility solely to punish or discipline students. According to Hallinger and Kantamara (2001b: 207) 'it is critical to note that large power distance describes a web of social expectations. It is not simply a matter of superordinates desiring authority, but within this culture subordinates expect them to exercise their legitimate power.' Thais refer to this cultural deference or inclination to show consideration to seniors as *kreng jai*. *Kreng jai* is a dominant norm that influences all social relations, not simply inside school or other formal organizations (Holmes and Tangtongtavy 1995). As students felt that they had equal status as their classmates, they had no power to discipline or control the behaviour of other students in the class; as the students responded in their interviews, a teacher who exercised authority and power in class by, for example, enforcing class rules vigorously would be unlikely to have problems with disruptive behaviour because most students were afraid of the consequences of misbehaving. This enforcement of rules emphasises the inequality of power in class, where the teacher sets the rules and the students have to follow. While some might argue that it is widely accepted that the relationship between teachers and students is hardly equal, the degree of students' acceptance to the teacher's power varies in different cultures. In the case of Thailand, the strong emphasis on the status of teachers as moral parents creates a sense of dependence, respect, and obligation. According to Wallace (2003), apart from the parents 'the teacher is supposed to be a model of the Thai cultural ideal of the moral parent who is patient, cares for and protects students from the unknown, wants students to be happy and grow, dresses and speaks politely, knows and recommends the right way of living and prevents students from being lazy and fooling around.' Through socialisation, students learn the goodness of teachers and soon begin to reciprocate by being deferential and grateful. This principle of dependence and reciprocity results in 'a pervasive, socially-legitimated expectation that decisions should be made by those holding positions of authority and reinforces the strength of hierarchical relations' (Hallinger and Kantamara 2001b: 207).

Since students were aware that they did not have the power to negotiate with the teachers, they protected themselves by showing respect and submission as well as by avoiding confrontation with teachers. As a result, when students were in the presence of their teachers, they felt inhibited and restricted in their self-expression. They then used deferential manners (being polite and quiet) to maintain a smooth social atmosphere. Students would not express their disappointment or anger directly to the teacher. Instead, to avoid direct criticism or confrontation, they used indirect means, such as consulting with other teachers, complaining among one another, or withdrawing from the subject with which they had problems. During the interviews, although most students expressed doubts toward and dissatisfaction with some teachers, arising from both academic and interpersonal problems, students never recounted approaching directly their teachers to negotiate misunderstandings, fearing that by doing this they might be singled out as trouble makers. For example, all students reported an incident when one teacher mistakenly taught the wrong subject. Although all the students knew that the teacher had made a mistake, it was not until three weeks had passed that a few students summoned the courage to tell the teacher that he/she was in fact supposed to be teaching a wholly different subject. When asked why they had let the matter drift for so long, students reported that they were waiting for someone else to tell the teacher or for the teacher to discover it for himself/herself. This extreme lack of will to challenge teachers' actions and the reluctance to impose on a superior fit very well with Thai understandings of hierarchical relationships.

Although teachers used their power to discipline students in class, students also used power to direct their behaviour. When students recalled the incident when the whole class had a conflict with one particular teacher, their approach to the protest against the teacher showed that the students had calculated whether or not they had sufficient power to negotiate with their teacher. When students felt that they could not tolerate the teacher's unpleasant and aggressive behaviour, they first talked with people in the same group. Knowing that the voices of only a few students might not be enough to persuade the whole class to take action against the teacher, these few students acted as leaders and called for a class meeting. When it transpired that the majority of the class shared these negative feelings toward the teacher, they decided to talk to their supervisor in an attempt to change the teacher or to withdraw from this subject, knowing that their supervisor, who was also the head of the department, had more power than the teacher and that they had the majority of the class as backing. It is interesting that instead of approaching the teacher in question directly, the students opted to seek help from their supervisor. By doing this, the

students also managed to minimise confrontation. The underlying principle behind this roundabout route is students' attempt to avoid the overt conflict with the teacher and act according to the hierarchical expectation that the inferior should not directly criticise the superior.

In the case of this conflict, students relied on one another to make a change and looked for a group decision to guide their action. Group deference is one of the characteristics of collectivist cultures, where change is fundamentally a group process and in such cultures individuals typically seek confirmation from the group for any change or action. The power of the group can be seen in another case where nearly ten students withdrew from one particular subject, as they claimed that the subject was too difficult for them. When asked why they did not talk to the teacher before the problem reached this juncture, students said that only a handful of students had this problem. The majority of the class did not find the subject too difficult or the teacher to be unbearable. Furthermore, there was no one acting as a leader to solve the problem. Unlike the previous problem, where the whole class was affected, this problem was specific to only a few students, and hence it was considered an individual problem and so was not sufficiently important to risk talking to the teacher.

Although the behaviour mentioned above does not contradict the characteristics of Thai culture in terms of students' passivity and their deference to power, it would be too simplistic to use this body of research data to generalise that most Thai students shared these characteristics and were determined to behave in a similar way. Furthermore, relying solely on an analysis of national culture to explain students' behaviour rests upon the assumption that student difference is explained solely by culture. This approach not only runs the risk of overgeneralization but also overlooks the fact that the classroom is socially constructed by the social practices of teachers and students. As a result, there are also influences arising from social interactions. By examining class activities, I found that some patterns of behaviour not only deviated from common beliefs about Thai culture but could also be interpreted quite independently from Thai culture, as seen in the following section.

5.2.2 Non-Cultural Factors in Teacher-Student Interaction

While a number of researchers suggest that in Thai culture opposing a teacher's view is interpreted as a gesture of rebellion or ungratefulness and carries with it the threat of loss of face on the part of the teacher (and thereby endangering the social hierarchy for all), students in fact stated that that conflicts or disagreement with their teacher would be avoided not because of the risk of the teacher losing face but rather because they might run the risk of getting a negative evaluation from the teacher, which could have an undesirable consequence on the part of students in terms of lost marks and class points:

The [Thai] teachers have big egos. They view themselves as teachers and us as only students. If we tell them to make a change, they might hate us. (D, 2)

I had experienced this myself, when I spotted my teacher's mistake; she said I was testing her knowledge and that I thought I was better than her. (E, 1)

The feeling of awe for teachers' powers and the suspicion that they might use their power to take revenge for students' infractions against their egos contrasted with the commonly held belief that Thai students have a very high respect for their teachers. It was this fear, not respect, which kept students from voicing their opinions or challenging teachers' authority in class. While this deviation of behaviours can be interpreted with reference to Thai culture, the following reasons stemmed from the ongoing processes of teacher-student interaction in class.

According to students, their silence in class sometimes stemmed from teachers' poor teaching style and they related how certain teaching styles had a deeply negative impact on their motivation. For example, students claimed that some teachers relied only on textbooks or worksheets to such an extent that in class teachers simply recited these verbatim. As a result, students found the class pointless, uninteresting, and boring. When faced with this kind of teaching, students said that they would be better off reading and studying by themselves in their free time. Students also reported poor relationships with teachers who never asked or checked if students could follow the lesson. These teachers would never involve students in the decision-making process or enhance students' control of their own study and as a result, students felt that their contribution was not needed. Students also stated that some teachers did not make clear the purpose or objectives of

lessons or topics of study so students did not understand why they had to study these subjects, in what way some subjects could be useful for them in the future or, in the broadest sense, what they were doing or why.

According to Alderman (1999), teachers' expectations and commitment to ensuring that subjects were learned are significant factors affecting students' achievement. Unfortunately, given students' perceptions of teachers' high and unrealistic expectations, it seemed that, rather than helping to achieve academic success, these expectations increased both the pressure and the burden on students. As this feeling of discomfort increased, students gradually disengaged from learning. While some students chose to engage during class time in non-academic activities, such as talking to friends, or even left the class entirely, other students pretended to be listening attentively or to be engaged in learning when in fact it was clear that they were not. This silence or quietness was then used to disguise the fact that they did not understand the lesson or that they were bored with it. Furthermore, most students reported communication problems with foreign teachers. This alone could be a very strong reason for students remaining silent in class.

In addition to teaching style, teachers' personal characteristics also had an effect on student behaviour. Students reported that they liked teachers who were kind, helpful, friendly, and approachable and toward these teachers they were willing to show respect and to cooperate with them in class. As most students believed that good students should listen and pay attention carefully in class, being silent and not disturbing or challenging the teacher meant that they accomplished the goal of being good students. Their silence in class, hence, was a manner of demonstrating respect toward their teachers. In contrast, students said that they were likely to withdraw their attention in classes where the teacher was biased and self-centred, or where the teachers criticised or expressed anger at them when they failed to do what the teacher wanted. When students encountered these negative learning experiences, it affected the classroom atmosphere; students felt that the teacher could not create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere so they refrained from participating in class. The silence, in this case, was a sign of a decline in students' motivation.

Students' evaluations of their ability can also indicate the level of motivation students will invest in their learning. Students had certain beliefs about their academic ability as well as expectations about their study before they began at the tertiary level. The fact that most students decided to choose English as their major because they were not

good at, for example, Mathematics or because they got a good grade in English in high school, showed that students initially judged their abilities by reference to their previous performance and predicted their tendency to achieve success or failure in their field of study. Relevant to these perceptions is attribution theory and self-efficacy theory, commonly referred to in the field of motivational psychology. (Bandura 1977, Dörnyei 2001, Weiner 1994, and Wentzel and Wigfield 1998). Bandura (1986) proposed that students' efficacy (expectations that they can accomplish a given task or activity) is a major determinant of their effort and persistence. Students' beliefs about their ability can be enhanced or suppressed, depending on their experiences during the course of study. Although, after a year and a half at the University, students reported positive experiences of study such as developing better listening and speaking skills, negative learning experiences, such as the degree of difficulty of the subject, lack of achievement, language problems and so on, seemed to overshadow this improvement. As a result, most students seemed to cast doubt on their own abilities and were uncertain whether they were good enough to reach their learning goals.

Students' motivational flux describes the dynamic character and temporal aspect of motivation. According to Dörnyei (2005: 83) 'when motivation is examined in its relationship to specific learner behaviours and classroom processes, there is a need to adopt a process-oriented approach/paradigm that can account for the daily ups and downs of motivation to learn, that is, the ongoing changes of motivation over time.' As students would in total spend four years at the University, which is quite a length of time, their motivation to learn can be expected to fluctuate over time. When students' motivation was in the down phase they might experience a lack of willingness or effort to pursue their study goals and so this would result in a decrease in motivation to pay attention or participate in class.

However, even though a given individual may believe that he or she is competent enough to accomplish a task and control its outcome, the task or activity may not be undertaken if there is no reason or incentive for so doing. Students seemed to have mixed opinions on each subject that they were studying; the subjects were described as, amongst other things, 'useful', 'boring', 'difficult', or 'irrelevant'. This directly refers to students' perceptions of the value of an activity and includes the different components of subjective task values, such as interest value, attainment value, and utility values. It is believed that to engage in, or remain engaged in, any task or activity, students must have a sense of its

interest, importance or utility value. As students' perceived values of the activity are influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, it is important to draw a distinction between the two and to find how each affected students' perceptions of the value of their study. Harter (1981) distinguishes five separate dimensions which show different orientations towards intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While intrinsic motivation leads to a preference for challenge, curiosity and interest, independent mastery, independent judgement and internal criteria for success, extrinsic motivation relates to a preference for easy work, pleasing the teacher/getting grades, dependence on a teacher when solving problems, a reliance on teacher's judgement about what to do, and the use of external criteria for judging success. The distinction presented here does not imply that the two types of motivations exist as polar opposites. Indeed, it is widely accepted that students' actions are probably prompted by a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The focus here therefore is on to which side students are most biased and the extent to which this influences their behaviour.

Since most students said that their main aims for studying English were to get a job, to achieve good grades, or simply to be with close friends, their motivation was clearly likely to be extrinsic. This extrinsic motivation can then influence students' perception of the value of the subjects of study. Because most students wanted to be able to speak English well in order to get better jobs when they graduate, they placed a relatively higher value on subjects that lead to the development of listening and speaking skills. This career-orientation leads to an engagement with study in order to pass exams (preferably with good results) rather than truly to explore the English language. Following on from students' highly instrumental involvement in English, it is reasonable to assume that their motivation is likely to be short-lived and will be exhausted once their extrinsic goals have been met. Because the perceived value of the subject can indicate how persistent students can be when they engage in learning, it is important for teachers to be aware of students' feelings on this subject. Unfortunately, in this classroom, students claimed that some teachers did not do enough to generate and maintain their interest or to help them to transfer class knowledge to situations outside the classroom.

It can be seen that even looking at only one aspect of student behaviour – the passivity of students – equally viable explanations can be offered both by reference to Thai culture and by reference to non-cultural factors, notable different motivational theories, the influences of significant others, or the classroom context. The findings also showed that

socialisation experiences and social encounters in the classroom are related to students' motivation. As discussed above, students' perceptions of their self-efficacy and competence seemed to be based in part on what they learned by watching and interacting with teachers and peers. As with teachers, relationships with peers have been related to students' motivational response in the classroom. The following section will discuss peer influence with respect to the characteristics of peer interactions in the class and how this affected students' behaviour and motivation.

5.3 PEER INTERACTION

As peers are significant figures in the classroom, knowing how or why they interacted with one another could help significantly in understanding the classroom dynamic. While patterns of teacher-student interaction, such as the passivity of students or the teacher-centred teaching method, can be explained by reference to broadly accepted concepts of culture, such as power-distance, students' own explanations of their behaviour in class seemed to involve more interpersonal factors.

5.3.1 The 'Cautious' Social Circle among Students

According to Holmes and Tangtongtavy (1995: 41), every individual (Thai or otherwise) operates within a social circle comprised of three different layers. The innermost circle is the family circle, where the individual is closely intertwined with the well-being of the other family members. Within the family circle, transgressions and mistakes can easily be forgiven due to the close bonds between family members. The second circle is the cautious circle which is composed of people with whom the individual interacts on a frequent but more official basis. This includes colleagues, classmates, teachers, doctors and so on. Behaviour in this circle is likely to entail 'proper' conduct, such as being courteous, cautious, deferential or friendly, because each participant in the relationship wants to keep it functioning smoothly for the good of both parties. The third circle is the selfish circle where each individual has minimum contact, mainly one-time-only, and has no influence or benefit on the other. This circle is impersonal and indifferent; in short, it's every man for himself.

Within the students' context, their classroom circle mainly existed within the cautious circle, where they interacted largely with friends and teachers. As students learnt to adopt the classroom values present in their immediate learning environment, they processed and stored information about their friends and teachers. Students would then use this information to guide their behaviour. Students' general perception of their classroom revealed that classroom cohesion was not as close as one would expect from research on collectivist classrooms. Students chose friends on the basis of similarity, such as coming from the same high school, having similar interests, and physical proximity such as sitting near one another, and then divided themselves into different groups with their own rules and beliefs. While students in the same group were close to one another, they only rarely mixed or interacted with students from other groups. Students' accounts of class friendships clearly showed that they divided their friends in terms of inner and outer groups and this classification affected the way they treated one another. Because of the importance of inner and outer group relationships to the understanding of the social life of this particular classroom, it is necessary to explain this classification somewhat.

Interaction with the inner group is inspired by a feeling of mutual understanding, intimacy and informality. The strong bonds among friends mean that students felt relaxed and uninhibited in the company of their close friends and when interacting with these friends they do not need to put on a social performance or contrived social presentation as they did when they interacted with outer groups; students could be themselves. They could speak their mind and argue with their friends without worrying that the friends would be upset or disturbed and they did not need to be shy or embarrassed when they made a fool of themselves or, from the perspective of Thai culture, they were not worried about losing face and, as long as students were in this trusted group, they felt secure and comfortable. Naturally, these feelings are accompanied by a feeling of responsibility toward the group. Students identified with the group by various means, such as sitting close together, sharing the burden of class work, or engaging in other tasks together. As part of the group, each student was expected to follow group norms and reciprocate the favours done by others in the group. Members of the group who failed to fulfil the group's need or expectation were likely to be retaliated against through a range of sanctions, ranging from being mildly told off to being barred from the group permanently.

To maintain peer acceptance and avoid rejection, students were highly motivated to conform to peer pressure, even though sometimes this might have run counter to their personal beliefs. For example, some students reported that they did not want to help their friends cheat in an exam but they felt that they had to do so because this type of help was expected of group members. In terms of educational aspiration, the interviews showed that the influence of friends was a complex area, as it has been seen that depending on their group orientation, friends could influence each others' academic attempts in negative, positive, or neutral ways. For example, students who were members of a group with relatively poor attitudes to academic achievement were likely to avoid hard work or show no effort to study. In contrast, students whose group shared values orientated to achieving academic success reported that they constantly checked competitively with their friends to see if they were working at (at least) the same pace as their friends. In the case of groups composed of students with mixed abilities, a heavy reliance on using friends as a criterion for framing attitudes to academic effort could pose a problem. As students tended to seek help from their more academic friends, rather than from their teacher, they would naturally compare themselves with their friends. If a student failed to understand a lesson and the lesson also passed his/her friend by, some students took this as an excuse to say that as even the better students could not understand the lesson, they, as less successful students, would have no chance and, as a result, they withdrew their attention and effort. Interestingly, some students did not feel that they influenced each other's attitudes toward academic achievement as they respected each other's right to hold different views about their study. These behaviours, which yielded a mixed reaction to academic achievement, illustrated not only a desire for positive acceptance and identity within peer groups but also the importance of the beliefs and values that each group holds.

While the inner group interactions showed students demonstrating genuine intimacy and trust, the interaction with the outer group was more cautious and superficial. Since students said that they were not close to classmates from outside their groups, they were self-conscious and self-restrained when they had to interact with those from the outer group. Their classmates were therefore treated with more consideration, caution and inhibition and as a result the relationship with the outer group was relatively distant and students were not deeply involved with one another. To perpetuate the relationship with the outsiders, the students emphasised certain aspects of self-presentation and social consideration. According to students, they presented themselves more politely and discreetly to outsiders and tended to stay out of others' way, avoiding undue intimacy and

conflict. In order to do this, students restrained their behaviour where there was the potential for discomfort or conflict with the classmates by complying with others' wishes or request, being reluctant to disturb or interrupt others, restraining their own displeasure or anger, and by avoiding asserting their opinions or needs.

Examples of these behavioural patterns can be seen in various situations such as when cheating in their exam or when doing group work. While students were aware both that cheating was wrong as far as normative class rules were concerned, and that some members of their groups failed to contribute to group work, they still helped their classmates to cheat or allowed some of their classmates to take advantage of them by not helping with group work. Students never reported their classmates' wrongdoing for fear of destroying friendships or appearing to be cruel or selfish. Similarly, students would refrain from asserting their ideas when engaged in group work if they felt that by doing so they might cause conflict or tension among classmates from other groups. In the case of cheating, students helped their friends cheat because it was part of the expectation and reciprocity of their friendship. However, their help toward outsiders seemed to develop instead out of a desire to avoid trouble and confrontation. This kind of behaviour did not happen only at the individual level. Each group developed its own system of mutual understanding and unofficial rules that operated within the group so, for example, it was the responsibility of group members to discipline or to criticise each other when members transgressed group rules, as in the case of waiting for one another to come to class together. Students I and L reported the pressure on group members who did not wait for others through the use of sarcastic comments or gossiping. In the case of other disruptive behaviour, such as answering the phone in class, student A and L reported that they would only reprimand their in-group members but not out-group members when this behaviour happened in class. Student then would not come into conflict with each other by directly criticising members of other groups. Each group had clearly marked territory within the physical space of the class and members maintained group boundaries to such an extent that they would avoid occupying or entering the area of a group to which they did not belong. As a result, students only interacted with those who were sitting next to or close to them. While the tendency to watch out for oneself and stay out of trouble helped to create smooth personal relationships, this, at the same time, isolated people from one another. The lack of interaction between the inner group and the outer group could explain the lack of cohesiveness in the whole class. This in turn could lead to a tolerance of disruptive

behaviour and a weak measure of social control. The issue of disruptive behaviour will be discussed later.

If the behaviour described above is interpreted with reference to Thai cultural values, it could easily be seen to be related to the concept of *kreng jai*, which students seemed to use unconsciously as the core value in maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships. The term *kreng jai* is defined by Klausner (1993: 199) as 'to be considerate, to feel reluctant to impose upon another person, to take another person's feelings into account, or to take every measure not to cause discomfort or inconvenience for another person.' However, when students were probed, it appeared that there were motives other than a genuine feeling towards others' well-being underlying these controlled manners and expressions. In fact, students' behaviour was strategically calculated as a means of self-defence or self-advancement; students were nice to others because they wanted others to be nice to them too. Similarly, students helped others because they would like to get some help in return. According to Valentine (1997: 103) 'calculated behaviours may not simply be a matter of appropriate self-presentation for the sake of belonging to a pre-existent group; but it may be the means of fostering useful connections' so students' helpful and polite manners were not only deployed to sustain the propriety of their class context but also to acquire personal gain and to avoid personal loss. An interpretation of these behaviours can not be restricted to only cultural traits, but should also include personal self-interest and rational choices in particular social conditions. Given the student responses when interviewed, it certainly seems at least possible that if students were placed in other circumstances where being nice and polite to one another were not the standards of conduct, students' behaviour might be different, being dependent on what behaviours were valued in that context.

5.3.2 Self-Concept

Because of the social distance between classmates, students also expressed concerns about how their classmates perceived them, as well as their uneasiness when they have to work with classmates from different groups. Such concerns of self-concept have an impact on how students behave in class. William and Burden (1997) suggested that the multifaceted nature of the self-concept encompassed three specific aspects, namely self-image (how students view themselves), self-esteem (the evaluative feelings associated with students' self image) and self-efficacy (students' beliefs about their abilities in certain areas). Through

socialisation with their friends, students constantly compared themselves with people both in the in-group and in out-groups in order to develop their self-concept and understand their place within the classroom. Students strove to present the best possible appearance to others so that they made a good impression on others, secured a favourable public image, boosted their self-esteem, and lived up to the standards of important reference groups. Therefore, the amount and kind of positive or negative feedback that students received from their peers and teachers affected their self-concept and consequently their behaviour.

Through this socialisation, students know what kinds of behaviours would be approved by their classmates. As a result, they voluntarily refrained from actions that incurred a negative judgement from their friends and classmates. For example, students knew that showing enthusiasm for any academic-related behaviour was not really welcomed in their class. Students who showed confidence in learning through, for example, volunteering to perform in class activities or answering the teacher's question, would get, at best, a lukewarm reception from their classmates or, worse, be labelled as a show off or the teacher's pet. When faced with situations where they were required to display behaviour indicative of an academic orientation, students reported anxiety about their performance and a fear of being judged by their classmates. Because students did not want to be placed in an embarrassing or shameful situation, they developed a number of unique patterns of behaviour to protect their self-image, which included deliberately withholding their effort and participation in class (for fear of rejection by their friends). Students' reluctance to participate in class or assert their ideas was not only influenced by their deference to teachers' power but also by fear of threats to their self-concept. According to Geen and Shea (1997), the presence of others can lead to both social facilitation and social inhibition depending on how the individuals evaluate the reactions from others and the level of the task. LaMonica (2001) concluded that:

When an audience is present, individuals experience evaluation apprehension – the feeling that he or she is being judged by the rest of the group as to whether he or she fits in. The typical result of this phenomenon is to either cause the individual to take action to form a good impression on the group, or to refrain from behaviours that might embarrass or ostracise the individual from the group.

Students' accounts highlight this negative relationship between social concerns and academic achievement in the sense that having academic success was not viewed by students as an effective means of gaining peer acceptance.

5.3.3 The Significance of Peer Groups

Students also used the larger peer group as a source of behavioural standards. With reference to classroom rules and regulations, students would observe whether or not the majority of students followed or ignored any given rule. If a rule was adhered to by the majority of students, it was likely that all students would acknowledge the importance of that rule and behave accordingly. In contrast, if students noticed that some rule was overlooked by their classmates, that rule would be deemed unimportant and so subject to violation. For example, one of the reasons cited by students for failing to turn off mobile phones in class was that other students kept their phones on. The same reasoning applied to cheating in examinations. Because the whole class had a high tolerance for cheating, there were no private sanctions or group/class monitoring of this behaviour and as a consequence it was easy for students to cheat. When cheating is widespread and goes unpunished, it is seen as an easy route to pass tests or achieve a better grade, with as little work as possible. The consequence of this is that cheating could undermine students' attempts to learn or pay attention in class. When students looked at the whole-class beliefs in order to judge whether or not to act, it becomes possible to predict behaviour by simply referencing the predominant classroom norms. It can therefore be said that as the priority of the whole class was not directed toward academic achievement, this may very well have affected students' motivation to learn or cooperate in the learning process.

The findings suggest that students' views on quality and intimacy of peer interaction had an impact on their behaviour in class. However, one cannot be certain that having a positive relationship with friends would lead to academic success or pro-social behaviour. In fact, the level of peer acceptance and group norms are significant determinants in students' behaviour. While approval from the peer group is related to students' sense of self-esteem and self-image, group norms for conduct are related to pro- or anti-social behaviours in class. Furthermore, the lack of cohesiveness between the whole class and the lack of peer sanction and intervention could lead to misbehaviour in class as will be explained below.

5.4 DISRUPTIVE CLASS BEHAVIOUR

While a substantial portion of the literature suggests that students in Thai classrooms are well behaved and well disciplined – mainly, as we have seen, because of the influence of the cultural imperative of being *kreng jai* – students actual observed behaviour in class was in fact quite contrary to this and was marked by a noticeable absence of *kreng jai* in peer interactions. This lack of *kreng jai* was manifested in different types of behaviour, including answering the phone in class, sneaking out of class, or cheating in exams. Even when the class was interesting to most students, some students still misbehaved. This disruptive behaviour happened sufficiently frequently that all students noticed and made comments on it when interviewed.

5.4.1 Irresponsibility and Indifference of Individual Students

The causes of misbehaviour can be divided into those arising from individual factors and those which are rooted in the classroom. At the individual level, students' interviews indicated that causes of misbehaviour included a low sense of self-efficacy in their learning ability, a lack of consideration towards others' well-being, problems with study, dislike of the subject or the teachers, or general mood swings. It was clear from the preliminary classroom observations that there was a marked tendency for the same students to misbehave in almost every class. These students displayed characteristics of individualism in the sense that by disturbing the class or violating the rules, they broke the solidarity of the group and the classroom expectation of conformity and smooth interpersonal relationships. It is believed that in collectivist cultures, students are socialised and ascribed roles which demand a high degree of cooperation with others and also concern for others' welfare. Where a context demands conformity and order, such as in a classroom, students are expected or obliged to act accordingly so that the class can run smoothly. Through social interactions, students learned what kinds of behaviour were appropriate or not in the class. However, not every student understands and carries through the process of modifying self-expression to fit in with social surroundings, as some students show a strong tendency to go their own way (Mulder 2000). For example, while most students responded towards the lesson that was tiring, uninteresting, or meaningless by hiding in the mass of students, i.e. sitting quietly or acting as if listening, in order to maintain the

classroom order, non-cooperative students decided to do what they liked, without worrying about classroom norms or their self-image. They seemed indifferent to the socially inspired self-identity with which most students have to be content. Their behaviour was based on their personal preferences and they did not concern themselves with social integration and control.

5.4.2 Allegiance to Peer Group Norm

Although the above explanation suggests that disruptive behaviour resulted from some few odd individuals who had become disengaged from classroom rules and regulations, this misbehaviour could also be seen as students' responses to peer pressure. When students were in a group which did not value socially responsible behaviours, they were likely to behave in the same way as the other group members in order to make a good impression and avoid group rejection or exclusion. For these students, being disruptive or acting contrary to the classroom culture was understood in terms of an alternative allegiance to their own group norm or expectation (Valentine 1997: 100). These students might not have issues with low self-efficacy or course difficulty but rather acted to show loyalty to their group. Underlying these two explanations of students' disruptive behaviour is the need-fear dilemma, that is an individual's simultaneous need for autonomy on the one hand and fear of isolation and exclusion on the other (Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998: 41). In this context, the theory illuminates how students would like to be themselves and be independent but at the same time they would like to be accepted into their preferred group.

While some students reported that disruptive behaviour was caused by individual psychological factors, others said that some of the class's reactions potentially reinforced these disruptive behaviours. In a well-functioning and cohesive group, students reported that from time to time they reminded or pressured one another to behave according to the rules of the class. However, students said that there were times when group pressure or sanction did not work and that some individuals were immune to the pressure and influence of peers. Students also reported that they valued cohesiveness and their relationship with one another to the extent that they sometimes ignored these disruptive behaviours in order to avoid conflicts with one another. When this happened, students left teachers and other classmates to confront misbehaving students or to solve the problem. Since there was an unofficial norm that each group would not interfere with the problems of other groups, it is highly unlikely that the classmates from different group would

mediate or resolve misbehaviour occurring in the class and therefore, most of the time, teachers were solely responsible for controlling classroom behaviour.

5.4.3 Teachers' Lack of Authority

The four weeks of classroom observation showed that most teachers' reactions to disruptive behaviour did not extend to verbal criticism of the students. When phones rang in class, most teachers would either stop the class or stare at the students who answered the phone. Occasionally they gestured students to talk outside. Similarly, when more students walked out of the class, some teachers might ask students where they were going and only allowed them to go when they said they needed the toilet. There was no direct criticism or investigation of these students' actions. Some teachers even ignored these behaviours and carried on teaching. According to the students, when the teachers failed in this way to control the disruptive behaviours in class, it maximised the chance of more disruptive behaviours and this gave rise in the student interviews to comments to the effect that teachers were negligent in using their authority in class and that they should enforce rules more vigorously.

Since I had a chance to have informal talks with four teachers who taught this class, I learnt that the teachers were fully aware of the disruptive behaviour but their attitudes towards dealing with problem students differed significantly from those of the students. Teachers said rules and regulations may keep students in line to some extent, but it is students' commonsense which matters most. The teachers pointed out that these were university students and that they were old enough to know what kind of behaviour was appropriate and so students should not need to be constantly reminded of how to behave in class. Teachers expressed the opinion that by being a nuisance, it was the students who lost, so there was no need to criticise or punish them every time they violated the rules or disrupted the class. Furthermore, most teachers felt that directly criticising students in class created a negative atmosphere which might in turn have an undesirable impact on other students who had hitherto been well-behaved. One teacher admitted that he preferred the class when all those students who usually misbehaved had gone because the rest of the class could carry on with their study without any disruptions. Teachers also developed different indirect means of dealing with disruptive behaviour when they knew that direct means such as class rules or punishment did not work. For example, apart from being vigilant in proctoring the exam, two teachers said that they prevented the problem of

widespread cheating by making different sets of exam papers, increasing the level of difficulty in the exam or using written exams instead of multiple choice.

While it is undeniable that the disruptive behaviour mentioned above interfered with the learning process, students' behaviour could be described as passively non-cooperative as these students had never manifested their rebellion in full by, for example, openly speaking up and questioning teacher's decisions, rules or practices (Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998: 129). It might be assumed that as most the disruptive behaviour was oblique to the teacher's authority and hence less threatening to the teacher's self-esteem, it was unnecessary on the part of teachers to use a very controlling or suppressive approach when dealing with this behaviour. However, the discrepancy between teachers' and students' ideas about how to deal with troublemakers in the class could potentially lead to more class disruption as some students might take the lack of criticism and punishment of misbehaving students as a signal that this behaviour was acceptable to the teacher and so carry on behaving badly. Not only did these patterns of disruptive behaviour deviate from commonly held beliefs about Thai students but it also transpired that students' reported attitudes to and experience of group work stood at significant odds with those suggested by the research literature.

5.5 PROBLEMS WITH GROUP WORK

As we have seen, studies by both Thai and western scholars agree that Thailand is a collectivist culture which places a high value on relationships within the group. People in collectivist societies place group goals above their personal goals; they are brought up to be loyal to, and integrate into, strong cohesive groups (Dimmock 2000: 47). As a result, individuals tend to look primarily to their referent social group in order to make sense of their roles and direct their behaviour. Social interaction is then very other-directed, with individuals regarding group expectation and support as fundamental prerequisites to individuals gaining confidence. This reliance on the group highlights the value of co-existence, interdependence and conformity towards group norms.

5.5.1 Group Work In the Thai Context

The significance of the group in collectivist cultures has convinced many teachers and researchers that group work might be the most suitable method of learning and in turn this has led to a warm embrace of collaborative learning as a way of organising and conducting classroom instruction. Within the framework of collaborative learning, students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. They use a variety of learning activities, such as peer-teaching, joint problem solving and brainstorming, to improve their understanding and to complete a learning task. A common factor in effective collaborative learning is that it highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions. There is also a sharing of authority and an acceptance of responsibility among group members in working toward the group goal. The underlying premise of collaborative learning is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, in contrast to competition in which individuals best other group members. As a result, students are responsible for one another's learning as well as for their own so the success of one student helps other students to be successful. According to Gokhale (1995), proponents of collaborative learning claim that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking. By working with others, students can learn from one another and can see different points of view and solutions to a task or activity. Collaborative learning has proven not only to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to interact with one another and act in helpful, rather than competitive ways, but also to help students achieve higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals (Johnson and Johnson 1986).

With its usefulness seemingly well researched and established, it was not surprising that many teachers have adopted the group-based learning in their classroom instruction. This is particularly so in the context of the Thai classroom. Given the dominance of students' group behaviour it seemed natural that group work would be the preferred way of learning. The group orientation manifested itself in different types of student behaviours, such as their tendency to do things together both in and outside classes, their reliance on the group to make decisions, their propensity to share knowledge or materials in class, and their tendency to organise themselves into groups when given individual tasks in class and in light of this, teachers' tendency to use group work is easily understandable.

In the classroom, both Thai and foreign teachers used group work to complement their teaching. However, there were slight differences in their approach. Thai teachers tended to ask students to do group work as an extra assignment in their own time while the foreign teachers used group work mainly in class. From direct observation in the class where group work was implemented, students seemed to help one another to complete the task. There were some odd students who tended to sit and wait for answers from their friends, but when the teacher monitored the task, students became more involved. As far as can be judged from external observation, with the assistance as well as presence of the teachers, the group work was carried out relatively successfully in the class. However, when students were asked to reflect on the group work that they did outside the classroom, when obviously there was no teacher oversight, all of the students reported a number of problems, including issues with non-contributors, the low quality of group work, and a lack of help from teachers.

There are different explanations which can here be used to understand the problem of group work. Judging from the accounts given in interviews, students seemed to lack the skills necessary for high quality cooperation. These skills include leadership, decision making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills (Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998: 248). These skills need to be established with the group before students can successfully engage in any collaborative or cooperative learning but unfortunately teachers seemed prone to placing socially unskilled students in a learning group and then expecting them to cooperate effectively and successfully to complete the task. Most of the time, students were ordered to do extra work (a class presentation, a written report) because of the teachers' interest (or whim) and not out of students' own interest. The fact that most students were used to a teacher-centred type of instruction and also only rarely sought out teachers' assistance outside the classroom made it more difficult for students to adjust to and to grasp the concept of collaborative learning.

5.5.2 In-Groups and Out-Groups

While it is believed that the cohesiveness of the group is a significant factor in successful group-based learning, in this class cohesiveness within groups has actually proven to hinder the effectiveness of group work. There was evidence that when members of a group were very close, students seemed to value their relationship with one another so much that they tried to avoid disagreements or conflicts by deliberately withdrawing their ideas or by

showing an unwillingness to challenge the ideas of other group members. This included a reluctance to check each other's progress after work was distributed and assigned to the individual group members. This problem also manifested itself when students had to work with classmates from different groups. While the out-group members expressed their discomfort when asked to share or assert their ideas (as they feared that the in-group members might reject their ideas as they did not belong to the group), the in-group members expressed their reluctance to delegate the work or to tell the out-group members what to do because they were not close to one another. This reluctance to communicate with one another clearly suppressed critical thinking as well as work progress. As a result, a superficially cohesive group climate did not help to promote collaborative learning, as is commonly believed.

This apparent group cohesiveness was also used by some group members to avoid doing any work at all. Some group members gambled with the group cohesiveness, knowing that with the strong bond between the group members, their friends were likely to forgive them if they failed to help with the group work but had good reasons or showed some remorse for their non-involvement. For example, some students defended their in-group non-contributors by accepting their friends' excuses for not helping, such as family problems or a lack of time because the students worked part-time. Although students allowed friends to take advantage of other group members from time to time, they expected their friends to reciprocate this understanding if for some reason, they could not participate in group work in the future. By contrast, the out-group members found that the lack of cohesiveness between them and the in-group members meant that they had no responsibilities to the in-group members and that they were not influenced by any in-group pressure to help with the group work. As a result they refrained from helping or participating in work. The interdependence (or the lack of it) resulted in some students doing significantly more work than others, leading to poor quality outcomes.

Students' attempts to keep conflict or disagreement at bay also appeared in their reactions to or solution for the problem of non-contributing members. In order to avoid confrontations with the non-contributors, some students solved this problem by allowing other students to restrict their contribution to only paying money for costs involved in completing the group work (for, for example, photocopying or binding reports). Some other groups solved the problem by simply accepting the situation and allowing some members to contribute significantly less work. Similarly, some students saw that an

apparent problem was in fact of direct benefit to them as by doing more work than others, they felt that they would gain more knowledge. While some groups said that they pressured the non-contributors to do group work by telling them off or giving some work to them, these measures were used for only non-contributing in-group members; the majority of students let out-group non-contributors go their own way. Students would allow these non-contributors to present the paper in class or to have their names on the cover of the written report in order to avoid any conflict or confrontation. Apart from avoiding conflict, when probed, it appeared that students also acted in this manner because they did not want to appear to be selfish. A concern with self-image and friendship in turn thus made it easier for non-contributors to take advantage of other group members.

The class disruptive behaviour and the problem of group work are examples of behaviours that contrasted with the assumption that culture values are unproblematically internalised and were unconsciously used by individuals when they interacted with one another. Students' accounts of, for example, non-contributory group members showed that the issues were not related to expectations of teacher-centredness. These behaviours emphasised the complex social processes in which students actively participated in and on which they based their behaviour. While some elements of students' behaviour had traces of cultural beliefs, their actions were the result of their evaluation of what was happening in class and were simultaneously determined by their social context.

5.6 SOCIAL INTERACTION AS MEDIATIONAL TOOL

As I previously wrote, understanding social interaction and context could uncover some elements of truth about students' lives that would otherwise have been overlooked when the focus was only at the individual level. I would like briefly to discuss the significance of social interaction towards the acquisition of sociocultural knowledge which shapes how students think, feel, and act. Viewed from the sociocultural perspective, in a classroom setting, students participate in different culturally specified activities. As activity is defined in terms of sociocultural setting in which collaborative interaction, intersubjectivity, and assisted performance occur (Donato and McCormick 1994: 455), the interactional activity that arises between teachers and students in the class could enlighten us about their social

behaviour. According to Wentzel (1999), as the teachers and students engage in the learning tasks and other activities, the ongoing social interactions teach students about themselves and what they need to do to become accepted and competent members of their classroom environment. Within the context of their interpersonal interactions, teachers create the learning environment by the way in which they select and deliver tasks, carry out evaluation, and exercise authority and control via rules and conventions for completing learning activities as well as rules for social conduct. These culturally based practices and knowledge are mediational tools which students use to decide on or justify their actions. Through socialisation, students mutually develop a set of values and standards for behaviours and goals they should strive to achieve. As a result, the construction of classroom rules, values, etiquettes, and ways of relating to others are the consequence of a process of sociocultural mediation.

As with the literature on teachers' influence on students' motivational processes, peer influence has also been studied with respect to peer interactions and perceived support from peers. Whereas parents and teachers facilitate the learning and adoption of cultural values and beliefs in the early years, peers seem to play an increasingly important role as students reach adolescence. This transition can affect the way the students view their social orientation. Alderman (1999) stated that as students – adolescents in particular – define themselves by the groups with which they affiliate, they articulate sets of behaviour and values that they would like and expect each other to achieve, even though some types of behaviour might interfere with their academic progress and disrupt the class order. From the interview, it was clear that peer pressure, in the forms of peer acceptance and rejection, was so forceful that it pushed students to behave in certain ways that, while they conformed to the group norm, contradicted the commonly held beliefs and expectations of what good students should do. This was evident in the problem of lateness, cheating, and group work in which the fear of rejection or ridicule resulted in improper and disruptive behaviour. In cases like this, it can be said that the mediational tool of conforming to peer pressure may win the friends over but may have a long term effect on students' academic achievement. It also showed that students often attempted to balance, negotiate, and accommodate the competing or conflicting socialization influences in order to reach their personal goals. Whether the mediational tool contributes to a positive and negative impact depended mainly on its effect on its users. For example, although students' cheating was wrong from a teacher's point of view, this action helped strengthen students' friendship and group cohesion. If group cohesion is very important for students, it is likely

that cheating might be more difficult for teachers to eradicate. Knowing which mediational tools students employ in different situations could enhance a teacher's understanding of his or her students which in turn could potentially lead to better classroom practices and management, thus benefiting both the teacher and students.

By talking to students, I learnt a great deal about students' worlds in the form of their relationships with teachers and friends, their attitudes toward their studies, their frustrations, their conflicts, and so on. According to Oldfather (nd), gaining some access to students' subjective perspectives is an essential aspect of efforts to understand the cognitive mediation involved in students' motivational process. The research findings from this study reflected the centrality of the individual's perceptions in motivational constructs and so students' judgements of their own abilities and their past learning experience could be related to self-efficacy beliefs and attribution theory; students' ambitions to have careers in the tourism industry or to achieve good grades revealed their extrinsic motivation; students' reluctance to be the centre of attention in class showed both the teacher and the group motivational influence; students' shared negative attitudes towards showing enthusiasm in class revealed the influence of social context. Students' accounts also showed the ongoing changes in motivation over time as students moved from the first year to second year and experienced more learning obstacles, as well as other distracting influences such as peer pressure and conflict with teachers. These insights into different motivation perspectives could not be achieved if the focus of the study had been on the large culture, which attempts to explain behaviours in terms of pre-defined characteristics of ethnic, national, and international groups.

From the analysis thus far it appears that students' explanations for their behaviour were located mainly in the domain of interpersonal and intrapersonal elements of their understandings of the reality of their classroom. However, although Thai cultural influences were missing from students' interpretations, some of their behaviour did resemble Thai national characteristics and so it would be premature to conclude that because students had not explicitly referred to Thai cultural beliefs and values, this influence was wholly absent. In order further to explore the relationship between culture and behaviour, students were shown a video filmed in a classroom in a secondary school in England.

5.7 EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL ISSUES DURING GROUP DISCUSSION

The video session and subsequent group discussion with the research participants was undertaken in order to let students experience (at a distance) a classroom from another culture and to ask participants to identify similarities and differences between it and their own classroom. The focus here was not to decide which classroom type was 'better' but rather was on students' reflections on their own behaviour and whether they saw this as being influenced by Thai cultural values or not.

Apart from the obvious differences in terms of class size and the arrangement of the tables and chairs, students pointed out that the teacher-student interaction and the learning process were markedly different from their own classroom. In terms of the teacher-student relationship, students were impressed by the relaxed interactions between the teacher and his students and the active participation of students, especially the frequency with which they raised their hands to answer the teacher's questions and the extent to which they voluntarily participated in class activities. While this two-way communication might be common in English classrooms, it contrasted with Thai students' behaviour in their classrooms. Students also mentioned that the English lesson from the video was interesting because the teacher used a range of teaching techniques, such as role playing and songs, in his teaching process.

It should be noted that before the group discussion, when students were asked to reflect on and explain their behaviour in class, none of the students mentioned culture as an explanatory factor. Having said that, students did, on a few occasions, refer to culture to explain the different personalities of Thai and non-Thai teachers or to acknowledge the benefit of learning about other cultures through their study of English. However, after seeing a classroom from another culture, students immediately brought up the issue of culture and used it to explain the differences in behaviour between themselves and their English counterparts. Students mentioned the process of childhood enculturation as the main developmental factor in their behaviour, claiming, for example, that they were brought up and taught to respect elders and to accept always what elders said to them as being useful and valuable. Conversely, challenging elders' ideas was not encouraged. These teachings had been passed on to them through their family and schools. In contrast,

English students were brought up to be confident, outspoken, and competitive and this was witnessed in the class video. Students' accounts of the expectations and roles of Thai students therefore closely corresponded to the behaviour described in the literature and previous research. This suggests that students were aware of these socially shared conceptions but required the trigger of watching the video to bring them to consciousness; when put into a situation where they had to compare and contrast their behaviours with those of students from different cultural backgrounds the students then called upon these values to explain their behaviours.

Initially, when asked to explain why they hardly participated in class, students had said that peer reaction made them reluctant to participate actively in the lesson. However, in the group discussion, most students explained the same behaviour through the cultural value of power-distance. Students claimed that they were brought up to pay respect to and not to challenge teachers and that Thai teachers kept a large power-distance from pupils and students, and because of Thai teachers' face, they would not lower themselves to the same level of students and would not interact with students as equals; this contrasted with English teachers, who treated students as friends. Students' different explanations of the same behaviour emphasised the importance of both social interactions and cultural values. It can be assumed that within the classroom context, students experienced and evaluated what they encountered in class, such as friends' reactions or classroom norms, and acted according to what the group required without realising that their behaviours might be influenced in addition by their own culture.

In order to understand individual behavioural actions, whether they are independent of or dependent on the influence of social interaction or cultural values, it is important to know what level of actions we are attempting to understand. According to Munro (1997: 10) 'when we talk about the social behaviours of persons in a small group, we can provide descriptions and observations of sequential effects without reference to any other level; the social group in question is part of a larger society. But when we move to describing how the group interacts with other groups at that level, we are talking about the behaviours of groups, not of individual persons.' Similarly, when students were asked to explain their behaviours in class prior to the video session, they reported how they viewed themselves and their friends in their immediate environment. They identified coherent patterns of behaviour that recurred in their classroom and gave reasons, purposes, and causalities for these behaviours so their evaluations and interpretations were based on what

they saw and experienced in their class. These explanations, however, differed when the analysis was shifted to the influence of culture. At the cultural level, students used what they were taught about the characteristics of Thai culture to explain why their behaviour was different from English students. They became more aware of their own culture and, as we have seen, analysed their behaviour in a way that appears to confirm the research literature. The fact that the students described their behaviours in terms of cultural knowledge immediately after watching the video suggested that cultural knowledge may partly determine students' behaviour but the extent to which these cultural practices influenced students' behaviour was still undetermined.

The rationale for the above statement is that if students were not shown the video, it was likely that no mention would ever have been made of cultural difference, as students initially described their behaviour through what they encountered and experienced in their classroom without referring to any cultural influences. According to Wedenoja and Sobo (1997: 172) 'when people interpret the world unconsciously, they experience it as undeniably real rather than as an interpretation.' It can be seen that initially students did not use Thai culture as a device for investigating what was happening in their class. Instead, to explain their behaviour they looked for reasons within their own classroom; that is, through their interactions with peers and teachers. This indicated that the classroom had its own traditions, rules, activities, and patterns and that only insiders would understand why and how certain behaviours occurred. In other words, it suggested that the classroom has its own culture that could share some characteristics of the national culture. However, as students only mentioned the influence of national culture after they were made conscious of it, it is clear that students treated their classroom as the primary explanation for their behaviour.

Another factor is that when students were in a situation where they had to explain the behaviour of students from another society, they had to change their view from that of an insider to that of an outsider. This inevitably affected their interpretations and led them to rely on cultural knowledge to make sense of their own culture and distinguish it from the other culture so, when students were called on to interpret how they differed from others, they used the point of divergence as their main interpretive category or tool. When presented with a class which was defined as different through its national culture, students used national culture as the means of understanding the differences presented to them. It seems reasonable to suggest that however the English students' behaviour varied from

theirs, Thai students would attempt to describe it in terms of cultural differences. This suggests that students' statements about the influence of Thai culture on their behaviours represent not so much Thai national culture as the way in which Thai culture was used by students to explain their behaviour within their small classroom culture. Furthermore, while it is unarguable that each student carries cultural knowledge that is acquired through experiences in the family, schools, workplaces, and the wider community, each student also has unique sets of experiences which they do not share with others. These unique elements, according to Schwartz (1997: 70), constitute an individual personality. As a result, individuals are able to react in new and unexpected ways, especially when under situational pressure. As evident from students' accounts, some behaviour differed from their own cultural expectations as a result of their interactions with teachers and peers in class. Because of this, it is not possible to say with certainty that any one type of behaviour is definitely influenced by Thai culture and another type of behaviour is directly influenced by something else. In fact, students' behaviour was the product of both unique individual experience and shared cultural values.

6 : CONCLUSION

The study aims to answer the research question ‘To what extent can Thai culture be used to explain students’ behaviour?’ The study began with the working hypothesis that, as students belonged to the culture where they were brought up and into which they were socialised, it was inevitable that their behaviour would partly be influenced by this national culture. By undertaking classroom observation and interviewing students, the research findings and analysis yielded a mixed result. While some of the students’ behaviour resembled and could be explained by Thai national characteristics, the lack of support from students’ statements for the influence of Thai culture on their behaviour made the result inconclusive.

This concluding chapter will attempt to draw together the implications of the research and the limitations of the study. With hindsight, they will be able to explain why the answer to the research question was still inconclusive and what the study achieved and contributed to the field of education.

6.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1.1 Concerns about the Levels of Awareness and Analysis

The inconclusiveness of the research question can be explained by the level of awareness and analysis. While the former refers to the degree to which students were made aware of the influence of Thai culture, the latter refers to the level of analysis that students used to interpret their student life and their social contact. During the class observation and pair interviews, the research was conducted in the students’ immediate environment by me and the research questions were mainly about students’ behaviour and their social interactions. There was no explicit indication or reference to other cultures. Possibly as a consequence

of this, students interpreted their life at the individual and social level, without making a connection to Thai culture. This level of analysis later shifted when students became conscious of differences between their own classroom and the English students' classroom. They then attempted to explain their differences by means of cultural differences. From the research findings and analysis, it is difficult to be sure whether students' analysis at the individual and social level (small culture level) was more truthful than their analysis at the national culture level. The main point to be emphasised here is that each level provides an accurate account of intentions and actions of the social agents in its own terms and that it would be possible for the researcher to link each level to the other in order to get a complete picture of students' life and experiences.

To illustrate this point, at the individual and social level, I found patterns of behaviour and hierarchies of friendship that were specific to the group and did not conform to Thai culture. On the other hand, I also found that cultural characteristics manifested themselves in the class's social behaviour. However, these manifestations were the product of social interactions. That is, for example, when students decided to keep quiet when dealing with non-contributors in group work or cheaters during an exam, this act was explained by students at the individual and social level as a means to strengthen their friendship and maintain their good image. However, at the same time, the act of keeping quiet also highlighted the cultural orientation of conflict avoidance and maintenance of smooth interpersonal relationships. At this point, the relationship between the students' behaviour and the cultural characteristics could be seen. With respect to different levels of analysis, it is possible to contemplate a linkage between the social interactions and the national characteristics.

6.1.2 Different Approaches to Ethnographic Research

Brigitte (1996) states that a distinguishing feature of ethnographic work is that:

It is concerned with understanding what the world looks like from the point of view of participants. How do they describe and make sense of their world and their activities; how do they talk about what is going on; what is important and significant to them and what is not; what resources in their environment do they use; what categories, models and representations are relevant and meaningful to them for solving problems and carrying out their work.

The goal of ethnographic research is therefore to understand the insiders' view of their own world and to collect 'emic' data from the point of view of insiders. Since this study is located within the ethnographic research tradition with a particular emphasis on understanding students' learning and social experiences by utilising observation and interviews, it also meant to capture the whole picture of how they described, structured, and interpreted their world. The use of direct classroom observation and interviews gave me an opportunity to understand an emic view of students' world and to provide rich and detailed descriptions of real-life activities and events in naturally occurring situations. These descriptions not only remained close to the concrete reality of particular events in students' lives but also revealed distinct features of their social life.

At the same time, by allowing students to describe, explain, and interpret their own world, I gradually became aware of the ways in which students constructed and created their reality. During the course of the research, I observed the way in which students' explanations of their patterns of interactions changed from being socially based to being culturally based. This showed that students have different realities depending on their interpretations of the situations. This lesson emphasised the merits of using different tools to cross check students' constructions of their reality.

Apart from focusing on how students understand their activities and behaviour, I also recognised the need to locate this practical ethnography within a theoretical context. According to Porter (1993: 593), the purpose of ethnographic research is to shed light on an area of life whose significance depends on a theory, to elaborate on a theory, or even to check on whether the theory really does hold true and explain things as they happen in real life. Although the answer to my research question is partially inconclusive, I was able to highlight the importance of social context and interaction as part of sociocultural theory and to show the merit of a small culture approach as a means of gaining direct access to students' perspectives. The research utilises the active role of students in reflecting on their behaviour and giving reasons and explanations for why they behaved in certain ways. As a result, I have shown how students' thoughts, beliefs, and interpretational processes were transformed into observable behaviour in the classroom. These insights, gained from the use of ethnographic research, could enhance both our understanding of students' own ways of seeing things and our understanding of the conceptual tools which students use to make sense of what is happening in their classroom.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.2.1 Problems of Generalisation, Subjectivity, and Reliability

As with all qualitative research, the study has the potential to suffer from problems of generalisation and subjectivity. In the case of generalisation, I was well aware that when classroom observation is used or when semi-structured interviews are carried out with a small number of participants from within one organisation, it is difficult to know if the research findings can be generalised to other settings. By choosing to conduct this research with students from this particular provincial university, I accept that such a narrow interview population may be unrepresentative of the broader Thai university student populations. Furthermore, it is not possible to be certain if the research participants share common characteristics or behaviour with students from other universities in other locations but nevertheless it should be remembered that the research participants were selected as their student status and their educational context were relevant to the research topic. Since the main aim of this research was to find whether Thai cultural characteristics have any impact on students' behaviours, the research findings could be generalised to theory rather than to populations. If the findings suggest that Thai culture is influential, it might be possible to conduct similar research with other groups of students in different settings in order to generalise these findings. In short, the research can validly answer the question, 'Does culture play a part in Thai student motivation?' but must leave unanswered the wider, quantitative question as to how widespread this is within the entire range of the Thai student population.

With respect to the problem of subjectivity, since this research is based on subjective, interpretive, and contextual data, the reporting of data requires accuracy both in description of what is observed and in interpretation of participants' thoughts. As shown by Fornaciari and Dean (2001) human beings are indeed a complex system and when coupled with the complexities of their socialisation, the task of understanding how they interact is a daunting task. When dealing with issues that involve human thought process which could be affected by the cultural beliefs and values of the individuals being studied (as in the present research), it is important to be aware that students' reports of actions and the actions themselves may differ substantially and that interpretations and personal

meanings are subject to change, depending on what level of analysis the research participants are made aware of. As a result, it is highly possible that there is more than one explanation to describe a given type of behaviour.

6.2.2 Influence of the Researcher

It is important for researchers to be aware of their own interpretations and biases. These tend to 'result from selective observation and selective recording of information, and also from allowing one's personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted' (Johnson 1997). In this study, my potential biases could lie in the fact that I was looking for certain types of behaviours that could be explained or influenced by Thai culture, such as student passivity or the teacher's authority in class, rather than approaching the classroom observation as a *tabula rasa*. Also, by asking students to watch the video of the English classroom and then asking them to find similarities and differences with their own classes, it was unavoidable that the issue of national culture would be mentioned as this distinction was explicitly introduced as a way for students to compare and contrast the classes so even though I did not explicitly mention culture, students would naturally point this out, especially when they encountered such different classroom settings and practices. These research biases could be harmful if the researcher neglected the participants' inner world and reported only what the researcher wanted, discarding the factors that really constituted the participants' world. These problems might be compounded by the fact that I am a Thai teacher undertaking research in a Thai university with Thai students. It is possible that my unconscious cultural knowledge may have prevented my seeing the emergence of Thai culture in the investigation. Given the fact that students only identified cultural difference when faced with the video of the English classroom might indicate that during the interviews my physical appearance as a Thai helped to prevent students from seeing themselves in a third-person perspective; not being exposed to themselves as Thais but rather as students, they failed to reflect on themselves in an inter-cultural perspective. Had this research been carried out by a non-Thai teacher, it is possible that the results could have been significantly different. This is a possible avenue for future research.

The narrative account of this study and the analysis of the events and activities were based solely on my own interpretation. As students and I shared the same culture, there was a possibility that my own personal experiences (both as a Thai student and a

teacher), beliefs, and values may have shaped the way that behaviour and events were interpreted and that I may have taken some information for granted or, alternatively, deemed it irrelevant. This, of course, can lead to the problem of reliability. As Hammersley (1992: 67) puts it 'reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.' As I carried out this research alone, there is no comparison or contrast from/with other researchers, so it remains unclear and unexplored to what extent the recording of research data and its analysis are contentious; it is certainly possible that other researchers could find quite different categories with which to analyse the same data. As I interviewed each pair only once, there was no chance to follow up interesting or overlooked points after the interviews had finished. Because students' perceptions and behaviours tend to be changeable, conducting only one interview meant that I lost the chance to compare students' responses over extended periods of time. Also, drawing participants from only one classroom eliminates the possibility of comparing groups of students at the same period of time. If, however, we accept that social or human phenomena are complex and multidimensional, the findings from this study could have value as one of many perspectives on the influence of Thai culture on students' behaviour. It is, at the very least, extremely difficult to approach the impersonal flat objectivity of the natural sciences when dealing with complex human behaviour within one research project. Instead, it is the patterns which build up within the layering of many separate, diverse pieces of research which guide and answer these broader research questions.

6.2.3 Complexity of National Culture

As I was concerned that the oversimplification and stereotyping of cultural characteristics and the over-emphasis on large-scale Thai cultural values and their influence on students' behaviour might overshadow significant small-scale cultures which flourish, live, and die within this particular class, I decided not to use the data from previous studies on Thai cultural values (e.g. Komin 1990a, 1990b, Mulder 2000, etc.) to analyse the data at the outset and hence followed the small culture approach to accept that each classroom has its own culture. However, this does not negate the second problem of differentiating Thai cultural characteristics from students' behaviour at the later stage of data analysis. Since cultural values are intangible and are only observed through behaviour, how can one be certain whether a particular behaviour is caused by shared cultural knowledge and not the research participant's own personality? It is extremely difficult to differentiate between

behaviour caused by cultural effects and that caused by psychological effects. I recognise that there are no easy solutions to this particular problem but to minimise these limitations, I applied the small culture approach as a means of interpreting group behaviour. By observing the emergent patterns of behaviours and asking students to reflect on their own behaviour, I found that while some patterns of behaviour may have significant national characteristics, these are not always sufficient explanations. Rather, students tended to base their explanations on the interpersonal relationship with significant others (teachers, friends and classmates). This finding showed that students mutually and socially constructed certain types of behaviour and activities which form a part of the cultural makeup of their own classroom. The cultural makeup of this classroom may or may not have national characteristic qualities but either way students did not seem to be concerned about this. Rather, they were more concerned about their roles and the reactions and expectations of the significant others on whom they relied to guide their behaviour. Seeing small culture as rooted in students' social context and interaction enabled me to apply culture not only in terms of national characteristics but also in terms of the processes that give cohesion to group behaviour. Although my research findings did not identify national characteristics that influence students' behaviour, they shed some light on the importance of small culture in this particular classroom. Given the preceding, I would like to treat my initial research findings as being extremely provisional and subject to subsequent studies which would in the future help to confirm or disconfirm my findings.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The research results provide a variety of opportunities for future research. As I mentioned that one of the limitations of this study is the problem of generalisation, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study in other educational settings in Thailand or elsewhere in order to uncover the degree of similarity or difference in students' patterns of behaviour and perspectives. As the research setting can be any classroom type in any education setting and the research methods are easily implemented, any novice researcher can imitate or adapt the study to suit their situation. Likewise, other teachers would be able to carry out similar studies by taking turns to observe each other's classrooms in order to identify similarities or differences in students' behaviour between the classrooms. The benefits

which would arise from this are not only that teachers would have a better understanding of their class but it would also provide a means for students to voice their thoughts, concerns, and feelings. Teacher-based small-scale research like this can lead to increased teachers' self-awareness of their practices, the development of better educational practices, the understanding of these practices by their participants, and the development of the situations where these practices are carried out. It can also potentially lead to larger scale research, where a group of teachers and/or educators encourage one another to ask themselves what is going on in their classroom and whether their practices live up to their expectation, whether their practice is beneficial for students, whether any changes are needed, and so on.

There are at least two issues that emerged from the research result which could be further explored for the development of teaching and learning practices. The first issue is the effectiveness of group work. While the use of cooperative learning methods in the form of small group work is said to help students develop positive attitudes toward learning, increase motivation, develop better teacher-student and student-student relationships, and develop higher self-esteem and self-efficacy (Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998: 245), the research result seemed to contradict this as some students reported that they did not benefit academically from group work and that they had conflicts with group members resulting in a deterioration of their friendships. It would be beneficial to look at the causes of this ineffectiveness and whether it stemmed from a lack of student skills for high-quality cooperation, a lack of teacher supervision, a lack of students' understanding of subject matters, or other reasons. What we learn could then be used to provide solutions to this problem and hopefully help students to learn or work together more fruitfully.

The second issue focuses on the change in levels of students' motivation over time. Students' statements showed that during the course of their study, their motivation did not remain stable, as they reported changes in their academic goals, their self-efficacy in English, and their efforts towards learning. The research data show that at the beginning of their study at the tertiary level, students carried with them their interest, intention, and goals for their English study. However, as time passed, setbacks in learning occurred at several levels. At the individual level, when students experienced difficulties in their study, or when they compared themselves unfavourably with other students' academic ability, they tended to report a decrease in their self-efficacy beliefs. At the social level, students reported that the unsupportive learning environment and the peers' negative reaction

toward academic success had a direct effect on their own academic attempt seen, for example, in the way some students decided not to volunteer in class for fear of classmates' reaction. This loss of motivation could either be temporary, such as walking out of class, or permanent, such as total disengagement from study. Students' motivation flux is important because it could indicate how much effort students are prepared to expend on their study. With respect to this, more work needs to be done if we wish to investigate which factors or reasons cause a loss of motivation or contribute to a growth in motivation during the lengthy course of students' English study. This type of study could be of real significance for the development of a temporal perspective on motivation theory.

In summary, while this thesis attempts to scrutinise the influence of Thai culture on students' behaviour, it also raises awareness of the significance of social context and interactions as well as the value of a research approach that takes into account the insider's perspective. The research result confirmed the difficulty of understanding the influence of culture, in the sense that it is still not possible to make a definite statement that certain aspects of Thai culture influence individuals' behaviour in particular ways. However, the inconclusiveness of the research question is most certainly not a sign of failure. Instead, it shows the uniqueness of each social context and the need to understand the details of human interaction within given localised small cultures.

Transcription of the facsimile copy of the field notes

วันอังคารที่ 1 สิงหาคม 2549 เวลา 9.00 วิชา ภาษาจีนเบื้องต้น 1 อ. สิริรัตน์
บันทึกการสอนครั้งที่ หนึ่ง

- 9.00 อาจารย์มาถึงห้องแล้ว ไม่มีนักเรียนมาในห้อง
- 9.05 มีนักเรียนมาในห้องจำนวน 5 คน นักเรียนมาถึงก็เดินเข้าไปนั่งหลังห้อง
- 9.15 มีนักเรียนมาเพิ่มอีกสามคน นร.เริ่มทยอยมาเรื่อยๆ นร.
บางคนถามอาจารย์ว่าจะสอบแบบไหน
เพราะวันนี้เป็นวันที่อาจารย์กำหนดให้สอบอ่าน ระหว่างที่รอให้นร.มา
อาจารย์นั่งคอยอยู่ที่โต๊ะหน้าห้อง นร.บางกลุ่มนั่งทบทวนบทเรียน
บางคนใช้โทรศัพท์มือถือคุยกันเบาๆ
- 9.20 นักศึกษายังมากันไม่ครบ คนที่มาช้าไม่ได้เข้าห้องมาอย่างเจียบๆ
มาถึงก็ยืนคุยกันก่อน ระหว่างนั้น อจ. นั่งตรวจงานอยู่เจียบๆ หน้าห้อง
นักศึกษาบางคนเอางานมาส่ง
- 9.25 อาจารย์เริ่มเช็คชื่อ นร.เริ่มเจียบลง นร.ยกมือเวลาอาจารย์ขานชื่อ
ก่อนที่จะทำการสอบ อาจารย์ถามว่านร.คนไหนไม่มีคู่มือในการสอบไหม
อาจารย์ให้ขึ้นบทเรียนใหม่ก่อนที่จะเริ่มสอบ อจ. ให้นักเรียนเปิดหนังสือไปที่หน้า
74 นักเรียนเริ่มเปิดหนังสือ ระหว่างนี้มีเสียงโทรศัพท์ดังขึ้นมา อจ.
อธิบายว่าเป็นจะเรียนอ่านออกเสียง ฝึกการผสมเสียงทีละคำ
อจ.อ่านแล้วแปลศัพท์แต่ละคำให้นร. เรียนฟัง หลังจากนั้นให้เด็กอ่านตามทั้งห้อง
ประมาณ 2-3 ครั้ง
- 9.30 นักศึกษาที่มาสายเดินเข้ามาในห้อง อาจารย์ต้องหยุดสอน อาจารย์เริ่มสอนต่อ
สอนคำศัพท์ใหม่เป็นคำๆ ให้นักเรียนอ่านตาม จากนั้น อจ. ทบทวนคำศัพท์เก่าๆ
ที่เคยสอนนักเรียน อาจารย์ให้นักศึกษาอ่านออกเสียงตามทั้งห้อง
อจ.เริ่มถามนักเรียนเป็นรายคน โดยถามเป็นบทสนทนา ถามชื่อ
นามสกุลนักศึกษา นักศึกษาตอบไม่ได้ อจ.ช่วยตอบให้
อาจารย์แก้การอ่านออกเสียงของนักศึกษา อจ.อธิบายบทสนทนาให้นักเรียนฟัง
โดยบอกคำศัพท์เป็นคำๆ จากนั้นให้นำมาใส่ประโยค
จากนั้นอาจารย์ถามนักศึกษาอีกสองคน นร.มีปัญหาเกี่ยวกับ การออกเสียง S = ซ/ E
กับ U = อู อะ จากนั้นอจ.ให้นักศึกษาเอาคำศัพท์มาสร้างประโยค
ถ้าประโยคยาวไป นร.อ่านไม่ได้ อจ.จะเข้ามาช่วย แล้วให้เด็กอ่านตาม
พร้อมแปลให้ฟัง ระหว่างที่สอน อาจารย์จะถามว่านร. เข้าใจหรือไม่ นร.จะเจียบ
อาจารย์ให้นักศึกษาอ่านเป็นคำๆ ถ้าเป็นคำศัพท์ที่ยาก นร.อ่านไม่ได้
อจ.จะอ่านและแปลให้ฟัง

- 9.45 อาจารย์เริ่มเขียนคำศัพท์ใหม่บนกระดานดำทั้งหมด 15 คำ ทั้งหมดเป็นชื่อเฉพาะ
อาจารย์อ่านออกเสียงให้นักเรียนฟัง ถ้านร.ออกเสียงไม่ได้
อาจารย์จะให้ออกเสียงตามตัวพยัญชนะภาษาอังกฤษ หลังจากนั้น
อาจารย์ให้นร.ฝึกอ่านออกเสียงเองก่อน
ถ้ามีคำศัพท์ไหนที่ไม่ได้สอนและไม่มีอยู่ในหนังสือ
อาจารย์จะเขียนให้นักเรียนดูบนกระดาน ให้นร.เขียนตาม โดยเขียนเป็นภาษาจีน
และเขียนตัวอ่านเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ
- 9.50 หลังจากอ่านคำศัพท์ใหม่แล้ว อาจารย์ให้นร.ทั้งห้องอ่านทวนคำศัพท์อีกทั้งห้อง

Translation of the facsimile copy of the field notes

Tuesday 1 August 2006/ 9 AM / Basic Chinese I

- 9.00 The teacher arrives at the class. None of the students have turned up.
- 9.05 Five students turn up and walk to sit at the back of the class.
- 9.15 Three more students arrive ... more students coming to the class. Some students are asking the teacher about the reading exam today. While waiting for students, the teacher is sitting at the desk at the front of the class. Some students are reviewing the lesson. One student is talking quietly on the phone.
- 9.20 Latecomers are still turning up. They are quite noisy before settling down. The teacher is waiting and checking students' homework quietly at the front of the classroom.
- 9.25 The teacher starts checking attendance by calling students' names. Students raise their hands when their names are called. The teacher reminds students about the reading test today and asks if students have had any problem finding a partner for this pair-reading test. The teacher says that she is going to start a new chapter before the reading test. The teacher asks students to open the textbook at page 74. All students have a copy of the textbook. At this point, a telephone is ringing. The teacher continues teaching by giving the objective of the new lesson. Students will learn the new vocabulary from the lesson. The teacher begins by showing how to pronounce each new word and translates its meaning. Then, the teacher asks the whole class to pronounce these new words together.
- 9.30 The last group of latecomers turn up. The teacher stops the class for them to get in. The teacher continues teaching the new vocabulary and asks students to pronounce them properly. After a while, she reviews the old lessons that she previously taught students by asking the whole class in Chinese. Students respond in unison. The teacher starts to ask students individually to engage in conversation with her in Chinese. If students cannot answer or if they mispronounce a word, the teacher helps and corrects their pronunciation. The teacher reads a whole dialogue from a new chapter to students and translates the dialogue for the students. The dialogues have some missing words. The teacher asks students to fill in the missing words using the new vocabulary. After that, the whole class read the dialogue aloud. The teacher spots some pronunciation mistakes (discrepancies between the Thai and Chinese alphabet (S, E, and U)) and shows students how to pronounce the problematic words. The teacher asks if anyone did not understand the word or the sentence. No one says anything.
- 9.45 The teacher writes the 15 new words on the blackboard (in Chinese) and shows students how to pronounce each word. The whole class practice pronouncing the new words. The teacher asks students to write these new words in their workbooks. The teacher writes the words in Chinese, using the Roman alphabet to show how to pronounce the word.
- 9.50 The teacher reviews the new vocabulary and asks students to practice pronouncing the words.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF CATEGORIES

Students' Reasons for Learning English

1. Self-efficacy in learning English.
2. Continuation of and familiarity with the subject.
3. Positive and negative past learning experiences.
4. Suggestions and support from family and friends.
5. Public perception of English majors.
6. Future career.
7. Intrinsic interest in the subject.
8. Status of English as an international language.
9. Ability to communicate in a foreign language.
10. Further education.

Students' Transition to the University

1. Different learning environment between university and high school.
2. Different teaching style between university and high school.
3. Novelty of learning in university.
4. Gap in students' educational background and friendship.
5. Increased learning difficulty.
6. Sense of achievement or lack of achievement in English study.
7. Communication problem with foreign teacher.
8. Lack of time and effort to study.

Students' Perceptions of Good/Bad Students

1. Be on time.
2. Attend the class.
3. Pay attention in class.
4. Prepare for lessons before and review lessons after class.
5. Do required work.
6. Not interrupt the class.
7. Dress properly.
8. Ask questions.
9. Persevere when faced with learning difficulties.
10. Rely on oneself for one's own study and progress.
11. Seek knowledge outside class.
12. Respect the rules.
13. Respect the teacher.

Students' Perceptions of Good/Bad Teachers

Ability to teach

1. Prepare the lesson.
2. Be knowledgeable and give students extra knowledge.
3. Give clear explanations and objectives of the subjects.
4. Ask and make sure that students really understand the lesson.
5. Involve students in the lesson.
6. Know the areas that students have problems and try to improve them.
7. Have a balance between theory and practice.
8. Relate what is taught in class to outside class.
9. Encourage students to think and share ideas.
10. Have a variety of teaching styles.
11. Do not teach too fast.

Personality

1. *Pleasant personality*
 - 1.1 Be kind, friendly, smiling, welcoming, approachable, sympathetic, fair, and consultable.
 - 1.2 Have a sense of humour and know how to entertain students.
 - 1.3 Not only teach but communicate with students during class.
2. *Unpleasant personality*
 - 2.1 Make decisions for students.
 - 2.2 Have high expectations without regard to students' abilities.
 - 2.3 Never give students' compliments.
 - 2.4 Are self-centred and authoritarian.
 - 2.5 Are partial.
 - 2.6 Are unfriendly and serious.
 - 2.7 Are short-tempered and sarcastic.

Interactions with Teachers

1. Respect for teacher as a role model.
2. Respect for teachers' authority and seniority.
3. Consideration for (or lack of consideration for) teacher's feelings.
4. Evaluation of teachers' ability to teach.
5. Evaluation of different teaching styles.
6. Evaluation of teachers' personal characteristics.
7. Intimacy with or distance from teachers.
8. Fear or lack of fear of teachers.
9. Seeking advice and suggestion from teachers inside and outside class.
10. Dealing with teachers' expectations.
11. Reliance on (or lack of reliance on) teachers' guidance on studying.
12. Conflicts with teachers.
13. Avoidance of confrontation with teachers.
14. Learning with non-Thai teachers.
15. Difference between Thai and non-Thai teachers.

Reasons for Classroom Misbehaviour

1. Change in behaviour over time.
2. Low sense of self-belief in learning ability.
3. Lack of understanding of the lesson.
4. Lack of effort.
5. Problem with study and time management.
6. Denial of self-responsibility.
7. Lack of consideration for others.
8. Lack of rule enforcement.
9. Ignorance of rules.
10. Failure of teachers to exercise their authority and power in class.
11. Fear (or lack of fear) of teachers.
12. Flexibility of rules and regulations.
13. Opportunity to misbehave.
14. Incentives (or lack of incentives) to attend class.
15. Boredom with study.
16. Influence or pressure from friends.

Students' Self-Perception

1. Confidence (or lack of) in general.
2. Learning ability (or lack of) in English.
3. Anxiety over classroom and learning performance.
4. Concern over peers' reactions and judgements of behaviour.
5. Reluctance to be the centre of attention/to be the first/to initiate things in class.
6. Importance of relying on oneself.
7. Lack of discipline in studying.
8. Desire to be part of the group.
9. Fear of not belonging to the group.
10. Fear of failure.
11. Fear of making mistakes.
12. Fear of being ridiculed/laughed at by friends.
13. Fear of appearing too stupid/too eager.
14. Fear of being ostracised by friends.

Interaction with Friends

1. Strong allegiance to the group.
2. Approval and disapproval of friends' behaviour.
3. Desire for approval from friends.
4. Respect and consideration for others' well-being.
5. Discipline among friends.
6. Expectation of reciprocity of help among friends.
7. Joint hardship.
8. Encouragement amongst friends to study.
9. Friends as a source of knowledge.
10. Display of physical proximity to the group.
11. Avoidance of criticism or hurting others' feelings.

12. Avoidance of talking to one another.
13. Conflicts and confrontation with classmates.
14. Gossiping among group members.
15. Intergroup competition.
16. Comparison with friends.
17. Being taken advantage of by friends.
18. Being influenced by friends to behave in certain ways
19. Being uninfluenced by friends

Working with Friends in Group Work

1. Defining the group against others.
2. Division of work among one another, then, working separately.
3. Lack of time, cooperation and communication among group members.
4. Problems with non-contributors.
5. Conflicts of ideas among group members.
6. Avoidance of conflict among group members.
7. Preference for individual work to group work.
8. Lack of trust in friends' abilities to carry out assigned work.
9. Focus on style over content.
10. Lack of understanding of the objectives and contents of the assigned work.
11. Problems with plagiarism.

Differences between Thai and non-Thai Teachers

1. Novelty of learning with non-Thai teachers.
2. Authenticity of pronunciation and usage.
3. Communication and comprehension problems with non-Thai teachers.
4. Difference in classroom management.
5. Difference in teaching styles.
6. Lack of cultural knowledge by non-Thai teachers.

Interaction with Classroom Environment

Spatial organisation

1. *Seating arrangement*
 - 1.1 Division between front-row and back-row students.
 - 1.2 Students' 'ownership' of territory and group proximity.
2. *Advantages and disadvantages of class size*
 - 2.1 Focus and attention.
 - 2.2 Distractions and discipline.
 - 2.3 Communication and comprehension.
 - 2.4 Safety and support from classmates.
 - 2.5 Opportunities for class participation.
 - 2.6 Inhibition in class.

Rules

1. Adherence to the rules.
2. Violation of the rules.
3. Awareness of spoken and unspoken rules in class.
4. Preference for rule-setting and punishment to avoid disruptions in class.
5. Types of rules and punishment.
6. Number of rules.

Subjects

1. Perception of each subject.
2. Evaluation of teaching materials.
3. Amount of extra work.
4. Number of subjects.
5. Balance between theory and practice.
6. Relevance of the subjects to future careers.
7. Novelty of the subjects.
8. Length of the lessons.
9. Intervals during class.

Examination

1. Types of examinations.
2. Degree of difficulty of examinations.
3. Criteria for grading.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

(First pair interview conducted on 21 August 2006)

อาจารย์ ทำไมถึงเลือกมาเรียนวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ
Teacher Why did you choose to study English?
(T)

ไก่อ เพราะว่า วิชาภาษาอังกฤษสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ประจำวันได้
และเป็นเหมือนภาษาที่สองภาษาสากลของโลก

Student Because English can be useful in daily life and also because it is an international
A (SA) language.

อจ. ไก่อเลือกมาเรียนวิชาเอกนี้เองหรือเปล่า
T Did you choose this major yourself?

ไก่อ เลือกเองค่ะ เพราะชอบวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ไม่ชอบวิชาคำนวณ
SA Yes, I chose it myself because I like it. I don't like mathematics.

อจ. ตอนอยู่ม.ปลายเรียนเอกอะไร
T What did you study in high school?

ไก่อ อังกฤษ-ฝรั่งเศส
SA English and French.

แนน เลือกเอกภาษาอังกฤษ เพราะชอบและหางานง่าย
Student I chose English because I like it and it is easier to find a job if you can speak
B (SB) English.

อจ. ที่เลือกนี้ พ่อแม่ไม่ได้บังคับใช่ไหมคะ
T Did your parents influence your choice?

แนน เลือกเอง พ่อแม่ไม่ได้บังคับ
SB I chose it myself. My parents didn't influence me.

ไก่อ เหมือนกันค่ะ เลือกเอง
SA The same. Mine didn't either.

อจ. ในสี่ปีนี้ คิดว่าจะได้ประโยชน์อะไรจากการมาเรียนเอกภาษาอังกฤษ
T So, for the four years, what do you think will be the benefits of studying
English here?

ไก่อ ได้งานทำ ได้ภาษา
SA I hope to get a job where I can use English.

- อจ.** งานแนวไหน
T What kind of job do you hope to get?
- ไก** แนวภาษาอังกฤษ ไกด์ งานที่ต้องใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ เอาภาษาอังกฤษไปใช้
SA I want a job where I can use English, like being a tour guide.
- แนน** จริงๆ อยากเป็นครุฑะ ครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษ แต่ถ้าจะเรียนคบ.ก็ 5 ปี
 เสียเวลาต้องเรียนห้าปี ก็เลยจะไปเก็บหน่วยจากข้างนอกดีกว่า
SB Actually, I wanted to be an English teacher but it meant that I had to study for 5 years for a teacher's degree and I thought this was too long. I'd prefer to get teaching credits after I graduate.
- อจ.** สรุปคือ ทั้งสองคน คาดหวังเรื่องงาน แล้วอยู่มหาลัยมา 2 ปี
 คิดว่าสิ่งที่เรียนได้ตรงกับที่คาดหวังไหม
T It seems that both of you would like to learn so that you can get a job in the future. After two years here, do you think you will get what you hope for?
- ไก** ไม่น่าจะได้ มั่นยาก
SA No, probably not.
- อจ.** เพราะอะไร
T Why?
- แนน** แล้วอีกอย่างคือว่า เรียนแต่ยังใช้ภาษาไม่ได้
 เรียนมาสองปีแล้วยังไม่สามารถใช้ภาษาได้เลย
SB It is like we've been studying English here for two years but we're still not able to use it properly.
- อจ.** จริงหรือ อะไรทำให้ต่างกัน เรียนระดับมหาวิทยาลัย
 ต่างกับระดับมัธยมอย่างไร
T Really? What's made it different? What are the differences between studying at the university and at high school?
- ไก** ต้องรับผิดชอบในตัวเองสูง เช่น เรื่องงาน ถ้าอยู่มัธยมไม่ทำก็ไม่ค่อยมีผล
 คะแนนมันนิดเดียว แต่ที่มหาลัย คะแนนเก็บเยอะกว่า ตอนอยู่มัธยมถ้าติดศูนย์
 หรือติดอะไรก็แก้ได้
SA I found that studying at university I have to be more responsible, especially for homework or reports. When I was in high school, the scores for each bit of homework didn't count much toward my grade but at university homework or reports count a lot. It was much easier to change a grade or resit exams when I was at high school.
- อจ.** มหาลัยก็แก้ได้นะ
T You can change grades here too.
- แนน** แต่ที่นี่ต้องตาม แล้วอีกอย่างคือ เราต้องมีความกระตือรือร้นอยู่ตลอดเวลา

ต้องอ่านหนังสือคะ อ่านทุกวันคะ

SB Here, if we fail, we have to sort things out by ourselves. We have to be on the ball all the time. Like me, I read books everyday.

ไก่ ตอนอยู่มัธยมหนูจะไม่อ่านเลยคะ

SA When I was in high school, I hardly read.

อจ. นี่อ่านหนังสือกันทุกวันเลยหรือ คิดว่าเราเรียนอย่างสบายๆ

T Really, you read everyday? I thought you would study only when an exam is near.

ไก่ คืออาจารย์เค้าจะสอนแบบไม่ค่อยตรงประเด็น เวลาสอบก็สอบอีกแนวนี้ เราต้องไปค้นหาเอง มันไม่ตรงจุด อย่างภาษาอังกฤษเราต้องไปหา ความหมายหาอะไรเอง เพราะว่า อจ.เป็นฝรั่งแล้วเราไม่รู้ความหมาย

SA I found that the teacher taught us one thing in the class but then tested us on something else in the exam so I had to find things out for myself or in the English class, I have to find the meaning of words by myself because the teacher is a foreigner and I don't understand what he says.

แนน คือมันจะมีกลุ่ม เด็กเรียน เล่นๆ แต่งตัว

SB Our class is divided into different group. Some groups like to study, others prefer fashion, and getting dressed up.

อจ. แล้วหนูคิดว่าหนูน่าจะอยู่ในกลุ่มไหน

T So, which group are you in?

แนน หนูคิดว่าหนูอยู่กลางๆ แต่ปกติหนูจะอ่านตลอดนะคะ เพื่อนก็จะมาขอลอก แต่หนูไม่ได้เก่งนะคะ แต่หนูขยัน เพื่อนที่ไม่ค่อยสนใจก็จะมาขอลอก

SB I thought I'm an average student but I am hard-working. I am not saying that I am clever but I study hard. Lazy friends always ask for my help. They like to copy my work.

อจ. ฟังๆดู เหมือนข้อเสีย แล้วข้อดีของการเรียนมหาลัย ละ

T Sounds like a bad idea. If you are hard working, people will come and copy you. What about the advantages of studying at university?

แนน ทำให้ขยันขึ้น มีความรับผิดชอบมากขึ้น รู้สึกว่าจะเจอโลกกว้างขึ้น
รู้ว่าเราจะทำตัวอย่างไร

SB I think studying at university has made me become more diligent, more hard-working, and more responsible. I've experienced more things and I'm learning to cope with them.

ไก่ รู้จักวางแผนมากขึ้น วางแผนในชีวิตว่า ถ้าเราเรียนแล้วมันยาก เราต้องพยายามทำให้ดีขึ้น เห็นอนาคตมากขึ้น

SA I've learned to make plans for my life and to sort myself out. For example, if I am struggling with my study, I now see that I have to work harder and plan to improve myself so that I could see my future get better.

- อจ. T ในความคิดของไก่อ๊ แนน นร.ที่ดีควรมีพฤติกรรมอย่างไร ในหรือนอกห้องก็ได้
 In your opinion, what should good students do in and out of class?
- แนน SB เข้าห้องตรงเวลา เวลาเรียนไม่ต้องขออนุญาตไปเข้าห้องน้ำ ตั้งใจเรียน
 ไม่รับโทรศัพท์ ปิดมือถือ
 Good students should come to class on time, not leave to go to the toilet during the class, pay attention, not answer phones in class, and turn off their mobile phone.
- ไกอ๊ SA ฟังอาจารย์สอน สนใจ
 Listen to the teacher, and pay attention.
- แนน SB ถึงไม่ฟัง ก็ให้เงียบๆ
 Even if you are not listening, you should at least sit quietly, and not disturb others.
- อจ. T ช่วยประเมินตัวเองหน่อย ว่าเป็นนักเรียนที่ดีไหม
 How do you view your self? Are you a good student or bad student?
- แนน SB ข้อดีคือ เวลาเรียนส่วนมากหนูไม่ออกนอกห้อง ไม่เดินออกไป
 ไม่รับโทรศัพท์ด้วย ตั้งใจฟัง แต่ข้อเสียของหนูคือ เวลาฟังไม่รู้เรื่อง หนูก็เงียบ
 แล้วก็ไม่ได้ฟังแล้วหนูก็จะ เหมือนจะฟัง แต่ไม่ฟัง
 คิดว่าไม่รู้เรื่องเดี๋ยวไปอ่านเองดีกว่า บางครั้งเพื่อนชวนคุยก็อยากคุย
 The good thing about me is that when I am studying, I pay attention. I never leave the class or pick up the phone but if I don't understand what has been taught, I will be very quiet, acting as if I am listening but I am not. I think to myself that I will find out about this lesson later and sometimes, when my friends would like to chat with me in class, I stop listening and start talking with them.
- ไกอ๊ SA ข้อดี ถ้าไปเข้าห้องน้ำนี้ไม่ค่อยไปคะ ไม่เดินไปเดินมา แต่ถ้าจำเป็นจริงๆ
 แบบว่าปวดมากก็จะขอไป แต่ถ้าไม่จำเป็นก็จะนั่งในห้อง ฟังอจ. ใหมาก็ฟังคะ
 ส่วนใหญ่จะไม่ค่อยฟังก็คือพูดมากกว่า พูดกับเพื่อนอะไรอย่างนี้คะ ถ้าพูดก็ยาว
 ถ้าไม่พูดก็ นั่งฟัง แล้วจดไปด้วย มันมีหลายนิสัย แต่ถ้าถามว่ารู้เรื่องไหม
 ก็พอรู้เรื่อง ทำก็ได้บ้าง ไม่ถึงกับไม่ได้เลย
 I hardly ever go to the toilet during class and I don't wander around. If I really want to go to the toilet, I will ask for permission first but normally I will be in class listening. If I am not talking with my friends, I will listen to my teacher, and write down what the teacher has taught. But if I am talking with my friends, I just stop listening. I guess sometimes I understand the lesson, and sometimes I don't, sometimes I do my homework, sometimes I don't.
- อจ. T พฤติกรรมที่ไม่ดีสะคะ เป็นพฤติกรรมที่หนูคิดว่าเป็นพฤติกรรมที่ไม่ควรทำ
 What about things that we should not do in class?

- ไก่ โดดเรียน หนีออกห้องเรียน อจ.สอนไม่เสร็จก็ออก
SA Skip the class. Walk out of the class while the teacher is still teaching. Students should not do these.
- แนน แต่งหน้าเวลาเรียน รับโทรศัพท์ ไม่ปิดมือถือ หนูเกลียดมาก
ถ้าเปิดสั่นก็ไม่เป็นไร แต่ถ้าเป็นเสียงขึ้นมาจากที่เราฟัง (อจ)ไม่รู้เรื่อง
บางคนเปิดเป็นเพลงอีกต่างหาก
SB Put on make up in class. Pick up the phone. I really hate this. It is ok if you set your phone to vibrate but I found it is disturbing when the phone rings.
- อจ. แล้วเราว่าเพื่อนบ้างไหม
T Have you ever told your friends off for doing that?
- ไก่ เคยๆ เคยเตือนๆกัน
SA Sometimes.
- แนน พุดเล่นๆ บอกเป็นนัยๆ
SB I do too but in a joking way.
- ไก่ บางครั้งก็ตะโกนให้ปิด แต่เค้าก็ไม่รู้ตัว เค้าก็คงคิดว่าพุดเล่นกันอะไรอย่างนี้
เค้าก็เลยไม่ค่อยสนใจเท่าไร
SA Sometimes, I shout to my friends to turn their phones off, but they thought that I was just joking with them so they ignored me.
- แนน คนเดิมๆนั้นแหละคะ ที่ทำ
SB It's just the same group of people who always do this.

APPENDIX D: THAI GLOSSARY

<i>Ajarn</i>	อาจารย์	A teacher or a professor. Also used to designate senior Buddhist monks.
<i>Bunkhun</i>	บุญคุณ	An indebted goodness, a psychological bond between someone who renders another person the needed help and favour and the latter who remembers the goodness and is ready to reciprocate the kindness.
<i>Gu</i>	กู	First person ungendered pronoun, either nominative or accusative. The Thai language uses a vast array of personal pronouns, mainly to distinguish between age and status of interlocutors. Used between intimate friends, <i>gu</i> is acceptable but in the overwhelming majority of cases, its use would be considered highly vulgar and inappropriate.
<i>Krengjai</i>	เกรงใจ	An attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his/ her interest or desire in situations where there is the potential for discomfort or conflict, and when there is a need to maintain a pleasant and cooperative relationship.
<i>Kru</i>	ครู	A teacher.
<i>Man sai</i>	หมั่นไส้	A mixture of jealousy and disgust.
<i>Meung</i>	มีง	Third person ungendered pronoun, either nominative or accusative. As with <i>gu</i> above, potentially a very vulgar word.
<i>Sanuk</i>	สนุก	To have fun, to enjoy oneself and to have a good time.
<i>Wai</i>	ไหว้	A traditional Thai greeting where the hands are brought together in a sort of prayer position at chest level accompanied by a slight bow

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